

LINK 23

Supporting students

Support students!

A quick scan through dictionary definitions of the word 'support' helps to establish the theme of this issue of LINK. Support is described as supplying what is necessary, providing the right conditions, encouraging someone to succeed, maintaining a person through challenging circumstances and sustaining a person under trial or affliction! If we are to enable students to engage effectively and successfully with their programmes of study, to learn develop and achieve their goals, we must support them in all these ways.

Our curricula, and the learning opportunities and experiences we offer, must be designed for the students we recruit and the achievements we expect of them. Our timetables should be constructed primarily of activities chosen to encourage and facilitate learning, to provide feedback on achievements rather than slots filled with lecture topics. Our assessment strategies should make transparent the standards to which we expect students to aspire – and enable them to demonstrate when they have reached them.

Higher education should provide a challenge to students and some will find difficulty achieving at lower levels of performance while others will need to meet the challenges associated with success at the highest levels. All require our support to optimise their achievements.

Supporting students is not about institutional retention and progression statistics or employment data, although improvements in these areas are likely if appropriate support is given. It is about providing an environment which is conducive to learning. Supporting students is not about roadside puncture repairs and tows to the nearest garage, it is about personal route-maps to destinations (with detours) -and the reliable support of a good motoring organisation.

In this issue of LINK, we look at the support we can give to students across a range of situations they might encounter - those prescribed by us and those which happen by chance, from their early engagement with our programmes to their graduation and career planning, on campus and off campus, face-to-face and using technology, from personal tutors to work place mentors. In all cases, we are putting the needs of the individual student at the centre of our designs to ensure that, with growing confidence, developing skills, and buoyed by the evidence of their own achievements, they can become successful, independent of us, and ambassadors of the benefits of higher education.

Clive Robertson
Director

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Higher Education Academy Network for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism (HLST) Annual Conference

Assessment and Feedback – What's the Answer?

St Hugh's College, Oxford, 12 November 2009

Assessment and feedback remain major issues in Higher Education – as evidenced year on year by the National Students Survey, questions of reliability and communication of assessment standards raised by QAA and the doubt about the fitness for purpose of the honours degree classification expressed in the Burgess Report. At the same time, new approaches in the provision of Higher Education through, for example, engagement with employers or technology-enhanced flexible learning opportunities, pose questions about assessment methods. Our conference this year explores work undertaken in response to these concerns and provides an opportunity to find out more about developing practice in this vital area.

Call for abstracts

Abstracts are invited for **papers**, **presentations** or **poster displays** which illustrate the ways in which higher education is engaging with the challenge of assessment and feedback.

Posters are welcome on any topic relating to the conference theme or, more generally, on other pedagogic research and development work in HLST.

Abstract deadline: **Friday 3rd July 2009**

Further information on abstracts, the conference and a registration form can be found on our website at www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/events/annual_conference

Using Mobile Phones for Formative Assessment

Alistair Briggs,
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In recent years, higher education institutions have increased the amount of technology available to their students. On top of this, every day a mass of computing power enters and leaves the campus in the pockets and bags of the students, adding to the amount of technology, but is often not used for educational purposes.

We have spent the past 3 years working on ways to turn students' mobile phones into useful educational support devices, and to this end have worked on projects with various institutions. We have also launched our own consumer products to help people learn through their mobile phone.

We have learned a lot about how mobile phones can be best used in an educational context (also a lot about how they shouldn't be used), as well as the realities of how students like to use their phones and for what activities. Our experience tells us that mobile phones are very useful at getting people to do 'micro-revision' and engage in a subject often, but for short sessions. The best way we have found to encourage this has been to use quizzes/formative assessment which are convenient and easy for students to use on a mobile phone.

A popular reason given for putting content on students' mobile phones is that it can be used in many 'mobile' situations such as sitting on a bus or waiting for a lift. The feedback from users has demonstrated how having access to content on their phones has enabled them to revise in unexpected places. These 'non-standard' places have been on the sofa and in bed as well as the 'mobile' places that we initially expected.

Our research into the reasons behind this has led us to realise that content on a mobile phone is much more convenient to access than content in a book or on a computer. Imagine that you are sitting on the sofa and feeling a little guilty about having not gone through the practice questions that you have been given. Going through the questions will involve leaving the sofa and finding the book you need or moving to the computer – switching it on – starting the web browser and navigating to the needed website. So starting the activity can take up to 5 minutes. It takes about 10 seconds for a user to start a new quiz or resume a previous one on their phone – and this makes a difference. We have found that removing effort and time barriers makes students do more revision of this type. Also starting revision in this way can encourage students to engage