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Editorial – Spring 2016

Charles Neame

This issue of Learning and Teaching in Action presents papers from two sources. Four of the articles in this issue report on projects funded by Manchester Met under the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) scheme launched in 2014. More such articles will follow in the subsequent issue of LTiA.

Three further articles continue the tradition of encouraging an eclectic mix of contributions from across the university. In the next issue we hope to repeat this balance of reports of funded pedagogic research and scholarship, and varied (and sometimes unexpected) papers from a wide range of colleagues.

The first of the ‘SoTL’ papers, is an article by Paul Gray, Natalie Simpson and Julie Scott Jones. This provides an evaluation of an innovative development in the form of the ‘pop-up’ Maths Cafés that many of you will have seen around the campus. Supporting the numeracy skills of students has steadily grown as a priority in recent years, and it is heartening to see promise of effective developments in that arena.

Jenny Fisher’s article on her animation for assessment initiative is striking on account of the unintended outcomes that she describes. It is rewarding for everyone when an idea or an initiative is taken up by others beyond the scope of the originally anticipated audience. There is a lesson here for all of us to champion our ideas widely; we never know who may be waiting to rise to the challenge.

The paper on personal tutoring by Jenny van Hooff and Adam Westall touches on a high priority topic. Supporting students effectively throughout their university experience has become critical to their success, the more so as student numbers rise and demands on staff time stretch resources more thinly. In particular, in the transition year – when students arrive at university for the first time and grapple with the dramatic challenges that this new world brings with it – they need support that helps them develop academic, practical and personal strategies for success. This paper reports on
work undertaken with level 4 students in one particular department, but with lessons learned that are relevant to everyone.

Also on the theme of transitions, but with a wider, pan-university scope, Claire Hamshire’s article reviews a number of aspects of induction and other first year support. The student perspective of first year experiences as both opportunities to be seized, as well as challenges to be met, is a thought-provoking one.

These four papers on SOTL project evaluations are followed by three diverse contributions from different departments within MMU.

Chrissi Nerantzi and Kath Botham discuss the potential for meeting the HEA’s challenge to demonstrate ‘good standing’ in relation to the UK Professional Standards Framework, by engaging with FLEX, a practice-based CPD programme offered by CELT. The pilot exercise reported here throws up some interesting questions about the concept of ‘good standing’ and discussion around the challenges and opportunities it presents.

Kate Dunstone provides an analysis of the experience of microteaching. This perspective is privileged by her simultaneous status both as an observer of student microteaching sessions, and as a student herself, by virtue of registering on the Teaching and Learning Essentials course with CELT.

The article by Rod Cullen et al. is timely, as it comes at the same time as the University’s Higher Education Review, when issues of quality assurance and quality enhancement are both under the spotlight. This particular paper, on the practice of achieving validity and reliability in assessment, follows from one of the important recommendations from the previous review in 2010. In addition, the paper reminds us of the purpose of the University Standards Descriptors, and how to use them effectively and to the very real benefit of teaching staff and students.

Outlines of the current round of SoTL projects for 2015-2016 can be found at: http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/sotl/index.php. The next call for proposals may be expected in early summer. Please contact me in advance if you wish to know more about the scope and process of the scheme.
Maths Cafés: Are they everyone's cup of tea?

Paul Gray, Natalie Simpson and Julie Scott Jones

Figure 1: An example of the promotional materials used – in this instance, a screen advert

Low Levels of Numeracy Skills - Poor Transition and Poor Progression

England has historically low levels of numeracy skills, with one in four adults ‘functionally innumerate’ (see, for example, Leitch 2006; Nuffield Foundation 2010; Rashid & Brooks 2010). The Vorderman Report (Vorderman et al. 2011) noted that only 50 per cent of teenagers in England and Wales pass (grade C or above) GCSE Mathematics and only 15 per cent go on to study A-Level Mathematics. In the context of higher education, this numeracy deficit influences student retention and progression rates. For example, the National Audit Office’s (2007) report Staying the Course: The retention of students in higher education noted a low retention rate in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. However, the problem is not solely related to STEM subjects. It has been found that students in all disciplines which require some level of numeracy, however basic, struggle for a number of reasons:

- Firstly, GCSE Mathematics has been identified as failing to develop life-long numeracy skills (Vorderman et al. 2011);
Secondly, the two-year plus gap between school mathematics and entering university results in students being out of practice when it comes to mathematics; and,

Lastly - and partly as a result of the previous two reasons - 'maths anxiety' (Onwuegbuzie & Wilson 2003) can create a barrier to learning the numerical elements of subjects, as well as a longer-term intellectual resistance to working with numbers (Mulhearn & Wiley 2005).

The impact of weak numeracy skills on the higher education sector has been well documented (see, for example, British Academy 2012; Gibbs 2010; MacInnes 2010; Scott Jones & Goldring 2014; Voderman et al. 2011). For example, it has been found that students' successful transition and settling into year one of university study can be disrupted by weak numeracy skills and/or 'maths anxiety'; ultimately influencing retention and progression. This is particularly the case with STEM subjects, as evidenced by lower progression rates amongst such disciplines across the sector. Clearly, there are both educational and financial consequences of poor numeracy skills, for students and universities.

Numeracy Support in Higher Education

There is a sector-wide disparity in how universities support students' literacy and numeracy. In response to the increasing awareness of dyslexia (and other forms of language-based learning difficulties) in the 1990s, the entire sector invested heavily in literacy and writing support. Support for literacy is clearly signposted, accessible and widely used in all universities. Addressing numeracy deficits, on the other hand, has been more piecemeal with at least a quarter of universities offering no numeracy support, and of those that do, the majority only target students on traditional STEM subjects (SIGMA 2012). Indeed, the typical higher education approach to supporting mathematics/numeracy (Lawson et al. 2012) is to base a maths support centre - operated by academic staff or more typically postgraduate students - within the Mathematics departments of a university. The problem with this approach is that it tends to rely on students being proactive learners who seek out support - a model which does not work well if students a) do not realise they have a problem or b) their 'maths anxiety' prevents them from engaging with
any available support. Additionally, Lawson (2012) found that support based in Mathematics departments often deterred students because students studying STEM subjects did not like to admit to having poor mathematics/numeracy skills, and students generally found Mathematics departments intimidating. For these reasons, some universities have now started placing mathematics support within *non-intimidating* humanities or arts buildings (Lawson, 2012).

**MMU’s Numeracy Support Pilot Project**

In the summer of 2014, MMU Directorate funded a Numeracy Support pilot project to provide numeracy support across the University. At the time, although individual departments (typically in the STEM disciplines) were providing some numeracy support through Learning Support Tutors (or similar), there was no formal institutional support for numeracy (in contrast to the successful literacy support offered by MMU’s Writing project). The Numeracy Support pilot project aimed to address this disparity. The pilot project was housed within the MMU Q-Step Centre in the Humanities, Languages and Social Science (HLSS) faculty, and Q-Step Centre staff provided the overall strategic leadership and support. The project consisted of three elements:

- A maths diagnostic tool;
- Data Buddies (undergraduate peer-assisted learners or PALs); and,
- Four Maths Cafés (staffed by the Data Buddies).

This article will look at just the Maths Cafés, and how they were viewed by the students who used them. However, before doing so, it is important to briefly outline the rationale for using undergraduate peer-assisted learners to staff the Cafés (as opposed to academic staff or postgraduates).

**Data Buddies: A Peer-Assisted Learning Model**

From the outset, the project chose to adopt a peer-assisted learning (PAL) model of support. Since the late 1990s, PAL has been increasingly implemented within the sector as a means of student-to-student support (see Capstick *et al.* 2004; Topping, 1996). With a
pedagogy centred on a shared dialogue between students, and when used to compliment (rather than replace) existing teaching, PAL has been found to increase both retention and progression (see Macintosh 2006; National Audit Office 2007). Capstick et al. (2004) found that the most effective PAL model saw undergraduate students from the year above working alongside new or less experienced students. Indeed, a range of research (see, for example, Capstick et al. 2004; Lawson et al. 2003; Topping 1996) has found that students are more likely to ask for help from someone closer to them in age with whom they can identify and therefore feel more at ease. The same research also highlights that - particularly in relation to technical or highly specialised material - academic staff can intimidate students. This, combined with the fact that students’ maths anxiety can act as a barrier to seeking support (Lawson 2012) led to the decision to use undergraduates as PALs or Data Buddies.

The decision to use undergraduates to deliver numeracy support is a departure from the model used by many other universities, who tend to rely on postgraduates and academic staff (Lawson et al. 2012). For the pilot project, the Data Buddies were all undergraduate students, predominantly third years, and from a range of disciplines. The Data Buddies were recruited through Jobs4Students; they then had to sit a maths test and achieve a minimum score in order for the project team to assess their functional numeracy skills. Once the students had passed the test, they then attended a half-day training session run by the MMU Q-Step Centre and CeLT. This training focused on: differing models of support; theories of coaching; data protection protocols; and confidentiality requirements. The training did not focus on curriculum content but rather the process of learning and supporting; it was stressed to the Data Buddies that they were not teachers nor should staff (or students) treat them as such.

Overall, 36 Data Buddies were recruited to the project in 2014-15. The majority of the Buddies (n=16) were from Science and Engineering (specifically mathematics). The remainder were from Economics (n=7), Sociology (n=9) and Psychology (n=4). Although the original aim was to use students from within each faculty to deliver support solely within that specific faculty, this was not always possible due to the number of Data Buddies recruited from each faculty, and timetable clashes between classes and the Café opening times.
The Maths Cafés

The Numeracy Support pilot project officially launched in October 2014. The project team adopted a broad definition of numeracy to encompass statistical analysis, formal mathematics, and functional numeracy skills. The decision was also made to move away from the typical numeracy support model of one central, static centre (such as Loughborough University’s Mathematics and Statistics Support Centre). The rationale behind this was that given the nature of ‘maths anxiety’ among students it was felt that they would be less likely to actively seek out support. Additionally, support had to be in student-friendly spaces (Lawson 2012). Building on the ‘pop-up’ Maths Café trolley trialled by the University of Plymouth (see Lawson 2012), the MMU support project created four mobile, pop-up Maths Cafés, each one sited beside a coffee shop/café in order to maximise accessibility for students.

Figure 2: An example of the promotional materials used – in this instance, a flyer

For times* and more information

mathscafe@mmu.ac.uk
@MMUmathscafe

Four sites were selected for the Cafés:

- the John Dalton building (Faculty of Science and Engineering);
- the New Business School;
• the Geoffrey Manton building (Faculty of HLSS); and,
• the Brooks Building (Faculties of Education and HPSC).

These sites were chosen as they contain the highest numbers of students studying subjects with key numerical elements. Each Café ran for two hours over lunchtime, every day of the week except Wednesdays (the Café in the Brooks building ran on Wednesdays).

The Cafés themselves consisted of:

• a trolley;
• a laptop, preloaded with subject-specific and generic numeracy information/guides/links;
• printed support materials;
• a ‘zapper’ to scan student ID cards to track usage; and,
• assorted flyers/leaflets on general numeracy issues.

The materials on each trolley and laptop were provided by academic staff, PSTs and SSOs within each of the different disciplines.

Two Data Buddies always staffed the Cafés. The Cafés operated a triage system whereby the Data Buddies attempted to resolve students’ initial problems; failing that, the Data Buddies then identified the next best form of support for the students and arranged for those students to get that support (for example, an appointment with a PST).

Figure 3: One of the Maths Cafés in action
The Evaluation of the Maths Cafés

An evaluation of the Cafés began in May 2015 and ended in August 2015. The evaluation consisted of:

- an analysis of all the students who accessed the Cafés during terms 1 and 2 of 2014-15;
- an online survey of Maths Café users (n=34);
- a focus group with six of the Data Buddies; and,
- the tracking of Maths Café users’ progression and assessment data.

How often were the Maths Cafés visited?

Data Buddies tracked users of the Maths Cafés by *zapping* student ID cards, that then captured student information and stored it on a database. When it comes to assessing usage, though, it is important to remember that not all students wished to have their ID card scanned and during busy periods, Data Buddies struggled to record all data. Therefore, the Maths Café usage figure is certainly an under-estimate.

Between the 19th October 2014 and the 22nd March 2015, the four Maths Cafés were visited a total of 282 times, with the two busiest Cafés being those in the John Dalton building and the New Business School (*see Figure 4 below*). Interestingly, out of the 282 visits, nearly two fifths were repeat visits from students who had already used one of the Cafés.

*Figure 4: Number of visits to the Maths Cafés between October 2014 and March 2015*
Home or Away?

Students were not restricted to visiting their home Café (the Café in their own faculty). Interestingly, the majority of users of the John Dalton Café were *home* students i.e. from Science and Engineering. However, half of the users of the Geoffrey Manton Café were students from other faculties, including for example, Art and Fashion students. In addition to this, and in line with research (Lawson 2012), a significant number of the users of the Geoffrey Manton Café were Economics and Mathematics students who appeared to have chosen not to visit the Café in their own faculty (see Figure 5 overleaf).

![Figure 5: Number of visits by 'home' or 'away' students](image)

Student Views of the Maths Café Service

The most common reasons for visiting the Café given by the students who responded to the online survey were ‘for a general numeracy query’ and/or ‘help with a particular aspect of an assignment or forthcoming exam’ (the majority response). The vast majority of the survey respondents found the Data Buddies to be either ‘approachable’ (32 per cent) or ‘very approachable’ (56 per cent); none of those surveyed found the Buddies to be ‘unapproachable’. Nearly a third (31 per cent) were ‘satisfied’ and half (50 per cent) were ‘very satisfied’ with the help they received. Over four fifths (85 per cent) said that they would use the Maths Cafés again and nearly all (95 per cent) said that they would recommend the Cafés to a friend.

In terms of the times and locations of the Cafés, nearly three quarters (73 per cent) felt that the times of the Maths Cafés were convenient for students; importantly, though, 24 per cent were not aware of
exactly when the Cafés were available, suggesting a need to improve publicity. Over four fifths (82 per cent) felt that the Café/s that they had visited was/were in the most appropriate location. Of those respondents who felt that the Cafés were not in the most suitable location, reasons such as - ‘It would be better if it was in the library to. You can't expect every student to visit the Café’ - were given. This does raise the issue of whether or not students would actually prefer to have numeracy support offered in a fixed location (such as Loughborough’s MSSC) in addition to the Maths Café trolleys.

**Classroom or trolley?**

Just over three fifths (61 per cent) would have preferred to visit the Maths Café in a classroom environment, as opposed to the existing pop-up Cafés. Some of the reasons for this included:

‘More confidential’

‘It’s slightly more private’

‘It’s more comfortable to sit down in a quiet place’

‘If it’s a simple maths question you are asking then that can be addressed easily at the trolley. But for more challenging maths concepts I think a classroom, where you can sit down and go through the problem, would be required’

Nonetheless, the remaining two-fifths (39 per cent) did prefer to visit the Maths Café trolleys. For example, responses included:

‘It is most convenient if you're passing by’

‘Visible in a public area of campus. You don't need to track them down, and seeing them around reminds you of their service’

‘Convenient’

‘Easier to find and no pressure. Classroom feels too serious’

‘A more relaxed environment to ask general questions’

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1 ‘Semi-private’ spaces for students to sit and spend longer with the Data Buddies are currently being trialled in the Geoffrey Manton building and the New Business School (where there are semi-private seating areas available).
‘Accessible and not intimidating’

**Drop-in or appointment?**

Although the majority of those surveyed appeared to like the drop-in nature of the Maths Cafés, just over a quarter (27 per cent) said that they would like to be able to book appointments. Reasons included:

‘More time to discuss things’

‘Sometimes, if there is another person there, I have to wait’

**Data Buddies or Staff?**

Although just under two fifths (39 per cent) would have preferred the Cafés to be run by academic members of staff - the most common reason given being ‘Staff would be more knowledgeable’ - the remaining 61 per cent preferred the Maths Cafés to be run by student Data Buddies, as opposed to members of staff. Some of the reasons for this included:

‘More approachable’

‘Some questions feel silly to ask a lecturer’

‘It’s nice to speak to someone your own age as you can relate more with them’

‘Fellow students … will probably be more understanding of the issues you’re having and frustration at being unable to understand a mathematical concept on your own. This is in contrast to lecturers who often exhibit total bewilderment and disbelief when you are really struggling to grasp something’

**The Benefits of being a Data Buddy**

As highlighted above, over three fifths of those surveyed preferred the Cafés to be run by the Data Buddies. However, being a Data Buddy had clear benefits for the Buddies themselves, not just the

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2 The possibility to offering bookable appointment during busy assessment periods is something that is currently being considered by the project team.
students they supported; and these benefits were not just short-term, but longer term as well. For example, the Buddies felt that being a Data Buddy enhanced their own learning, as well as providing them with specific employability skills:

‘I want to go in to teaching, I thought it's a great time to actually see if I like it, and you get paid for it while you’re doing it’ (Male Buddy 1)

‘Something to put on my CV’ (Female Buddy 3)

Additionally, many of the Data Buddies expressed a sense of personal satisfaction in supporting fellow students. For example: ‘It’s the satisfaction that you know you’ve helped someone and they’re learning because you’ve helped them’ (Male Buddy 1).

Progression Data and Maths Café Users
In an attempt to ‘concretise’ the wider impact of the numeracy support offered by the four Cafés, progression data for all the students that had used the Cafés was analysed. While it is acknowledged that any relationship between Maths Café usage and student performance should be treated with caution - given the multitude of other factors that can influence student performance - some positive findings were evident. For example, the analysis found that:

- 100 per cent of the Level 4 students who used the Maths Cafés passed and progressed at the end of the academic year 2014-15; and,
- 91 per cent of all Level 5 and Level 6 students who used the Maths Cafés passed and progressed/graduated at the end of the academic year 2014-15. Indeed, 64 per cent of these students saw their marks increase from their previous year’s results.

Conclusions
Overall, it was felt that the Maths Cafés had been a success. For example:
The four Cafés received over 300 visits during the six months between October 2014 and March 2015, with around two fifths of these visits being repeat visits from those students who had already accessed the available support. This clearly demonstrates the need for numeracy support;

The diversity of disciplines represented in the user data - for example, students studying Fashion and Art, and Film and Media, attended the Geoffrey Manton Café - suggests that numeracy support needs to be made available to all students, not simply those taking STEM subjects;

The majority of Maths Café enquiries were resolved on-the-spot by the Data Buddies, implying that most students have difficulties with foundational or basic numerical concepts;

Students rated the Data Buddies highly, thus demonstrating the utility of the PAL model - and in particular the use of undergraduates - for delivering numeracy support; and,

There is a clear personal development and employability dividend in being a Data Buddy.

In addition to staffing the Maths Cafés, as part of the pilot project some of the Data Buddies were utilised by academic staff to provide in-class numeracy support. In these instances, the Buddies provided in-class support to students on a small range of units; these sessions were arranged in conjunction with academic staff and usually ran in the period running up to assessment deadlines. In these sessions, Data Buddies worked in the class offering help to students and guiding them with class activities. The Data Buddies proved very popular, with both staff and students. For example, as one Personal Support Tutor explained:

‘In these classes it [the Data Buddy] makes a huge difference, because it just makes the class easier to run for me and it means that everyone gets to talk to someone, which I think is really nice’.

The students themselves tended to prefer support from the Data Buddies in class, as opposed to support from the academic member of staff. As a Student Experience Support Tutor highlighted: ‘They can ask him [the Data Buddy] things that they can't ask me or the unit leader’. Moreover, the Buddies themselves highlighted the utility of this approach:
‘Sometimes the way the teachers teach they [the students] don’t understand it, but then when I go and explain the way I’ve learnt it myself then yes, that’s better [for the students]’ (Female Buddy 3)

‘Don’t forget we were doing it last year. ... We managed to get our heads around it and ... we sort of tell them [the students] how we did it last year’ (Male Buddy 3)

Bearing these comments in mind, it is clear that the use of undergraduate PALs to provide in-class numeracy support is something that needs to be developed further in the future.

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Let’s animate: Reflections on a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning funded project

Jenny Fisher

Abstract

This paper describes and reflects on a project that introduced animation into assessment for undergraduate students.

Introduction and background

In this article, I reflect on the introduction of animation as a form of assessment for under-graduate students. As a Senior Lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University, I teach on BA (Hons) Social Care. The programme’s key points of focus are a sound theoretical grounding in social care, and the inclusion of a myriad of disciplines including social policy, sociology, psychology and health. There is a strong emphasis on employability and the preparation of students for employment in the social care sector. One of my responsibilities is leading a core Level 5 unit (90 students) that is now called Engaging Communities, Delivering Services. I rewrote the unit in 2015, including a new assessment strategy. The aim of the unit is to explore the delivery of social care in communities and how organisations engage with communities; the unit builds on the knowledge, skills and understanding of communities gained at Level 4. Prior to 2015, students were assessed by an assignment and a group power-point presentation. In preparing for an open day presentation for potential students and their relatives, I came across a number of animations about social care practice online. With this in mind, I started to look at how animations were made, and spoke to the departmental e-learning officer, Hayley Atkinson about the options for introducing animations into my learning and teaching. At this point, I saw a call from the University’s Centre for Learning and Teaching for applications for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Funding was available to support research and scholarly work to improve quality in learning and teaching, including the piloting of new approaches. The funding would enable us to
purchase a departmental license for an online animation programme, attend workshops and conferences to disseminate findings, and some release from other teaching to develop the project. The application for funding was successful. In designing the SoTL project, I aligned the aims with the University’s principles for Learning, Teaching and Assessment, as follows:

1. To explore the use of animation in student assessment and learning, as an alternative form of presentation.
2. To enable students to become partners in the co-production of learning materials for other students.
3. To collaborate with voluntary and community partners in providing animated videos for their organisations.

**Assessment and animation – a brief summary from the literature**

Throughout the project, we continued to inform our practice through the academic literature. There is not space here to provide a full review of all the relevant literature, but here we provide an overview. Assessment continues to be one of the most significant factors in learning and teaching in Higher Education (Brown and Knight, 1994; Gibbs and Simpson, 2004; Williams, 2014). Assessment of learning is the dominant form in contrast to assessment for learning, where students are assessed through a range of approaches that are of value for their future employability and learning (Williams, 2014). Biggs and Tang (2011:228) advocate assessing students’ creativity as “the ability to create something different on a foundation of the unknown”, using open-ended approaches and encouraging risk-taking.

The 2015 NMC Horizons Report identified that education technology will have a significant impact globally on higher education over the next few years and there is a need to increase students’ digital literacy linked with employability (NMC, 2015). Creating animations improves students’ digital literacy and they can be an effective tool in learning and teaching (Lam and McNaught, 2006). Many high quality multimedia materials are available online. There is, however, limited academic research and writing on the use of animations in learning and teaching, and the research that exists mainly relates to science,
computing and mathematics. Hoban (2009) asserts that students benefit from creating and designing artefacts for audiences. Herrington et al. (2010) who advocate learning in authentic environments, while Gauntlett (2011) whose book ‘Making is Connecting’ recognizes the intersecting value of digital learning, creativity and communities, and Meyer (2014:1) who states that ‘People can learn more deeply from words and pictures than from words alone.’

**Description of practice**

Having been awarded the CELT SoTL funding, the next step was to identify an animation programme for the students to use that was free for students and could be used on any computer. Colleagues introduced me to Explee, stop motion animation and other programmes. I was already aware of Powtoon and Go-animate and spent time exploring these. We took the decision to use Go-Animate as I found it the most accessible, and used some funding to buy a licence for the schools programme. The costs are relatively low, and the technology allows for export of the animations to YouTube.

The unit specification for the Level 5 unit stated that the assessment would be a power-point presentation, so I needed to apply for a minor modification to change this to presentation. This was accepted. I had been teaching the unit for two years, and continued to teach the same topics (albeit updated in line with policy changes). Students attended a weekly seminar with a tutor and in these sessions, we showed them how to create animations, storyboarding techniques, and provided ongoing support. The Go-animate licence enabled us to give each student an account so that they could develop animations. The animations were to be 2-3 minutes long, consider a community, a social care organisation and the work the social care organisation did with those who used their services. Students worked in groups of 3-5.

We followed an action research approach: ‘any research into practice undertaken by those involved in that practice, with an aim to change and improve it’ (Open University, 2005:4). We undertook formal and informal evaluations of the students’ experiences of making animations. After each seminar, students were asked to provide
verbal and visual feedback on how they felt the session had gone and their learning. We reflected on our own experiences of the seminars and contact from students. Following marking of the assessment and feedback, students were asked to complete an online questionnaire about their experiences of using animation, with an opportunity for free text comments.

Discussion

Generally, the project worked well and the informal and formal feedback from students was positive. Students told us:

‘I think this animation is a fantastic idea and without it I wouldn't have passed the module I am normally not a very academic student and having dyslexia struggle to do essays this animation allowed me to show my creative side and I would definitely recommend this you carry on with this type of assessment.’

‘This animation was a lot more enjoyable than an essay or a presentation.’

‘Maybe make the length of the animation more flexible’

‘…maybe the groups could be smaller next year, so there's more for each person to do’

In undertaking the evaluation, students were willing to complete an online questionnaire, but reluctant to take part in an interview or a focus group citing time constraints and the fact that they had left the university for the academic year.

In reflecting on the project, I return to the key aims. We did explore the use of animation, and in conjunction with students found it to be a successful alternative to power-points, that was enjoyable. The students have co-produced learning materials for other students, and this academic year, we are using the animations to provide examples for level 5 students, and as resources for Level 4 students on another community based unit. Collaboration with voluntary and community partners was more challenging, mainly due to work pressures upon the organisations. However, some animations are being used by
organisations as promotional material. There were some key learning points for myself.

Group work was a challenge and I agree with Biggs and Tang (2010) that we need to approach group work with caution. The majority of students chose their groups, but there were students who for one reason or another, did not inform us of their groups so were randomly allocated. Using multiple student accounts was problematic for some students, and a few felt that two to three minutes was no long enough for an animation. I could have spent more time discussing the introduction of and rationale for the animations with colleagues.

**Unintended outcomes**

While teaching myself how to make an animation, I decided to make a fun animation for a friend of mine to play at a celebration event. I showed it to Dr Katherine Runswick-Cole (Social Change and Well-being Research Group) who asked me to introduce her to the basics of animating. By that evening she had made ten animations about the impact and outcomes of an ESRC funded research grant. And so it continued, as social media and word of mouth about the animations did their work. I have run a number of workshops for university colleagues on animation and those who attended have gone on to use animations in their community-based work and to disseminate research findings. One external partner emailed me to say ‘*Fantastic!* Thank YOU so much.’ An academic colleague used animations at a workshop and told me in an email ‘I felt that the application of GoAnimate in this instance, stimulated much discussion around both material and discursive issues pertaining to psychological practice. I hope to develop my skills in using it as a training tool.’ (personal comm. academic colleague)

In the academy, we are cognisant of demonstrating the impact of our research, and short animations can reach those who may not have the capacity or time to read lengthy reports. Through the animation project I have met and connected with people who I do not come into contact with in my everyday role. These individuals work in other disciplines, departments, universities, and my learning, teaching and research practice continues to be informed by their work. I was asked to collaborate on the LTHE tweetchats between September and
December 2015, and was a guest on one of these tweetchats asking questions about the use of animation.

We have presented our experiences of introducing animation as assessment at conferences including the Assessment in Higher Education 2015 conference, the Association for Learning and Teaching conference 2015, the CELT conference 2015, the Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Change Learning and Teaching conference 2015, and co-facilitated a creative workshop at Open Educa Berlin 2015.

**Final thoughts**

I am now teaching the second term of the unit, a year after we introduced animation as assessment for the students. I am hopeful that all the good practice that I have developed and the lessons from the evaluation will inform the learning and teaching in the unit. There are a number of key ways in which I have modified the teaching and assessment, and I am working with two new team members. We have asked the students to focus on their choice of community and organisations much earlier in the term, spent less time showing students how to do animations in recognising that they do not always need this support, and more time thinking about the content and how this will match the assignment specification. Each group has been provided with one student account. We have introduced a group diary to detail meetings and action points, and students are engaging more with the seminar time. Reflecting on my practice, I am more confident in talking to students about the value of making animations, and the re-development of a rubric is informing our assessment.

Being awarded the CELT scholarship funding has opened many new doors for me, and I have made new friends, as well as gained confidence as a teacher. Being creative and stepping out of the box can be a challenge in the academy, but I will continue to be creative and innovative in my practice, and would recommend that others do as well. However, you cannot do this on your own and as Nerantzi (2015: 23) reminds us ‘We need to remember that people can bring spaces alive and bring others in’. As I write this article, I have been asked by a colleague if she can sit in on the seminars to learn how to animate, and our Faculty Business Development Manager has told
me that the Centre for Knowledge Exchange is making animations inspired by mine. Animation is enjoyable for students and staff, and through sharing practice of creative forms of assessment, the role of animations in learning and teaching can develop across the university.

References


Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank the generous contributions of Hayley Atkinson, Eleanor Hannan and Chrissi Nerantzi. I would not have been able to develop this project without their support. Further, I would like to thank Dr Charles Neame for his comments on a draft of this article.
Enhancing belonging, confidence and academic development through meaningful Personal Tutoring

Jenny van Hooff & Adam Westall

Abstract
This paper reports on a SoTL funded project which sought to examine and develop the role of personal tutoring at Level 4. Research suggests that a highly structured, proactive personal tutoring system which supports students’ academic development is essential in easing the transition into HE, developing students’ academic confidence and sense of belonging to the institution, which in turn reduces their chances of early withdrawal (Thomas, 2012). However, while various reports claim that students would prefer increased contact time with their personal tutors, there appears to be a mismatch between such reports and actual engagement with personal tutoring systems.

In this paper we present survey and focus group findings evaluating students’ experiences of personal tutoring in the Department of Sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University. The findings suggest the importance of quality, familiarity and consistency in the delivery of personal tuition, and emphasise the significance of the personal tutor role, and in turn institutional support, in achieving this.

Background to the Project
The purpose of this project was to examine and develop the role of personal tutoring as a strategy to ease Level 4 students’ transition into HE, develop their academic confidence and sense of belonging to their course and institution. Personal tutoring is identified as a key factor in nurturing belonging and academic confidence, and for these reasons is particularly crucial for Level 4 students to support their transition into HE (Thomas, 2012). However while research such as NUS’ Student Experience Research 2012; Part 1: Teaching & Learning found that 41.9% of respondents would like more contact time with their personal tutors there appears to be a gap between...
such reports and students’ actual engagement with personal tutoring systems.

Within the Sociology Department at Manchester Met, attendance at personal tutor meetings peaked at around 40% in 2014/15; one of the aims of the research was to explore strategies to improve student engagement with the system. Effective personal tutoring is also a key strategy in student retention and success; a survey of early leavers undertaken across four Higher Education Providers (HEPs) found that for 43%, ‘not being given helpful academic support by my department’ was a contributing factor in their decision to withdraw (Thomas, 2012:42). This research focuses on student experiences of personal tutoring at Level 4, when issues of non-continuation, transition into higher education and academic integration and belonging are particularly pertinent (Yorke and Longden, 2004).

In the UK 8% of students leave HE during their first year of study; however extensive research carried out across four institutions found that between 33% and 42% of students think about withdrawing (Thomas, 2012:4). A highly structured, proactive personal tutoring system that supports students’ academic development is essential in easing the transition into HE, developing students’ academic confidence and sense of belonging to the institution, which in turn reduces their chances of early withdrawal (Thomas, 2012:42-44). This is particularly important for stay-at-home students, who may struggle to develop a sense of belonging, which is reflected in higher withdrawal rates (HESA, 2015). Building a sense of belonging in students has been promoted as a strategy for institutions to enhance student engagement (Krause, 2007), and this project attempts to develop personal tutoring as one method of achieving this.

Originally the aims of personal tutoring were to provide personal guidance and support (Watts, 2011). However, in the changing higher education environment, personal tutoring can now be seen to adopt a more holistic approach. (Thomas, 2006; Watts, 2011). In beginning to look at the significance of personal tutoring to aid belonging and ease transition, it is evident that a number of key arguments exist. Taking the starting point that the institution is responsible for providing an environment which makes learning possible (Krause and Coates, 2008), the role of the student and the tutor both need to be considered.
Upon arrival in the higher education environment, students are expected to shift from their previous experience of education, which is usually planned, pre-organised and monitored, to that of the higher education environment where independent learning is required. This shift in both culture and norms and the lack of familiarity and preparedness that students have towards higher education (Wilcox et al., 2005; Stephen et al., 2008), results in students being required to manage their own learning. For this a structured set of transitional activities may help to promote a successful transition period (Wingate, 2007). Research around personal tutoring suggests that “proactive, structured personal tutoring may enable students to progress” (Watts, 2011).

Research conducted on social support systems in the first year of higher education suggests that students experience problems which lead to withdrawal, such as finding independent study problematic, university life not being as expected, unhappiness with the choice of course/subject and a failure to connect with their personal tutor (Wilcox et al., 2005). From a thematic perspective, this suggests that social support and independent learning and culture adaptation, amongst others, are common problems that students encounter. It may be argued that the role of the personal tutor alongside other support systems in the university can be a way of intervening to ensure students are less likely to withdraw.

In enabling and embedding positive relationships, the role of the tutor is significant. Despite the personal tutoring system not flourishing in UK higher education institutions (Vinson et al., 2010) many institutions adopt the system as a way of providing support and guidance to students, despite the unwillingness by some staff to actively participate (Wingate, 2007). A view that pastoral work and student retention issues are not part of the academic role, as well as a need for academic staff to establish a balance between research, teaching and administration (Wilcox et al., 2005; Wingate, 2007) when facing an already increased and unmanageable workload. In translation to how this is perceived by students, their relationships with personal tutors will include a lack of willingness or interest from tutors, a perception that tutors are too busy to engage as well as a feeling of guilt for taking up their time (Stephen et al., 2008). In summary, in order for personal tutoring to be successful, particularly in helping to establish belonging in the transition stage for first year
students, attitudes towards the development of student learning and support need to be holistic (Wingate, 2007) with a commitment from the institution, academics and students alike.

The Study
The findings presented here are based on mixed methods research into the experiences of personal tutoring of the 2014-15 Level 4 Department of Sociology students at MMU. Action research was selected as the most appropriate methodological approach for this study. Action research has become established as a popular technique in educational research as it bridges the gap between academic research and more practical applications (Nolen and Vander Putten, 2007: 403). Action research is designed to enable the practitioner to bring about an improvement in their own practice, with research findings feeding directly into improvements in teaching and learning. It is necessarily participative, and is designed to capture the student voice in order to bring about change (Rowland, 2002). As such, methods of data generation should reflect this endeavour. For this research project we selected a mixed methods approach of online questionnaires and focus groups, and informal interviews as the most appropriate methods; these were supplemented with feedback from Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings to give as comprehensive a picture as possible. The questionnaire was designed to give the quantitative figures necessary to provide generalisations about engagement with the personal tutoring system, and was live on Survey Monkey between December-May 2016. Out of cohort of 192; Sociology (51), Criminology & Sociology (58) & Criminology students (83), we had 35 responses to survey, which was approximately twenty per cent of the Level 4 cohort. This was despite frequent email and in-class promotions of the survey, and the students being given time in lab sessions to complete the questionnaire. While a twenty per cent response is reasonable we had hoped for more given my access to the students – the rate perhaps speaks to the ‘questionnaire fatigue’ that students suffer from early on in their time in HE which makes it difficult to research their experiences.

A focus group of five students was also held in order to provide a qualitative insight into the meanings behind the statistics generated.
A focus group is defined as ‘a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research’ (Powell et al, 1996:499, cited in Gibbs, 1997), which makes it particularly appropriate as a method in participatory research. Because of the difficulties with timing and recruiting students for more than the single focus group, tutors were also asked to informally interview their tutees about their experiences of personal tutoring (with the tutees’ full knowledge and consent), and in this way the qualitative experiences of a further ten students were recorded.

Findings
Generally the findings were positive, with students demonstrating an appreciation of personal tutoring system that provided access to tutors who were available, approachable and familiar. For most of the students at Level 4, their personal tutor was also a seminar tutor, and this appeared to greatly improve students’ experience of the system, with 63 per cent agreeing that they knew who their personal tutor was, and 89 per cent agreeing that there is at least one member of staff they can talk to.

This is particularly crucial at Level 4, and is supported by other research demonstrating the links between a proactive personal tutoring approach and students’ development of academic confidence and sense of belonging to the institution, which in turn reduces their chances of early withdrawal (Thomas, 2012).

In our analysis of the data, three themes emerged:

Consistency
Consistency emerged as something highly valued by students. They were particularly appreciative of staff who were reliable and provided clear expectations and structure. Extracts from the focus group support this:

‘he emails me and I never have to email him’

‘she has kept a record of everything I have done and everything like that. I’ve looked back at what I’ve achieved since starting in September’
‘you should be able to see them on your own terms, have one session at the beginning of the year that we all have to go to.’

‘he gives me awkward times like when I finish at 1 he says 2 or 3 or 5, so I don’t bother going’

One of the major complaints from staff about the implementation of a resource-heavy, highly-structured personal tutoring system was lack of student engagement. However, what came through strongly in this research was the importance of a personal tutoring system that worked for students for them to engage with it. A consistent approach/message from the department is key to establishing a student-friendly model.

Familiarity

The departmental system was designed so that tutees are taught by their personal tutors for at least one seminar (although with students moving seminar groups due to timetabling issues this could not always be accommodated). Although challenging to organise, this is seen to be a particular success; students felt like they know who their tutor is, and where they are even if they do not always attend all of the meetings, as reported in the focus groups and informal interviews:

‘I know I can go to them, obviously I know people are different and don’t feel the same but with my personal tutor I know that if I had a problem I could go to someone, it’s not just like I am left in the lurch’

‘I like having a personal tutor as I like a designated person that I know that if I need help with I know there is someone there’

70 per cent of survey respondents suggested that at least one member of staff knew who they were aside from their personal tutor. 80 per cent of those surveyed suggested that they knew where to turn if they encountered a problem or issues. In terms of belonging the overall integration and ultimately their familiarity with the personal tutor and the department is important in helping to establish institutional awareness (Kember et al, 2001)

Where this didn’t happen, lack of familiarity provides a barrier to establishing a successful tutor-tutee relationship for the following focus group participant:
You only see them once a term, I’m not just going to pour my life out for you’

34 per cent of respondents were unsure if a personal tutor was important to them, which may contribute to any potential limitations towards forming a meaningful working relationship.

This underlines the importance of tutors being familiar to their tutees; students reported that they were more likely to turn up to meetings with academics they were familiar with. As personal tutoring in our department is focused on personal development planning rather than pastoral support, it is also useful for tutors to have a sense of their tutees’ academic progress through their role as seminar leaders.

Quality
The quality and content of the meetings was of particular importance to students; in our qualitative research findings they emphasised the importance and value of meetings that were useful to their academic development and integration:

‘he always says that if I have any specific work or problems then bring it to him and he will go through it with me’

‘mine really helps me with my essays, without him I would be lost, but that is because I make the effort to go up to him and ask him’

‘mine are really good like, she tells me where to go and what I need’

‘he always says that if I have any specific work or problems then bring it to him and he will go through it with me.’

One participant describes how her personal tutor had improved her sense of academic confidence through encouraging meetings and signposting her to appropriate support, which is hugely important to retention in the first year (Thomas, 2012). The extract highlights the value of personal tutoring in easing the transition into Higher Education:

‘My PT when I met her advised me all different things, she’s even told me of her experiences and stuff to overcome it. I can’t remember the name of the guy down stairs but he does exam prep classes and PowerPoint. I’ve been and spoke to
him and he said I can do one to one with him. He’s given me advice that I need. Now that I have been here longer they have advised me of loads of different steps that I can take and now I feel more confident.’

However, students also received a negative experience from tutors who they felt were disinterested:

‘He never asks me about my work he just asks if I am enjoying it, am I OK, right you can go now if you want’

‘They don’t really talk about relevant things, they just ask how are you, how is your time here and its awkward’

Structured meetings focussed on academic progress were what students found most useful in our research.

Participants also admitted that they were not always engaged in personal tutoring:

‘I don’t think enough people make an effort to meet their personal tutors’

‘perhaps people are just lazy and can’t be bothered, me included’

In order to design and maintain a system that engages students, meetings have to have outcomes that they can see the benefit of, for example a review of feedback, help with referencing etc.

A further important point to note here is the responses by students in terms of their enjoyment and happiness. 83 per cent suggested that they enjoyed their chosen course of study, alongside 80 per cent expressing feelings of happiness towards their course. In terms of retention, both the quality of individual processes such as personal tutoring as well as overall integration into the environment and surroundings (May, 2011) will encourage more persistence in students with their studies and ultimately less withdrawal from the learning environment (Kember, et al, 2001).

**Conclusion**

With personal tutoring at the forefront of institutional and departmental priorities, this research into Level 4 sociology students’ experiences of personal tutoring has highlighted the need for a
system that is integrated with wider learning, that both students and staff are invested in. Lack of student engagement is seen as an issue in personal tutoring, however the students we surveyed reported that to fully participate in a personal tutor system they would have to see the benefit to their academic or personal integration. In particular, participants identified a number of issues that were particularly important to them as personal tutees.

For the students surveyed, consistency emerged as something that was highly valued. They were particularly appreciative of staff who were reliable and provided clear expectations and structure. The departmental system was designed so that tutees are usually taught by their personal tutors for at least one seminar, and where this was not the case, lack of familiarity provides a barrier to establishing a successful tutor-tutee relationship. This underlines the importance of tutors being familiar to their tutees; students reported that they were more likely to turn up to meetings with academics they know. The quality and content of the meetings was also of particular importance to students; in our qualitative research findings they emphasised the importance and value of meetings that were useful to their academic development and integration. In order to design and maintain a system that engages students, meetings have to have outcomes that they can see the benefit of, for example a review of feedback, help with referencing etc.

This research into student experiences of personal tutoring has highlighted the benefits of a structured personal tutoring system which supports students’ academic development, the importance of the tutor role, and in turn institutional support, in achieving this.

References


Facilitating the transition to higher education: An exploration of students’ perceptions and experiences.

Claire Hamshire

Abstract
Learning transitions are not simply linear, but an iterative process of ‘becoming’ over time, as students transform and gain new skills, and the initial transition to university can be particularly complex as some students struggle to adapt to new environments and styles of learning. Induction support across MMU varies, therefore to identify best practice this project explored level 3 and 4 students’ perceptions of their early experiences at MMU in the first term of their first year; to gain a greater understanding of the different dimensions of their transitions and further develop induction processes and resources to support them.

The aims of this project were to evaluate newly developed ‘Step-in’ events using an online survey and to explore students’ perceptions and experiences of their first term at MMU via a series of focus groups.

Background
There is a substantial research base, built over the last forty years on student retention and success, and it is noted that the transition to higher education can be difficult for some students as they struggle with both social and academic integration (Harvey et al., 2006). Although attrition can occur at any time, the first year is critically significant and whilst there is no simple formula for easing the transition and therefore retention of a diverse student body, it must be noted that first impressions can directly influence students (Andrew et al., 2008).

The student experience aspect of the MMU Mission states that:

‘we will create an excellent learning environment that places students and their success at the heart of our work; creating
an outstanding, inspiring and sustainable environment for
learning’ (MMU 2012 p8).

Central to this goal is student engagement and as stated by Foster et al. (2012) retention can be considered to be the baseline from which all other engagement begins. Thus the concept of engagement underpins student learning in terms of both retention and persistence (Nelson et al., 2012) and student success and attrition are perceived as a worldwide concern with, on average, 10% of students in the UK leaving higher education in their first year.

Student success in higher education is described by Nelson et al. (2012) as being determined by first year student experience and the initial transition with multiple factors influencing students’ on-going development and transformation during these transitions, with individual experiences varying (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005). For some students it could be an emotional journey, as they manage both academic and social transformation during a time of considerable personal and social adjustment (Case et al., 2010; Yorke et al., 2000), and some could become ‘stuck’ in the liminal phase of the transition which results in an “in-between-ness” or betwixt space (Palmer et al. 2009). Although learning transitions are on-going throughout students’ studies, and difficulties during learning transitions could occur at any time, the literature on student transitions recognised that the first year is critically significant (Scanlon et al., 2007; Yorke, 1999). Hence the process of induction to an institution and gradual building of relationships with both peers and academic staff is important to foster a sense of belonging (Harvey et al., 2006). Programmes that aim to gradually build both academic and social relationships will support students during their time in higher education.

By maximising positive experiences and managing student transition sympathetically, institutions could build positive relationships with new students which Yorke and Longden (2008) consider “bends the odds” towards student success and academic engagement. A programme built around information transfer and not relationship building could confuse and dishearten students and exacerbate their predisposal to withdraw (Edward, 2003). In effect, if an individual student fails to develop a sense of belonging and has a subsequent loss of academic engagement they have a reduced likelihood of successful completion (Barnett, 2007). Students’ feelings of
connectedness to the university and hence their identity of ‘being a student’ have a potential to impact on both their development as learners and ultimately their commitment to studying (Scanlon et al., 2007). The process of induction and building a relationship with students is therefore important and institutions that aim to gradually build both academic and social relationships will support students’ progression, confidence and success - in line with Principle 4 of the MMU Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment (MMU 2014).

Induction support across Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) varies and the findings of an institutional programme self-evaluation exercise undertaken in the 2013/14 academic session identified that only a minority of programme teams worked with current students to develop induction resources. Following this evaluation exercise a project team of staff from across the institution led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students reviewed induction provision and developed a series of ‘Step-in’ events for the 2014/15 academic session.

It is clear that there is no simple formula to increase retention across a diverse student population where attrition is a multi-causal problem that requires a combination of solutions; particularly within a large institution such as MMU. However by evaluating students’ experiences to identify barriers to student success and best institutional practice, realistic steps can be taken to enhance students’ transition into the institution and ultimately retention at MMU.

The aims of this project were:

1. To evaluate student uptake, utilisation and the impact of the newly designed ‘Step-in’ events using an online survey.
2. To determine students’ perceptions and experiences of induction more broadly and identify barriers and facilitators to a successful transition via a series of focus groups.

Methodology
This study explored students’ initial perceptions and experiences, with a focus on both their perceptions of the new ‘Step-in’ activities and induction provision more broadly; using data collection methods that focus on individual experiences. Evaluation of students’ perceptions and experiences was integral to the project, and the
students’ own expressions of their learning experiences were central as only they can articulate their learner experience (JISC 2007). To achieve this the evaluation utilised a mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative data for a comprehensive analysis (Creswell, 2002). This pluralistic approach considered multiple viewpoints and perspectives (Johnson et al 2007), and was the most appropriate for this project as the use of more than one phase of data collection and method allowed a more complete picture of the students’ experiences to be assembled to meet the aims of the study. The main theoretical drive for the study was inductive, with the agenda being one of discovery; therefore the most important elements of the study were the qualitative (Creswell, 2002).

**Online survey at ‘Step-in’ events**
During phase one of the study, level 3 and 4 students’ perceptions of the Step-in activities were collected via an online survey that was made available to them at each of the events. At the ‘open’ events where no prior registration was required and students could circulate freely around a range of activities the online survey was offered to students by student ambassadors who walked around the stands at the events with iPads inviting students to complete it.

At the more structured class-based events a specific time for evaluation was timetabled and the students were given a paper copy of the same survey to complete at the end of the sessions. Each of the events included in this phase along with the method of data collection are detailed in table 1 below:
Table 1 - Step-in events data collection procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Method of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Fun-day</td>
<td>21/8/14</td>
<td>Student ambassadors with iPads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMU Futures Up-cycling</td>
<td>3/9/14</td>
<td>Paper copies of the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-Up literacy event</td>
<td>9/9/14</td>
<td>Paper copies of the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army leadership</td>
<td>11/9/14</td>
<td>Paper copies of the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Sunday</td>
<td>21/9/14</td>
<td>Student ambassadors with iPads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International afternoon</td>
<td>23/9/14</td>
<td>Student ambassadors with iPads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability afternoon</td>
<td>25/9/14</td>
<td>Student ambassadors with iPads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus groups

In phase two of the study, a sample of students who had expressed an interest in attending a focus group and left their contact details when they completed the online questionnaire were invited to one of four focus groups that were undertaken between 17 October and 21 November 2014. Despite repeated emails inviting participation to over 100 students and the offer of a £10 voucher, attendance was limited with a total of 19 students.

The goal in these focus groups was to explore students’ perceptions and experiences of induction and the first few weeks of term. As such, there was no definitive interview schedule or set of questions; instead, students were asked to complete an initial activity by writing comments individually on post-it notes to identify:

- Anything that they had particularly enjoyed/found particularly useful during their initial induction.
- Anything that they had not particularly enjoyed/found particularly useful during their initial induction.
• Suggestions for improvement for future induction sessions.

Findings

Survey

In total, 515 survey responses were collected, detailed in table 2 below:

Table 2 - Number of students completing the survey at the Step-in events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of completions</th>
<th>Estimated number attending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Fun-day</td>
<td>21/8/14</td>
<td>27 (families)</td>
<td>35 (families)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMU Futures Up-cycling</td>
<td>3/9/14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-Up literacy event</td>
<td>9/9/14</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army leadership</td>
<td>11/9/14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Sunday</td>
<td>21/9/14</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International afternoon</td>
<td>23/9/14</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability afternoon</td>
<td>25/9/14</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these new Step-in events that were developed for the 2014/15 academic session was evaluated positively by those students that attended it. These students perceived that the staff were helpful, enjoyed the opportunity for meeting other students at the events and believed that they had become more familiar with the campus. However, there was a recurring theme across the events for potential for improvement around general organisation/management of the events and repeated requests for provision to be expanded to include a wider-rage of activities. Sample comments include:
'It was good to meet other students from different courses and from different years too :)'

'It could probably be improved by adding more activities.'

'More events/ greater variety.'

Focus groups
Each of the focus groups was transcribed verbatim and analysed in relation to the aims of the study. This thematic analysis used a ‘Framework’ approach, as described by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). The initial familiarization stage and analysis identified three sets of key issues:

- **Induction**
- **Teaching and learning**
- **Student support services**

The results of this thematic analysis are presented by detailing the students’ perceptions and experiences of factors that the students considered as both positive and negative influences on their learning.

Induction
The overarching theme of induction included all experiences that the students attributed to their initial induction to the university, including both institutionally wide and programme specific activities. The majority of the group discussions were about programme specific events and the students repeatedly commented on the importance of feeling welcomed by their programme team; other comments related to how pre-entry support could be improved and the importance of having time to become familiar with both campus buildings and staff. There were a number of distinct sub-themes:

- **pre-entry support**
- **Step-in activities**
- **Initial programme induction**

Pre-entry support
A number of students suggested that they would have liked further information about the institution:

‘You need to make students more aware of other facilities we have. Reach out and let us know about societies so we can get more involved - emails, text, phone calls.’
and also about the specific requirements of the programme:

‘Going into University for the first time is a massive transition and for the first week or 2 weeks, you’ve got so much going on in your head, so much - Freshers’ Fair and all the other stuff, and I seriously think that they should have given you the Welcome Pack a month before you turn up to the University, to tell you the textbooks for your course so that you could buy them before you get here so you know what to expect.’

Opportunities for connecting with other students who were studying on the same programme where also considered important by several students, a sample comment being:

‘Put on something before Freshers’ Week so you can get to know someone if you’re commuting and you don’t know anyone.’

**Step-in activities**

During the discussions of the Freshers’ week and Step-in activities the groups expressed a preference for events that provided both informal group interactions and practical orientation to the university:

‘It was really good, the tours that were organised by the University [on Welcome Sunday]; we did the bus tour and the walking tour. It introduced you into the University and I think that’s a good way for students to get to know where everything is; a good way to look around and familiarise yourself with the city.’

‘If you came in and the first day that’s it, you’ve got to go to your lecture or to a tutorial, most of us would be “where on earth am I going” because of the transitional aspect. I think its so much better we had the Freshers’ Fair and Freshers’ Week because there are activities and then around that time you can meet people, start making friends and socialise.’

However, a number of the students had been unaware of the activities that were offered:

‘I didn’t know there was a Welcome Sunday? It didn’t say anything about going.’
‘I don’t think enough was said about Welcome Sunday, there could have been posters put up or something in the houses as we didn’t know anything about them. I didn’t get a text message or anything.’

**Initial programme induction**
Across all of the focus groups the students identified the importance of what they considered to be engaging learning experiences in the first few weeks of term. These discussions were wide-ranging and prolonged but the majority expressed a preference for small group sessions with activities that encouraged student interaction:

‘We had like a brunch before a lecture - kind of like, lets have some food before a lecture and get to know each other. That’s how I got to know everyone on my course; I got to know everyone and then later on, because there aren’t that many people, it turned into a seminar-lecture and then we got to do group work together.’

‘My induction was really good. We got to meet everyone and had brief PowerPoint presentations on each unit and then we were set an activity where we had to go out in small groups around Manchester finding places, it was really good.’

However, other students perceived that some of their initial learning experiences had not met their expectations:

‘You hear the same thing over and over and over; it was pointless. All you had to do was pick a day and every tutor from every module comes to that day and then just tell us, “OK, go to Moodle, do this, do that”. They should just tell us a bit about what we would be doing and that’s it, not take a whole week and tell us about the same thing over and over again.’

Choice of venue for these sessions was also perceived as important; with a number of students commenting negatively on the use of large lecture theatres:

‘My induction was horrible. We were in the Business School in one of the big lectures, it was the Tuesday of Induction Week and as I walked in it was just full. I’ve never seen so many people in one place; I was petrified. So it has been quite hard to make friends on my course. I think everyone found it the
same, because there were so many people and for the first
week it was just lectures so everyone was just sitting with
random people and it was a bit weird. You just want to turn
around and leave, I was petrified, it was horrible.’

**Learning and Teaching**

The theme of teaching and learning included all learning experiences
that students attributed to occasions when they engaged with their
university and inherent throughout this theme was the concept of
student support. The students talked in depth about the support that
they received, how welcome they felt, programme
organisation/management and how this had aligned (or not) with their
expectations. There were a number of distinct sub-themes:

- Lectures and seminars
- Programme organisation
- Moodle/online resources
- Personal tutor support

**Lectures and Seminars**

The perceived quality of the lectures and seminars were an on-going
topic of discussion across the focus groups. Some of the students
were very positive about their lectures:

‘We’re in a big group but I just like the lectures. They get
everything in there and they engage you. It’s just the way I like
lecturers, they’re really nice and they ask us questions and
then we get to talk or we just talk and go over things.’

‘There’s a teacher who’s good. Even in the lecture, he does
group activities; every row does something that makes it more
fun and enjoyable.’

However, other students were particularly critical of the delivery of
their lectures, and those that were 2 or 3 hours long were particularly
noted as being poor:

‘I’ve got 2 hour lectures but after 10 or 15 minutes you can’t
keep up with what they’re actually saying so you just end up
switching off. They’ll give you a 10 minute break after an hour
and 50/60% of the people who were there in the first hour don’t
actually come back.’
'I don't even have a break [in the 2 hour lecture]. It's just literally 4 till 6 and you don't get a break or anything. They're the hard ones, that's when everyone falls asleep and people leave and stuff like that. I think that on Monday hardly anyone came to our lecture 4 till 6 because they've got a really bad perception of it from the previous ones. I think they're too long, because after an hour everyone switches off.'

Programme organisation

Programme organisation and management was also repeatedly raised as an issue, with programme timetables a particular focus of discussions:

'They really need to have a think about how to structure the timetables better. I know there's a load of students and there must be a lot of logistics involved but there must be a way round it surely.'

'My timetable was wrong until like last week. Nobody would help me with it, I was crying and I went to one of the [Student Hub] offices but they didn't know what to do. Nobody would talk to me face to face, they would only talk on the phone. I thought “no-one’s going to fix it until I actually see someone”.'

In addition, the students who were using online registration were particularly critical of the system, talking at length about the negative impact on their experiences: there were no positive comments:

'I tried to register for one of my lectures yesterday and I couldn’t because it’d crashed again. When it was going again I couldn’t register for it because it was past the 90 minute deadline so now it looks like I haven’t even been there; so now my registration’s probably gone down a bit because of that.'

'It worked for me, I managed to sign in for everything but it took 5 minutes. There should be a different system, going on your phone is just not – it takes too long, sometimes you’re sat in a lecture theatre trying to sign in and it’ll just take ages until about 20 minutes into the lecture.'

A number of the students within the focus groups also had placements within their programme and were concerned about the organisation and management of these:
'I was going to go out last week but still nothing. We were supposed to go [to placement] every Tuesday but there’s still about a hundred of us who haven’t been placed. They’ve said they’re trying their best and I’ve tried to get hold of placements but you can’t just go and speak to them you have to ring them and that’s so annoying.

Moodle/online resources
There were both positive and negative comments on Moodle and associated online resources. The negative comments were mostly from students who had no previous experience of the system who believed that their programme team had not adequately explained how to access the system:

‘I seriously think, because this is the first time I’ve experienced Moodle and I’ve had problems with it for the last week and a half that there should be some sort of workshop. It was difficult because I came from college and we had a totally different system; when I came to University and they gave us Moodle, I didn’t have a clue. I hate it. I really do. They just expect you to know it. I’d say probably 50% of people know Moodle but the other 50%, me included, don’t know it.’

Students already familiar with the system were much more positive:

‘I know Moodle from my previous place. This is a different style of Moodle but in general it’s the same. I think Moodle is a good thing and the professors provide reading lists and all that stuff.’

‘Everything that we do in the lectures or tutorials, it’s all on Moodle so if I missed one, it’s just there. It’s exactly the same thing, whatever’s on the lectures, but the week after the week we do it.’

The MMU App was also identified as useful:

‘The MMU App’s really useful – I always forget what room I’m in so I check on the way in and that’s what I use it for most. I’ve got a journal I’ve written in but it’s really useful to just have it on my phone so I can see.’

‘It’s in the morning [on the way to university] and you just open it up [the App] and it’s there; all mapped in the timetable.’
Personal tutor support

There was considerable discussion about programme specific one-to-one support by staff designated as personal tutors. The role of the personal tutor appeared to be pivotal as those students who believed that they had a supportive personal tutor generally perceived their institution as supportive:

'I see mine once a week and we e-mail as well so if we've got any problems we just get back to him.'

'We've got just the one Personal Tutor but there are student support people in the building, who've said we can go to them if we've got any issues.'

On the contrary, those students that had not met their personal tutor perceived a lack of support from their programme team overall:

'I know with my course especially, we don't have enough contact with our Personal Tutor. I've seen her once since the start of term and they're meant to be there to provide support but we don't know how we can contact them.'

'It seems strange, they're supposed to be your Personal Tutor and yet you've seen them once and then that's it.'

Support services

The theme of support services included all comments that the students made regarding MMU facilities that were independent of direct teaching and learning. All of the focus groups discussed MMU support services in depth and reflected on how these had aligned with their expectations. The students detailed occasions when the available support had both corresponded with and diverged from their expectations. There were a number of distinct sub-themes:

- Student support services/hub
- Library
- Students’ Union
- Halls of residence

Student support services/hub

The theme of student support included all experiences that the students attributed to occasions when they had contacted student
support services either online or through the hub. Each group discussed support services in depth and the majority were positive about their contact:

‘I’ve spoken to the Student Hub about jobs and they were helpful in that they redirected me to the International support student officer and she helped me with the job aspect about what I need to do to get a job. They were professional and helpful.’

‘Learning support were really good. That whole desk is really good, the people there are straight on it, they know what they’re doing; checking over things I’m writing, double checking that I’ve got it right.’

One student praised the Student Support Officers that worked with her programme team:

‘Our Student Support Officers come to our seminars and help with the seminars so their faces are constantly there. So we know who they are and its constantly reinforced with us that they’re there to help. And they e-mail us when there’s things going on, so they are quite helpful. More helpful than anybody else I’ve encountered so far to be honest.’

However, some students had experiences that fell below their expectations and these students spoke at length about how they had struggled to get help at times:

‘Your Hub is the first port of call and I went to the Hub but they wouldn’t help me.’

‘You do want to speak to someone but you’re told to e-mail. But by the time, if it’s a pressing issue, you don’t want to sit there waiting for the e-mail. You’d rather speak to someone and get it sorted out.’

**Library**

Overall the students were positive about the on campus library services and social study spaces:

‘I think it’s really good because of the opening hours of the library. I spend a lot of time in the library after my lectures
because if would go home I know I’d just be lazy; so I go straight to the library.’

‘The library is good. 24/7 opening times is great and the staff are helpful. There’s a good book choice there and the laptop loaning system is quite helpful as well. If you don’t feel like going in the designated computer area, you can just go and sit in a corner, relax with your books, get a laptop out and return it at the end. That’s pretty useful.’

The availability of e-books was also praised by the students that used them:

‘The library’s got the option for some of the books for e-books, and they need to do that for all of them. It makes it so much easier when you’re at home doing your work, you can just go and read it rather than having to book out a book.’

However, a number of the students commented on the difficulties of finding a space to study in the All Saints library, and the limited availability of text books:

‘Everywhere gets full really quickly. There is like 30,000 students so I can see why it gets full pretty quickly and there needs to be more books in the library.’

‘There’s only 40 books (for my programme) and there’s more than 500 students so it doesn’t make sense and we have to give the book back within 5 days.’

**Students’ Union**

Understandably the students were disappointed that the opening of the new Students’ Union building had been delayed by several months:

‘Students Union keep on telling you “its coming on, its coming on” and it’s still not. They had the closing down thing the other week for the old Student Union; but two weeks later, nothing’s changed, they’re still in the old Union. Inside, there’s still plastic on things and builders walking around.’

‘When’s the new Union going to be finished. I’m sure it was meant to be finished in September. You can see when you walk past it, it doesn’t look anywhere near done.’
A couple of the students were also dissatisfied with the number of societies that were available:

‘There’s not actually that many societies. Manchester Uni have thousands and there wasn’t much to choose from.’

‘There should be societies for things – I’m happy to pay. Some of them are free societies that you just turn up but there’s not much information about them.’

On a more positive note one student who had engaged with the Students’ Union support team praised the help that she had received from the team:

‘The advisers with the Students Union are really good. I’ve been fighting with the finance office for over 6 weeks trying to get my support package and I think I got further in 20 minutes with the Union than I had in 6 weeks with the finance office. They just keep fobbing me off back to Student Finance and they tell me it’s the Uni’s responsibility; I just ended up getting nowhere. She gave me a new number to phone at Student Finance and put me in touch with the woman in charge of the Bursaries and it’s been sorted in days where it’s taken nearly 6 or 7 weeks.’

**Halls of Residence**

Across the focus groups the majority of students lived in Halls of Residence; most of these students were in MMU Halls but there were also a couple of students in Private Halls. Overall they were positive about their first term experiences and the information and support that were available:

‘Out of all the accommodation that I’ve heard from other Halls, I think I’ve got the best one. I’ve had very little problems to say about the accommodation.’

‘Reception at Cambridge Halls is brilliant. They collect your post and sort any issues out. It’s really good. 24 hours - the number for reception that’s really good as well, especially early in the morning, if you need anything.’

‘The Halls are quite nice; all my needs are seen to. The staff are friendly there and I’m getting the support package as well from the University and that’s been put through pretty well.’
The staff have been helpful with that so that should ease my costs. Support’s been really good for moving into University accommodation if I have had questions, I’ve gone to the Student Hub, they’ve been answered. So, it’s pretty good; going well so far.’

However, several of the students would have liked to have had more information about the location of their rooms before they arrived in September so they could have connected online with the other students sharing their accommodation before then:

‘When you send your deposit for Halls, you get told what Halls you’re in; like “you’re in Cambridge”, but that’s it. They didn’t say what flat or what room. If they’d tell us what flat, even just the floor, would be good.’

‘How come we don’t know until the day?’

‘I called them and they said “you’ll know everything on the day”.’

‘We didn’t know what flats we were in with whom until we got there. If we’d have known that beforehand, we could have spoken to our flat mates and maybe got to know them a bit before instead of being thrown together. If we’d have known them beforehand, it would have been much easier and a lot less awkward.’

In summary, all of the students who participated in the focus groups were positive about their initial experiences at MMU, even though there were aspects that they believed could be improved. As a final question, at the end of each group the students were asked if they would recommend studying at MMU to others, based on their experiences and all of the students agreed that they would, summed up by the sample comment below:

‘It’s a brilliant place to learn and a brilliant place to study in a wonderful city. A really good, multinational city with lots of things to do. What you learn, dependent on the course, is second to none in my opinion. You can see that the University has got support networks if you’re getting in trouble. You can see that they care about you after you graduate because there’s these services where you can still be logged on to Jobs
4 Students for a year or 2 years after you graduate so they’re still helping you. You’ve got the Employability Hub and student counsellors or the student officers. I would definitely recommend MMU.’

**Conclusions and recommendations**

This project utilised a blend of methodologies to explore in depth the perceptions and experiences of the 2014/15 students in the first term of their first year with the purpose of identifying the most appropriate induction provision. The study focused on the students’ own viewpoints and impressions, and the data collected indicated that there was a multitude of factors that influenced student transitions and their learning experiences in the first term.

The key findings were that these students viewed their transition and induction period as a series of opportunities to connect with the institution, university staff and their peers and that positive, successful relationships are necessary to facilitate this transition. The feedback from the students who completed the surveys at the Step-in events indicated that they valued opportunities to connect with both staff and their peers and that they would welcome further provision. The students’ comments in the focus groups were positive overall and centred on their experiences of induction, learning and teaching and support services. However there were recurrent themes around lectures that were overlong/uninteresting and programme organisation and management as well as occasions when service provision did not meet expectations.

In general, the students’ perception was that their induction and transition started with their initial contact with the University whether this was via an open day, Step-in event or timetabled session and any negative encounters along their journey had a significant impact (for example, poor organisation of events or unhelpful staff). Positive relationships with both staff and their peers were therefore crucial and induction programmes need to facilitate these relationships in order to encourage student engagement.

Unfortunately, the impact of specific demographic factors within the study is unclear, as the small numbers within some of the age/gender categories made it impossible to identify if demographic factors had
significantly influenced the student perceptions and experiences. However, the needs of a diverse student population necessitate the provision of induction resources made available in a variety of different formats and programme teams are encouraged to consider the use of current students as partners for the development of induction resources.

This project was small scale and further studies are necessary with larger samples in order to increase the generalisability of the findings and investigate if these findings are supported by students across the institution. In particular a longitudinal study that explored how students’ experiences and perceptions changed as they progressed through their three year degree programme would offer insight into how learning resources can be best provided to meet changing student need during their programme. However, based on the findings of this study recommendations for further investigation are:

- Reviewing the Step-in and institutional induction programme of events to ensure that the marketing strategy is appropriate and that the provision is adequate to meet the needs of a diverse student population.
- Reconsidering if the practice of timetabling 2 or 3 hour lectures is an appropriate learning and teaching strategy.
- Setting realistic expectations around timetabling, attendance monitoring, Moodle provision, Personal Tutor support, Library and placements so students aware of the rationale behind timetabling decisions and what provision is available to support their learning.
- Reviewing wifi provision both on campus and within the Halls of Residence.

References


FLEX to evidence Good Standing

Chrissi Nerantzi and Kath Botham

Introduction
At MMU the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) operates an institutional Professional Standards Framework scheme (MMU PSF) accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) for all categories of HEA Fellowship. The MMU PSF scheme is aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF), (HEA, 2011) and provides an internal scheme to support colleagues in achieving HEA Fellowship. This scheme offers both programme based routes and individual routes to achieve fellowship.

From November 2014 until July 2015, MMU participated in a pilot project with nine other higher education institutions to explore possible mechanisms for ‘Remaining in Good Standing’. “A person is said to be in good standing if they have fulfilled their obligations. It's the responsibility of individuals to ensure they continue to work in line with their relevant Fellow descriptor standard” (HEA, 2015).

It is therefore important to identify effective ways to evidence Good Standing of the staff who teach or support learning across the institution and to increase engagement in academic CPD, in order to enhance standards of professional practice and the student experience. This was the main driver for participating in the Pilot Project: ‘Strategic Enhancement Programme Career Progression and Staff Transitions’.

The engagement in this HEA pilot was a continuation of MMU’s engagement with the HEA Change Academy in 2013/14. This investigated mechanisms and the potential of reward and recognition of teaching in career progression. The pilot also built on the Framework for Academic Quality and Practice – an HR led University-wide project that has four elements: Induction and
probation, Academic CPD and Research Training, Peer Review and Observation, and Management Review of teaching.

This project’s findings will be shared with key stakeholders to identify opportunities for wider implementation across the institution.

This paper explains how FLEX, a practice-based CPD programme has been used to pilot Good Standing.

FLEX: a developmental CPD programme
As well as the accredited PSF scheme, in operation since September 2013, a developmental FLEX CPD programme has also operated since January 2014. FLEX is a practice-based scheme and includes the option of formal (credit bearing) or informal (non-credit bearing) pathways for engagement in academic CPD. It provides a mechanism to evidence CPD via an online academic portfolio. Internal and external offers, organised and practice-based CPD can be incorporated into the online portfolio. CPD activities are selected by participants using a pick ‘n’ mix approach. An overview of FLEX and how it relates to other provision can be found in Figure 1. An annual FLEX Award (an open badge) has also been created as a means of recognition for ongoing engagement with peer-reviewed CPD. Open badges are digital stickers with metadata that can be used in a variety of ways to evidence, for example, belonging to a community. They represent a memento, an expression of playfulness as well as engagement, and achievement beyond academic credits (Nerantzi, 2015b).
There is currently a lack of evidence that such incentives can increase engagement with CPD (Crawford, 2009). However, King (2004) notes that recognition for formal and informal CPD can be important. It is an ongoing challenge to encourage academics to regularly engage in CPD. Initial professional development or professional recognition is often compulsory but maintaining continuing engagement with CPD and reflective practice can be inconsistent after this point. King (2004) recognises that engagement with CPD might be required for a professional body but that it can also be self-driven. The requirement for Good Standing when eventually articulated will in itself act as a stimulus for engagement with CPD and reflective practice. The FLEX Award recognises the value of informal or non-formal engagement in CPD and enables personal, focussed CPD opportunities as well as creating a bridge to professional recognition and academic credits.

The purpose behind FLEX is to create a mechanism that will enable each member of staff to develop their own bespoke Academic CPD portfolio to evidence and support their personal career development, and bring together their teaching and research interests and discipline contexts. Siemens (2006, 47) notes, that “Learning is continual. It is not an activity that occurs outside of our daily lives.” We see that this also applies to professional development as we get the most out of it when it is ongoing and embedded in practice. The portfolio is populated with a series of FLEX activities that form critical
reflective accounts of practice and related formal or informal CPD activities. These are carried out to enhance a specific aspect of teaching or supporting learning and evidence a commitment to action to achieve development in practice. Furthermore, colleagues are encouraged to use their portfolio regularly in order to develop reflective habits and become genuinely reflective practitioners.

Stefani (2005) talks about using teaching portfolios for ongoing CPD and modelling reflective practice. The use of digital portfolios that can be shared is also important because it creates opportunities for professional dialogue and conversations. Such conversations are a valuable tool to support personal and professional development and have the potential to bring renewal and growth to that development. Palmer (2007) states “If I want to teach well, it is essential that I explore my inner terrain. But I can get lost in there, practicing self-delusion and running in self-serving circles. So I need the guidance that a community of collegial discourse provides – to say nothing of the support such as a community can offer to sustain me in the trials of teaching and the cumulative and collective wisdom about this craft that can be found in every faculty worth its salt.” (p146)

The programme team are exploring ways to refine the approach and integrate the range of FLEX provision more overtly within the MMU PSF as accredited units leading to recognition at D1 (leading to Associate Fellowship of the HEA and D2 (leading to Fellowship of the HEA), together with providing a resource to provide ongoing evidence for ‘Good Standing’ within the UK PSF. The HEA sponsored project described earlier enables us to pilot the use of an online portfolio linked to the UK PSF as a method of demonstrating good-standing.

FLEX is an Open Educational Resource (OER) available under a creative commons licence and could potentially become a CPD resource available to other Higher Education Providers to adapt in their own context. The team are very interested in developing this concept further and working in collaboration with other institutions to achieve this.
Why pilot?
We were interested in participating in a pilot for Good Standing as a way of testing the use of online portfolio as a tool to support ongoing CPD and reflective practice. We were already considering it as a method of evidencing the engagement with CPD necessary for HEA good-standing. Participating in the pilot would also enable us to: work closer with the HEA; connect and collaborate with other institutions, sharing practices, ideas and dilemmas; and also connect with colleagues and departments and professional services internally, especially where there are lower levels of engagement with academic CPD.

We hope to develop our knowledge and understanding linked to Good Standing as a means of ensuring that the MMU Framework for Academic Enhancement and Practice becomes embedded in individuals’ career development, and of exploring the potential to use a portfolio as a mechanism to evidence this. As a large institution we also needed to consider it as a method of building capacity in readiness for an institution-wide implementation of ‘Good Standing’ and identify if this is an effective mechanism to achieve this.

Through the MMU PSF Framework, staff who teach or support learning at MMU are able to gain professional recognition through HEA Fellowship. The scheme is positively received and the process has been shown to encourage reflection on practice and build academic staff confidence in their practice. We would therefore like to explore ways to further develop successful academics as reflective practitioners and extend engagement in academic CPD beyond the initial engagement with the professional recognition route. This would also develop integrated provision that would frame the MMU PSF as also providing developmental and aspirational opportunities, embedded in academic practice that will assist the ongoing development of academics teaching practices.

Approach
An action research approach was used as it gave us the flexibility to continually evaluate with participants in this pilot the process of developing the portfolios, capture the ‘Good Standing’ accounts as well as respond to feedback and challenges as they were experienced and make changes were needed while the pilot was live.
This meant that we would get the maximum out of the pilot together with our participants. Using an action research approach also enabled the pilot team to have a voice in this study and participate in the reflective process.

Participants

Five participants initially expressed an interest in engaging in the pilot study: three academics who completed the PGCAP at MMU within the previous 2-3 years and gained Fellowship of the HEA, and two Academic Developers from the Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) who are Senior Fellows of the HEA and Fellows of the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA).

The participants from outside CELT were from different disciplines. Two had used portfolios before and used existing portfolios during this pilot, while the remaining three had set-up new portfolios using Wordpress. Participants were initially split into two groups of three and two and each group was supported by a member of the project team. Only three participants engaged in the process to its conclusion (one PGCAP graduate and Two Academic Developers), therefore only one peer group was eventually required.

Timeline of activities

- 2 February 2015 first meeting with participants to introduce the project
- 1-15 February 2015 participants supported in setting-up their portfolios and familiarising themselves with the digital space
- 16-28 February 2015 capturing the first draft FLEX activity in the portfolio – engagement with this this stage was a little variable
- 9 March 2015 a second meeting was organised to discuss the FLEX activity and reach consensus about how to progress which only the CELT SFHEAs were able to attend. It was agreed that the Good Standing account would take the form of either one FLEX activity or a summary page that gave the overview of 5 Flex activities and this would be captured in the portfolio.
- 17 April 2015 deadline to complete the Good Standing account.
18 April until 24 May 2015 participants share Good Standing account with pilot buddy(ies) and engage in a professional conversation around the shared accounts. The group could decide on the format of this conversation i.e F2F (face to face), Virtual etc.

15 May pilot team attends Progress meeting at the Open University, pilot participants are invited.

A final meeting to bring the pilot to a close took place on the 20th of October 2015.

In total three portfolios with Good Standing records were received. These were peer reviewed and the pilot was brought to a close via a reflective conversation about the process and its value. The conversation has been summarised below.

**Progress report**

**1st meeting: Getting started**

Three pilot participants attended the introductory meeting where ideas on the proposed approach were shared and discussed. A template Wordpress portfolio was accessed at https://mmupsfflex.wordpress.com where guidelines for demonstrating Good Standing had been included, based around the FLEX approach of creating five CPD activities which were aligned to the Areas of Activities of the UK PSF. It was agreed that for the Good Standing requirements each of the five FLEX activities would be around 200-300 words There was also the potential to also use this portfolio to study towards the Accredited Flex Provision (30 level 7 Credits) and this process was explained. One participant expressed an interest in gaining academic credits.

The pilot team faced a number of challenges when planning for this meeting. These were mainly linked to the lack of a current clear definition of Good Standing and how this links or doesn’t link to the appropriate category Descriptors (D1-D4) of the UK PSF. The team are still unclear whether the HEA will require that Good Standing to be evidenced in respect of a specific Descriptor or whether it will be more loosely linked to general engagement with the UK PSF. The team also discussed the necessary length of the Good Standing account and it was agreed that the word length set out above would
be appropriate as a starting suggestion. More guidance will be required from the HEA when the Good Standing requirements are finalised.

During that first meeting it was agreed to create the portfolio where applicable, and to capture the first FLEX activity in the portfolio. This would then be discussed during the 2nd meeting.

**2nd meeting: Shift in approach**

Two pilot participants (SFHEAs) attended this meeting where their draft Good Standing account was discussed. Both had made a start with capturing their reflective accounts in their portfolios. The three further pilot participants were unable to attend this meeting. This will need following up by the project team as a matter of urgency.

During the meeting, it was agreed that the initial plan of completing all 5 required FLEX activities linked to the 5 Areas of Activities was too extensive and was too onerous for a Good Standing account. It was agreed that one FLEX activity, typically of about 1000-1500 words, would become the Good Standing record together with appended evidence of engagement with CPD. The Good Standing record could be in the form of a case study, a critical incident or reflection on the learning from a range of CPD activities.

Colleagues who wished to gain FLEX credits could then continue working on four further activities and submit their portfolio to gain up to 30 credits at postgraduate level for the PG or the MA in Academic Practice. An alternative approach would be to complete the 5 Flex activities and create an overview summary that became the good standing account and the five Flex activities were the evidence to support the engagement with CPD. This was the preferred option for the two SFHEAs where the five sections did not align as easily with the D3: Descriptors

The template portfolio therefore was simplified to reflect the outcome of this meeting. See [https://mmupsfflex.wordpress.com/guidance/guidance-for-remaining-in-good-standing/](https://mmupsfflex.wordpress.com/guidance/guidance-for-remaining-in-good-standing/) - the original guidelines are still there, together with the new ones, which are at the top of the page.

**3rd meeting: All coming together now**

The final review meeting took place on the 20 October 2015. Two of the three study participants who had fully engaged with the process
were present and the third provided responses to the key questions via email. The main questions asked related to the following:

- Usefulness of the Wordpress portfolio as a method of capturing evidence and reflection relation to prof CPD – linking to good standing
- Barriers to using this format (technological/personal etc)
- Thoughts in relation to moving forward – future use /as a learning tool etc.

**Useful for evidencing Good Standing**

Study participants were in agreement that they found the portfolio a useful space to capture their development and are considering continuing using it in their professional capacity to record activities and achievements for evidencing Good Standing. Participants were also considering expanding the content of the portfolio and using it for other purposes such as the showcasing of activities, research and achievements. All three participants also had to provide evidence of good standing for other professional bodies and were suggesting that the portfolio could be double badged and used to provide evidence for other professional bodies’ good standing requirements.

**Reflective habits**

The value of the portfolio in developing and supporting reflective practice and reflective habits was highlighted together with its value in creating action plans that can encourage an academic to implement changes and developments to their own practice. One study participant spoke about using the portfolio as an “organic exercise” to track progress and development annually.

**Sharing**

The sharing aspect of such a portfolio was discussed and the benefits of being able to create public and private sections of the portfolio was deemed to be important. It enabled personal reflections that could remain confidential and not seen by colleagues or students unless the academic who ‘owns’ the portfolio wished to share it and engage in dialogue. It was agreed therefore that there should be the opportunity to have a public portfolio with private or password protected sections which would contain more confidential information.
Engagement in dialogue and sharing of the portfolios within the group had not really occurred and study participants felt that they were unsure how to comment on each other’s portfolio; they would have preferred initially to receive feedback from the pilot organisers. They suggested that more guidelines indicating the purpose of and the best mechanisms to provide feedback to peers may have encouraged them to engage with this more readily.

**Technological challenge**

Overall, Wordpress as a tool was seen to be useful and flexible. None of the study participants had used it before and found that the tool itself presented a real challenge to engage. One participant noted “If an easy online portfolio is available it would be a better option.” It was acknowledged that supporting colleagues to get started with the portfolio system was time consuming. The tool itself was seen as the biggest barrier. Therefore, clear portfolio building guidelines, sample templates but also information around being a professional when using social media and how peer review portfolios were highlighted as important to better support colleagues in this process.

**Format of recording Good Standing**

The suggested format was to use the FLEX activities template linked to the Areas of Activity of the UK PSF. One of the study participants found this restrictive and moved towards capturing their Good Standing Record on one page using the overall questions provided as guidelines. After discussion with the other study participant who was present at the meeting it was concluded that recording Good Standing on one page would streamline the process and also provide a clearer filing structure in the portfolio. This method would be flexible to cover the different categories of Fellowship and it has been proposed that a portfolio will form the core method of submission of an application within the re-accredited MMU PSF scheme due to commence in September 2016. This would enable colleagues to submit their initial recognition application via a portfolio – the structure of this varying depending on the category of Fellowship – and then develop an additional page in the same portfolio to demonstrate good standing in subsequent years.
What we learnt and the way forward
This pilot project enabled us to experience first-hand how colleagues experienced collecting evidence for Good Standing using a digital portfolio. We found it challenging to identify sufficient colleagues who had completed their teaching qualification or gained professional recognition in the last 3 years and were willing to participate in the pilot study. In the end, we did work with three colleagues who all set-up their academic portfolio and engaged in a meaningful way with the process.

The focus group organised at the end of the pilot was useful and we discussed challenges created, benefits and ideas to move forward so that the inclusion of a FLEX based portfolio could be developed further within the forthcoming re accreditation of the MMU PSF scheme (Spring/Summer 2016).

Specific outcomes are the following:

Mini course
We plan to develop a mini course that will enable colleagues to develop their understanding, knowledge and capacity in using digital portfolios as spaces for reflection and collecting evidence of CPD. This will also be useful as a resource for applicants engaging with the planned re-accredited MMU PSF scheme. The suggested format of the course will be in three parts:

- Developing reflection, reflective practice and reflective writing
- Portfolio-based development, use of professional dialogue and peer reviewing portfolios as well as support with developing competence in the technicalities of using an online portfolio.
- Engagement with the UK PSF from the outset

It will be important to work with Learning Technologists in the faculties on this proposed mini course, especially for setting up portfolios, and to explore alternative portfolio building tools and platforms.

Sample portfolio
We need to rethink our approach to what is included in the existing sample PSF portfolio, its structure and possible layouts so that this
space becomes of real help to colleagues. We will need to perhaps consider alternative formats and samples for each level of Fellowship. Exploring alternative, freely available portfolio platforms will be valuable, in collaboration with learning technologists in the faculties.

**Format of recording Good Standing**

Simplifying the current format and moving away from the good standing report being formatted on 5 FLEX activities is essential. We propose that one page in the portfolio will form the Good Standing account enabling the whole account to be presented together and to provide a quick overview of activities. Mapping to the UK PSF will also be important.

**Final note**

We are currently reviewing our MMU PSF scheme and this pilot provided a useful starting point. It has informed our plans and how to move forward, both to create a stronger scheme and to support colleagues effectively in their professional development process.

**Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank pilot participants for their input and feedback as well as Dr Charles Neame for his advice and suggestions on finalising this article for publication.

**Further resources and related outputs**

FLEX site at [http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/flex/index.php](http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/flex/index.php)


References


A Personal Reflection on the use of Microteaching in Creative Disciplines

Kate Dunstone

Abstract

As part of 2015’s Unit X Educator project, in which students at MMU explore arts education through placements and teaching workshops, students were required to deliver a microteaching session to a group of their peers. I observed the session and supported unit tutors in offering feedback to students. Coincidentally, the student microteaching session took place in the run up to delivery of my own microteaching session as part of the Teaching and Learning Essentials (TALE) course offered by CELT, which I was studying at the time. This paper examines how my role as observer, in Unit X, and participant, in TALE, allowed me to reflect on the benefits of microteaching for staff and students, as a method for teaching and learning, and professional development.

Unit X is a cross-faculty, interdisciplinary undergraduate unit undertaken by level 4, 5 and 6 students across Manchester School of Art. Launched across level 4 courses in 2011/2012 it has since become compulsory for all level 4 and Department of Design students, and is an option in levels 5 and 6 for the Departments of Media and Art.

Level 5 students select one of four ‘colleges’ to attend, led by teaching staff across the School of Art, reflecting their interests as practitioners. College One: Educator, is a college option focused on experience of art and design in educational settings. Led by the School of Art’s Outreach Support Tutor and external outreach staff the college draws on training and support offered to School of Art Outreach Ambassadors, a team of current students trained to support in the delivery of the School’s outreach program, to develop knowledge of lesson planning, behaviour management and learning styles. This knowledge is then applied by Unit X students in work experience placements at schools and organisations across Manchester.
My role within Unit X, as Research and Evaluation Intern, required me to undertake a series of case studies highlighting the challenges and benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration for students and staff. These case studies included an evaluation of College One: Educator, through which I attended teaching sessions and conducted interviews with staff and students.

During teaching sessions, led by faculty Outreach Manager Clare Knox-Bentham and Outreach Tutor Anna Frew, level 5 students in the Educator college were required to prepare a ten minute microteaching lesson based on a subject of their choosing, delivered to peers and tutors, with feedback given through anonymous evaluation sheets.

Figure 1 Students take part in a peer’s microteaching session

Alongside my role within Unit X I have taken part in a variety of staff development programmes within CELT. After attending CELT’s Greenhouse sessions, monthly sessions during which staff from across the university meet and share innovative ideas for learning and teaching, I took part in the Teaching and Learning Essentials (TALE) course, which included sessions focused on microteaching as a tool for developing practice.

The delivery of these microteaching sessions coincided with my observation of microteaching as a learning tool within Unit X, providing me with an opportunity to consider microteaching as a tool for learning, teaching and staff development.
For Unit X students the inclusion of microteaching in a unit focused on arts education offered an opportunity for them to test out teaching delivery in a supportive environment before they were required to present to a public audience. It also gave them a chance to reflect on each other’s delivery and resources. Below are two examples of student feedback submitted as part of their reflective blogs.

‘During this session I learnt a lot of things about hosting a teaching session. This session didn’t go exactly as I had planned it… I definitely feel as though if I prepared a little more the outcome would have been … better.’

‘I was pleased with my workshop even though we did run out of time… but I did get some good feedback… All these comments will really help me with the planning for the [upcoming work placement] and will help influence other people as well.’

However, as Ralph (2014) demonstrates, microteaching also has its disadvantages within teaching. Apparent among students taking part was the stress of presenting to peers, which may have distracted them from technical aspects of session delivery. The requirement that ‘all participants buy-in’ (Ralph, 2014) also presented problems for some groups, where peers were less enthusiastic or more nervous about taking part. However, both these disadvantages could be addressed using a technique I observed in the TALE course: the implementation of ground rules for microteaching sessions (see Figure 2 below).

Overall I felt that the controlled setting and potential for self-reflection provided by the Unit X microteaching sessions were beneficial to students preparing for their first experience of classroom teaching. Peer evaluation sheets allowed participants to gather ‘in the moment’ feedback on their performance, which they could act on straightaway. Observing peers’ teaching styles heightened their sense of reflection, asking themselves, ‘is that how I’d approach that?’ or ‘do I respond in that way?’

Similarly, the peer assessment aspect of delivering microteaching sessions within TALE was the most valuable aspect of that course, highlighting examples of good and poor practice I had not been aware of. For example, I discovered the need to pay closer attention to inclusive practice, such as facing students when speaking to aid
with lip reading, and ensuring visual resources are clear and appropriate for dyslexic learners. Applying these techniques in subsequent lessons I have been able to embed inclusive practice in lesson plans and develop a more inclusive classroom environment.

Figure 2 Suggestions for microteaching ground rules at the TALE Microteaching session

Attending the Unit X session, and observing how students reacted to their first solo teaching experience, was also valuable in shining a light on my own practice, and highlighting what I’m getting right as well as wrong. I was pleased to reflect on how much my confidence has increased in delivery, allowing me to improvise more in sessions, read the room and respond more directly to the requirements of student groups, and deliver to a wider variety of groups, as well as making my sessions more enjoyable for myself and participants.

However, I also reflected on things I’m less successful at. My background delivering informal sessions means I rarely consider concrete learning outcomes, and even more rarely communicate these during sessions. This was shared by participants in the Educator session, who showed a general vagueness and confusion between learning outcomes and learning activities. With this in mind, in defining learning outcomes for my own microteaching I have found it useful to follow the advice that each outcome should be able to be ‘preced[ed] with something like “Students will be able to…”’ (Iowa
State University, 2015), as well as MMU’s own guidance on using a structure of ‘what the student will do… in which context… how well s/he will do it’ (CELT, 2015). I also found it useful to refer to Anderson and Krathwohl’s revision of Bloom’s ‘Taxonomy of Educational Objectives’ (2001) to define the cognitive and knowledge dimensions of the session.

Engaging in microteaching has had two key impacts on my practice: first, a greater appreciation of my own style of delivery and how this matches or differs from colleagues; and second, a greater understanding of the value of inclusive practice in delivery. Within level 5 student microteaching sessions I was able to observe similar outcomes, demonstrating the benefit of microteaching as a learning and teaching tool at a range of educational levels.

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Further Reading
Developing and using marking rubrics based on the MMU standard assessment descriptors: Reflections on two approaches

Rod Cullen, Rachel Forsyth, Neil Ringan, Susan Gregory and Mark Roche

Abstract

The MMU standard descriptors for assessment provide a basis for writing marking criteria at all levels of taught provision. This paper reflects on the development and use of specific assessment criteria in the form of rubrics based on the MMU standard descriptors on two units, Assessment in Higher Education and Enhancing Learning Teaching and Assessment with Technology (ELTAT), on the Post Graduate Certificate and Masters in Academic Practice (PGCMAAP). In addition, the paper briefly reflects upon the use of Turnitin (via the institutional VLE) to build and use rubrics as part of overall online assessment and feedback strategies.

Despite some challenges, both unit teams are confident that the rubrics they developed based on the MMU standard descriptors assisted them in coming to reliable conclusions on the quality of student work and represented a valid assessment tool for the respective assignments. The rubrics have potential to be used both in preparing students to undertake the assessment tasks and as a formative tool while supporting them during and after the completion of the work. A consistent theme in both teams’ reflections was the ability to use the attainment descriptors within selected cells of the rubric as reference points for targeting both feedback on what was attained and feedforward on what could be done to move the work into a higher grade band. Although Turnitin rubrics proved easy to use for marking and feedback, setting them up initially (especially to automatically calculate overall marks) can be challenging.

Based on our experiences we make several recommendations for programme and unit teams who are developing rubrics based on the MMU standard descriptors for use in their assessment and feedback practice.
Introduction

Background to the MMU standard descriptors

The 2010 QAA institutional audit report for Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) recommended that the university should

‘establish a set of comprehensive university-wide assessment criteria to help maintain consistent standards across all provision, both on and off-campus’ (QAA 2010).

A working group was set up to consider this recommendation, with representation from each faculty. It was decided that it would be neither desirable nor necessary to require all programmes, in all subjects, to use a single set of generic assessment criteria. Instead, a set of standard descriptors was developed with three primary purposes in mind:

1. To act as a reference point for academic colleagues to develop their own programme and unit specific marking criteria;

2. To provide a common language to describe student performance in assessed work at each level taught at MMU;

3. To link all assessments clearly to the institutional Graduate Outcomes set out in the MMU Undergraduate and Postgraduate Curriculum Frameworks.

The standard descriptors sketch out in broad terms (using the MMU graduate outcomes) what is expected of students at a particular level of study, with an indication of how performance at that level can be differentiated. They are too generic to support making grading decisions for individual assignments; rather they form the basis for writing marking criteria that judge the standard to which each learning outcome has been achieved. Criteria need to be specific to the assignment because they need to link the criteria and the intended learning outcomes for the unit.

The MMU standard descriptors for assessment (CASQE, 2012) are provided as a set of exemplar rubrics, one for each level of study (Levels 3-7). The term ‘rubric’ is being used here to describe a document that articulates the expectations for assessment by listing the criteria (what is being looked for in student’s work that we are attempting to assess) and quality definitions for these criteria.
explaining what a student must demonstrate to attain a particular level of achievement e.g. 1st, 2(i), 2(ii), 3rd, Fail (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). An extract from the level 4 standard descriptors is shown in Figure 1

![Figure 1 - Extract from level 4 standard descriptors](Link to Full Level 4 Standard Descriptors document)

It is likely that the criteria developed specifically for any particular assignment task will draw on a subset of appropriate descriptors at that level (CASQE, 2012).

**Purpose of this paper**
Teaching teams from two units on the PGC and MA in Academic Practice (PGCMAAP) programme were keen to use the standard descriptors to develop specific assessment criteria in the form of rubrics for the summative assessment tasks for these units. There also seemed to be an opportunity to reflect upon some of the reported benefits and potential challenges in the published literature associated with the use of rubrics.
These include:

- **Reliability**: Rubrics are considered to increase consistency of judgment when assessing performance and authentic tasks. This is in terms of awarding marks across a student cohort as well as between different markers (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

- **Validity**: Provision of a common assessment language was a central goal of the MMU standard descriptors. The language in the rubric is a matter of validity because an ambiguous rubric cannot be accurately or consistently interpreted by tutors marking assignments or students trying to understand their grades (Payne 2003 cited in Reddy & Andrade, 2010).

- **Clarity/Transparency**: There is growing evidence that use of rubrics improve instruction in relation to assessment by making expectations and criteria explicit (Andrade, 2007)

- **Provision of Feedback**: It is commonly reported that rubrics enable the provision of clear feedback that is easily targeted on ways to improve learning and attainment to the benefit of students (Reddy & Andrade, 2010).

The teams were also aware of what Bloxham and Boyd (2011) described as the ‘disjunction between stated policies and actual practices in higher education marking, particularly in relation to analytical, criterion-referenced grading’, and were keen to explore ways to show how policy and practice could be better aligned.

The PGCMAAP programmes use the Turnitin tool for the submission of assignments and the return of marks and feedback to students. Although both teams built and deployed rubrics in Turnitin (via the institutional VLE) this paper does not specifically reflect upon practical and technical aspects of this experience.

In this paper the teams will:

- Describe the assessment strategies for the two units.

- Reflect on the development and use of marking rubrics based on the MMU standard descriptors in respect of marking and feedback provision.

- Make recommendations to colleagues planning to develop and use their own rubrics based on the standard descriptors.
Overview of the units and their assessment strategies

Assessment in Higher Education

Assessment in HE is a 15 credit unit which can be taken as an option on the PGC or MA in Academic Practice. The assignment requires participants to review an existing assessment strategy for a unit or programme with which they are familiar, and make recommendations for enhancement. This activity is directly aligned to the unit learning outcomes. It is intended to be of wider value to the participant than simply gaining credit for their awards, and so participants are encouraged to submit their work in any format that may be useful to them. For example, participants might prepare the QA paperwork required to make a change to the assignment and submit that together with annotations showing how decisions have been made and are situated in the relevant literature. Alternatively, they might record a presentation that could be used with colleagues to explain the assignment review. Others may produce a traditional review report, comparing an existing approach with a proposal for change.

Whatever the style of the submission, the marking team needs to be able to take a consistent approach to determining grades. A marking rubric is appropriate for this kind of assignment at this level, because the marker is looking for certain key characteristics of the whole submission, irrespective of the format of the assignment.

The marking and feedback strategy for this assignment has the following elements:

1) Provision of annotations on the submission, using Turnitin QuickMarks and comments, if the submission is in an annotatable format

2) Audio feedback in Turnitin GradeMark to provide an overview

3) Use of a rubric in Turnitin GradeMark to determine and demonstrate mark allocation

See here for Full Assessment in Higher Education Assignment Brief.
Enhancing Learning Teaching and Assessment with Technology (ELTAT)

Enhancing Learning Teaching and Assessment with Technology is a 30 credit optional unit which has evolved and expanded in scale from a previous 10 credit unit, Designing Effective Blended and Online Learning (DEBOL), following the PGCMAAP programme review in 2013. The same team of four academics designed and delivered both units, although only 3 were involved in the marking and feedback process for the summative assessment. The reflections below relate to the use of marking rubrics for the assessment of both DEBOL in 2012/13 and ELTAT in 2013/14. The learning design and assessment strategy for both units is almost identical, differing primarily in scale. The assessment strategy embeds weekly formative activities in a developmental portfolio. This provides an evidence base for the summative assessment that requires the production of a plan/scheme of work to embed technology enhanced learning, teaching and assessment in practice and a reflective account of learning from the unit. The ongoing formative tasks take participants through a process of reviewing their current practice, evaluating the opportunities for using technology to enhance their practice, designing appropriate technology enhanced activities and planning to evaluate the effectiveness of proposed developments. Participants are expected to include their developmental portfolio as an appendix (not formally assessed) to their summative assignment and to cross reference to it in evidencing their thinking in relation to their planned development and reflections on their learning. For DEBOL the summative assessment was submitted in written format, however for ELTAT participants were offered the option of submitting their plan and reflections in either written or video format.

All written parts of the assignment (plan, reflections and appendices) are submitted as a single document to Turnitin. If a video reflection has been chosen this part is submitted via the Moodle video assignment tool with appendices submitted to Turnitin.

The marking and feedback strategy for this assignment has the following elements:

1) Annotation of the written submission using Turnitin Quickmarks
2) Inclusion of 1st Marker and 2nd Marker text comments to the General comments field in GradeMark

3) Provision of a short GradeMark audio comment on the overall assignment

4) Use of a GradeMark rubric to determine and demonstrate mark allocation

See here for Full ELTAT Assignment Brief.

Reflective process and analysis

Those involved in constructing and using the rubrics on both units wrote short (max 800 words) individual pieces reflecting upon their experiences. The individual reflections were shared with, and read by, everyone in the marking teams. Follow-up discussions within and across the teams identified key themes in the reflections. The written reflections and notes from the discussions were used to construct the collective reflections presented below.

Collective reflections

Approaches to constructing rubrics and marking practice

The teams followed different approaches to designing and constructing their rubrics. The first iteration of the rubric for Assessment in HE (See Appendix 1) picked five of the level 7 graduate outcomes (1, 2, 3, 6 and 7) that matched to the requirements of the assignment and incorporated them into the rubric with very few changes to the wording. For example, the threshold pass for ‘Analysis’ was, ‘Novel and complex problems are solved with reference to theory and practice’, exactly the same as the standard descriptor.

In contrast the ELTAT team developed bespoke criteria based on the specific unit learning outcomes assessed by the assignment using the consistent language of the level 7 standard descriptors to articulate the attainment bands (see Appendix 2). This proved to be a complex process as the team recognised that some of the learning
outcomes had several components. For example, in relation to the learning outcome ‘Design constructively aligned learning, teaching and assessment strategies that embed technology effectively in their practice’, participants may have done a really good job in relation to constructive alignment but not been very clear on how they would embed technology or indeed vice versa. To address this, it was decided to separate out these two aspects into two component criteria. Consequently, each initial learning outcome was broken down into component criteria and a specific row articulating the attainment levels was constructed for each. This produced a complex looking and highly detailed rubric that initially intimidated some members of the marking team.

Despite the differences, both teams used consistent forms of language that are explicit in the standard descriptors in the descriptions of the attainment bands. For example, terms such as satisfactory, sufficient, adequate, descriptive are used to describe a threshold pass and terms such as creative, insightful, and authoritative are used to describe the highest attainment band in both rubrics.

The collective reflections suggest that the approaches to the design of the rubrics reflect the teams’ approach to marking, the characteristics of the assignments and different approaches to deploying the rubrics in Turnitin. For Assessment in HE, the team adopted a step-marking procedure (only using marks ending with 2, 5 and 8) i.e. only awarding three different mark points in each band. This marking practice can’t be accommodated within the grade calculation tool in Turnitin, so overall grades were calculated manually for each piece of work. In this respect, the rubric is used to provide an overall visualisation of the distribution of performance across the marking descriptors. This approach to using a rubric is best described as ‘holistic marking’ (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

The ELTAT team chose to set up their rubric in Turnitin so that it would calculate a mark. This is not the place to go into technical details about the way Turnitin marking rubrics are set up or how marks are calculated, but it is worth mentioning that marks allocated to each individual criteria were evenly weighted in a calculation to produce an overall mark for the assignment. It is fair to say that it took a few iterations to set up the rubric so that it calculated an
overall mark that the team felt best reflected the level of the portfolio. Even then, they agreed that it would be the decision of the individual markers whether to use the mark generated by the rubric or to use this as a guide in determining the mark themselves. The finished rubric had an extensive set of criteria that both described and gave a weighted mark for each level of attainment. In contrast to the Assessment in HE unit, the approach on ELTAT is best described as ‘analytical marking’ (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

‘I would say that my initial perception of the marking rubric was of an exceptionally complex and unwieldy tool and I initially struggled to see how I would be able to use it effectively. After some discussions across the marking team I better understood the structure and rationale behind the rubric, and when I started using it for real, my concerns quickly disappeared.’ - NR

Reliability
Both unit teams considered that the use of rubrics had helped them to mark consistently across the respective cohorts and within teams. For the majority of submissions, markers on both units came to very similar decisions about the quality of the work. In the small number of cases where there were disparities, the rubrics provided a very helpful framework to discuss and resolve issues. Overall, decisions about designing and using the rubrics to mark holistically (Assessment in Higher Education) or analytically (ELTAT) were largely a matter of preference of the marking teams. Our collective view is that the standard descriptors facilitated both approaches equally effectively.

‘The rubrics streamlined the process of second marking and moderation and allowed me to easily align comments and feedback which other markers had provided with the attainment of the learning outcomes.’ - NR

‘It was apparent that we had all aligned our feedback to the criteria within the rubric and there were very few (only minor) modifications made to the original marks allocated’ - SG
Validity

The unit level learning outcomes were an important aspect of both the holistic and analytical rubric approaches. For Assessment in HE, the unit learning outcomes became increasingly reflected in the marking criteria, following reflections/discussions over a couple of iterations. For ELTAT, the unit learning outcomes were used as specific criteria but the team found it necessary to unpick them into component parts that could be judged individually. The language of the rubric evolved in both approaches through an ongoing process of trialling, discussion and reflection on the experiences within the marking teams.

Previous studies of assessors and the marking process, particularly those that look at the use of criteria (e.g. Ecclestone 2001; Hanlon, Jefferson et al. 2004; Beattie, et al. 2008) emphasise that the existence of criteria is insufficient to achieve absolute objectivity and independent validity of marking decisions for most assessment tasks in higher education. Our experience reinforces this and shows that upfront and ongoing discussion around the development and use of the rubrics are an important factor in the construction of a valid rubric. Through these discussions, the teams gained a consistent view of what they were looking for in the assignment and a collective understanding of the language used to describe levels of attainment. As a result, both teams considered that the rubrics represented valid tools for measuring attainment in respect of the assessed tasks. This was also an important factor in determining the reliability of the rubric.

‘It has taken three iterations to achieve a rubric that I think is sensitive enough to the individual assignment for making decisions with reasonable speed.’ – RF

‘Overall, I think the main benefit in the use of the rubric was having the detailed discussions about the assignment before undertaking the marking, rather than the usual practice of having difficult discussion about disparities between markers after marking the work. In other words we were all clear on what we were looking for from the start.’ - RC
**Clarity/Transparency**

The rubrics were made available to participants on both units as part of the unit handbooks and within assignment briefs provided when the assignments were set. We haven’t looked in detail at how effective this has been in making expectations and criteria on the assessment task explicit to participants as suggested by Andrade (2007), however we are confident that we were able to have informed discussions with participants at the point that the assignment was being set. Furthermore, we are able to refer to the rubrics in ongoing dialogues while supporting the participants in completion of both regular formative tasks and their summative assignments. This is an area that needs to be looked at in greater detail in the future. Both teams are confident that using the rubrics enables them to produce feedback that enables students to understand how marks have been arrived at by the markers.

‘Comments from students in relation to the feedback clearly demonstrate that they value the close alignment to the learning outcomes, and have been able to readily see the profile of attainment of learning outcomes across the unit and then link comments and feedback to these in a straightforward way.’ - NR

**Provision of Feedback**

In relation to feedback provision, it is difficult to separate out the use of the rubric and the use of Turnitin. A key strength of Turnitin is that it enables the provision of rich, multi-layered feedback (QuickMarks, General Comments and Audio Recordings). Building and using the rubrics within Turnitin provides an additional layer to that richness. Within Turnitin the rubric provides an accessible and straightforward way of visualising the overall quality of the work across criteria. The quality descriptors within each cell of the rubric (see appendices 1 & 2) provided useful reference points for targeting both feedback on what was attained and feedforward on what could be done to move the work into a higher grade band. The ability to target developmental feedback in this way was a consistent theme in both teams’ reflections. Gratifyingly, the ELTAT unit was described as an “exemplary unit – excellent, feedforward feedback consistently applied across all submissions and markers. Feedback was
transparent and linked explicitly to the rubric.” by the external examiner for the PGCMAAP.

‘From a personal point of view, I find the use of the rubric makes marking judgements more straightforward and gives me more time to think about feedback.’ - RF

‘The response from participants on the unit has been overwhelmingly positive. They seem to value the depth and quality of the feedback they have received on their work and a number have taken the time and effort to contact the teaching team to thank them for this.’ - SG

Specific thoughts on use of Turnitin

Once set up the Turnitin rubrics are easy to use for marking and feedback, however the rubric editing and management tools in Turnitin are a bit clunky, making it more of a challenge to build and set up the rubrics in the first place. The rubrics used by ELTAT to calculate an overall mark are particularly tricky to set up and the overall mark produced is best seen as a guideline to help inform academic decision making, rather than a definitive mark.

Recommendations

Based on our experiences we make the following recommendations to programme and unit teams who are developing rubrics based on the MMU standard descriptors for use in their assessment and feedback practice.

- Construct the rubrics based on the standard descriptors at the same time as designing the assessment tasks.
- Be prepared to adapt the standard descriptor exemplar rubrics to meet the needs of individual assignments. This may involve:
  - Determining the marking teams’ preference for holistic or analytical marking and constructing the rubrics accordingly.
  - Changing the wording of the quality descriptors to reflect better the requirements of the specific assignment task and to align with unit level learning outcomes. It is
helpful to make use of the consistent language in the standard descriptors in making these changes.

- Involve all members of the marking and moderation team in the design and development of the rubric i.e. have difficult conversations about expectations of the assignment before undertaking the marking.
- Ensure that all markers and moderators fully understand their role in the assessment process.
- Ensure that the unit learning outcomes, MMU standards descriptors and the specific assignment rubric are shared with students as part of a detailed assignment brief at the start of the unit.
- Explain in detail to students how the marking team will make use of the rubric in assessing their assignments and refer to it frequently while supporting students in completion of their assignment.
- Be prepared to fine-tune the rubric over several iterations based on staff and student experience and ongoing reflection.

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### Appendix 1: Assessment in HE Rubric 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate outcome:</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate outcome:</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate a high degree of professionalism* eg initiative, creativity, motivation, professional practice and self management.</td>
<td>Express ideas effectively and communicate information appropriately and accurately using a range of media including ICT</td>
<td>Find, evaluate, synthesise and use information from a variety of sources</td>
<td>Articulate an awareness of the social and community contexts within their disciplinary field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade range</strong></td>
<td><strong>86%-100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>70%-85%</strong></td>
<td><strong>60%-69%</strong></td>
<td><strong>50%-59%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is novel, creative and feasible.</td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is presented creatively and persuasively in a way which is accessible to colleagues</td>
<td>A complex and innovative assessment strategy is produced, which synthesises useful information from a wide range of appropriate sources to produce original outcomes of publishable standards</td>
<td>You have critically evaluated the social and community contexts of the discipline in developing a creative assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is imaginative and feasible.</td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is presented convincingly and fluently to a defined audience in a way which is accessible to colleagues</td>
<td>A complex assessment strategy is produced which gathers useful information from a wide range of appropriate sources and synthesises the results to produce imaginative outcomes</td>
<td>You have critically evaluated the social and community contexts of the discipline in developing an imaginative assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is interesting and feasible, but may not be novel.</td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is presented confidently and coherently in a way which is accessible to colleagues</td>
<td>An assessment strategy is produced which gathers information from appropriate sources and synthesises the results</td>
<td>You have carefully analysed the social and community contexts of the discipline in developing a feasible assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is appropriate and feasible.</td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is presented clearly and appropriately in a way which is accessible to colleagues</td>
<td>An assessment strategy is produced which gathers information from appropriate sources and synthesises the results</td>
<td>You have considered the social and community contexts of the discipline in developing a basic assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is not appropriate to context or level, or is not feasible.</td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is unclear and confused</td>
<td>There is a partial attempt to produce an assessment strategy which gathers information from appropriate sources</td>
<td>There is partial or limited identification of the social and community contexts of the discipline in developing an assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is not appropriate or feasible.</td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is unclear and inappropriate</td>
<td>Limited attempt to produce an assessment strategy which gathers information from appropriate sources</td>
<td>There is limited or incorrect identification of the social and community contexts of the discipline in developing an assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is little or no evidence of any attempt to develop an appropriate, feasible assessment strategy.</td>
<td>Your assessment strategy is unclear and inappropriate and does not use appropriate strategies or media</td>
<td>Little or no attempt to plan an assessment strategy which gathers information from appropriate sources</td>
<td>There is little or no identification of the social and community contexts of the discipline in developing an assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2: ELTAT Rubric 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome: On completion of the unit participants should be able to:</th>
<th>Fail 0%-19%</th>
<th>Fail + 20%-44%</th>
<th>CF 45%-49%</th>
<th>Pass 50%-59%</th>
<th>Merit 60%-69%</th>
<th>Distinction 70%-85%</th>
<th>Distinction + 86%-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess the potential of technology to enhance their current learning, teaching and assessment practice</td>
<td>Overall: Assessment of potential technology</td>
<td>No assessment of potential technology to enhance their current practice</td>
<td>A superficial assessment of potential technology to enhance their current practice</td>
<td>A partial assessment of potential technology to enhance their current practice</td>
<td>Adequate assessment of potential technology to enhance their current practice</td>
<td>A clear and detailed assessment of potential technology to enhance their current practice</td>
<td>A rigorous assessment of potential technology to enhance their current practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis/reflection on current provision</td>
<td>No analysis/reflection on current provision</td>
<td>A superficial analysis/reflection on current provision</td>
<td>A partial analysis/reflection on current provision</td>
<td>Adequate evaluation analysis/reflection on current provision</td>
<td>A clear and detailed analysis/reflection on current provision</td>
<td>A rigorous analysis on current/reflection provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of potential technology linked to practice</td>
<td>No assessment of potential technology</td>
<td>Assessment of potential technology not linked to current/proposed practice</td>
<td>Assessment of potential technology clearly linked to some but not all aspects of current/proposed practice</td>
<td>Assessment of potential technology thoroughly linked to all main aspects of current/proposed practice</td>
<td>Assessment of potential technology rigorously linked to all aspects of current/proposed practice</td>
<td>Assessment of potential technology meticulously and authoritatively linked to all aspects of current/proposed practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of detail in assessment of potential technology</td>
<td>No assessment provided</td>
<td>Assessment lacking detail in most aspects</td>
<td>Assessment lacking detail in some aspects</td>
<td>Clear assessment but limited in scope</td>
<td>Thoroughly detailed assessment</td>
<td>Rigorously detailed assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design constructively aligned learning, teaching and assessment strategies that embed technology effectively in their practice.</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>No design provided</td>
<td>Proposed design is superficial</td>
<td>Proposed design lacks detail in a few key areas</td>
<td>The design adequately describes the proposal</td>
<td>The design thoroughly describes the proposal</td>
<td>The design meticulously articulates an original proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructively alignment</td>
<td>No attempt to constructively align the proposed learning, teaching and assessment strategy</td>
<td>A superficial attempt to constructively align the proposed learning, teaching and assessment strategy</td>
<td>A partial attempt to constructively align the proposed learning, teaching and assessment strategy</td>
<td>Adequate attempt to constructively align the proposed learning, teaching and assessment strategy</td>
<td>A clear and detailed attempt to constructively align the proposed learning, teaching and assessment strategy</td>
<td>A rigorous attempt to constructively align the proposed learning, teaching and assessment strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Fail</th>
<th>Fail +</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>Merit</th>
<th>Distinction</th>
<th>Distinction +</th>
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<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Outcome: On completion of the unit participants should be able to:</td>
<td>Fail 0%-19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embedding of technology</td>
<td>No design provided</td>
<td>Design does not clearly describe how technology will be embedded in practice</td>
<td>Design lacks details in a few key areas about how technology will be embedded in practice</td>
<td>The design describes the main aspects of how technology will be embedded in practice</td>
<td>The design thoroughly describes all aspects of how technology will be embedded in practice</td>
<td>The design rigorously describes all aspects of how technology will be embedded in practice</td>
<td>The design is original and meticulously describes all aspects of how technology will be embedded in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an action plan to effectively embed technology within their practice</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>No action plan provided</td>
<td>A superficial action plan provided</td>
<td>A partial action plan provided</td>
<td>An adequate action plan provided</td>
<td>A clear and detailed action plan provided</td>
<td>A highly detailed and rigorous action plan provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan detail</td>
<td>No plan provided</td>
<td>The plan is lacking detail in most aspects</td>
<td>Plan is lacking detail in some aspects</td>
<td>The plan is clear but limited in scope</td>
<td>The plan is thoroughly detailed in most aspects.</td>
<td>The plan is rigorously detailed in most aspects.</td>
<td>The plan is meticulously detailed in all aspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on achievability</td>
<td>No reflections provided on the achievability of the action plan</td>
<td>Reflections on achievability unrealistic in most aspects</td>
<td>Reflections on achievability unrealistic in some aspects</td>
<td>Reflections on achievability generally realistic</td>
<td>Reflections on achievability consistently realistic</td>
<td>Reflections on achievability realistic and alternatives explored</td>
<td>Reflections on achievability realistic and alternatives explored in detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>No evaluation strategy is provided</td>
<td>A superficial evaluation strategy is provided</td>
<td>A partial evaluation strategy is provided</td>
<td>Adequate evaluation strategy is provided</td>
<td>A clear and detailed evaluation strategy is provided</td>
<td>A rigorous evaluation strategy is provided</td>
<td>A rigorous and authoritative evaluation strategy is provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Purpose of evaluation not provided</td>
<td>Purpose of evaluation is vague and lacking in detail</td>
<td>Purpose of evaluation is unclear and lacking in detail</td>
<td>Purpose of the evaluation is clear but lacks detail in some aspects</td>
<td>Purpose of the evaluation is clear and detailed in all aspects</td>
<td>Purpose of the evaluation is clear and meticulously detailed and authoritative.</td>
<td>Purpose of the evaluation is clear, meticulously detailed and authoritative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>No evaluation data sources identified from relevant stakeholders</td>
<td>Only one or two data sources identified for a limited set of stakeholders</td>
<td>Some data sources omitted from one or two key stakeholders</td>
<td>Main data sources from key stakeholders identified</td>
<td>A range of data sources for key stakeholders identified</td>
<td>A wide range of data sources for all stakeholders identified</td>
<td>An extensive range of stakeholders for all stakeholders identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Outcome: On completion of the unit participants should be able to:</td>
<td>Fail 0%-19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Communication of work is unclear and inappropriate to a defined audience and does not use appropriate strategies or media</td>
<td>Communication of work is unclear and inappropriate to a defined audience and does not consistently use appropriate strategies or media</td>
<td>Communication of the outcomes of their work is unclear and confused and does not consistently use appropriate strategies or media</td>
<td>The outcomes of their work are presented clearly and appropriately to a defined audience using a range of strategies and media</td>
<td>The outcomes of their work are presented confidently and coherently to a defined audience using an interesting range of appropriately selected strategies and media</td>
<td>The outcomes of their work are presented convincingly and fluently to a defined audience using a wide range of appropriately selected strategies and media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presentation should be appropriate for masters level work (Spelling, grammar, logical, coherent, clarity, fluency, structure, citations correct and appropriate and bibliography correctly constructed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Most required elements of the Portfolio are missing</td>
<td>Some required elements of the Portfolio are missing</td>
<td>One or two required elements of the Portfolio are missing</td>
<td>All of the required elements of the Portfolio are included with some lacking in detail</td>
<td>All of the required elements of the Portfolio are included in detail</td>
<td>All of the required elements of the Portfolio are included in meticulous detail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>The Portfolio is devoid of meaningful structure</td>
<td>The Portfolio is poorly structured and difficult to follow</td>
<td>The Portfolio is lacking in structure and difficult to follow in places</td>
<td>The Portfolio has a good basic structure and flow</td>
<td>The Portfolio is well structured and flows effectively</td>
<td>The Portfolio has a strong structure and flows very well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links to Appendices</td>
<td>Reflections devoid of links to appendices</td>
<td>Links to appendices evident in few aspects of reflections</td>
<td>Links to appendices evident in some but not all aspects of reflections</td>
<td>Reflections clearly linked to appendices for most aspects of reflections.</td>
<td>Reflections thoroughly linked to appendices for all aspects of reflections.</td>
<td>Reflections rigorously linked to appendices for all aspects of reflections.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of supporting literature</td>
<td>Little or no use of supporting literature</td>
<td>Limited use of supporting literature</td>
<td>Insufficient use of supporting literature</td>
<td>Appropriate use of supporting literature</td>
<td>Effective use of supporting literature</td>
<td>Extensive use of supporting literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harvard referencing technique</td>
<td>Work does not implement the required referencing technique</td>
<td>Limited implementation of the required referencing technique</td>
<td>Work partially implements the required referencing technique</td>
<td>Work adequate implements the required referencing technique</td>
<td>Work thoroughly implements the required referencing technique</td>
<td>Work rigorously implements the required referencing technique</td>
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<td>Work adequate implements the required referencing technique</td>
<td>Work thoroughly implements the required referencing technique</td>
<td>Work rigorously implements the required referencing technique</td>
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<td>Contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Neame</td>
<td><a href="mailto:C.Neame@mmu.ac.uk">C.Neame@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Gray</td>
<td><a href="mailto:P.Gray@mmu.ac.uk">P.Gray@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td>Jenny Fisher</td>
<td><a href="mailto:J.Fisher@mmu.ac.uk">J.Fisher@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td>Jenny van Hooff</td>
<td><a href="mailto:J.van-Hooff@mmu.ac.uk">J.van-Hooff@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<td>Claire Hamshire</td>
<td><a href="mailto:C.Hamshire@mmu.ac.uk">C.Hamshire@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chrissi Nerantzi</td>
<td><a href="mailto:C.Nerantzi@mmu.ac.uk">C.Nerantzi@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kathryn Botham</td>
<td><a href="mailto:K.Botham@mmu.ac.uk">K.Botham@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kate Dunstone</td>
<td><a href="mailto:K.Dunstone@mmu.ac.uk">K.Dunstone@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rod Cullen</td>
<td><a href="mailto:R.Cullen@mmu.ac.uk">R.Cullen@mmu.ac.uk</a></td>
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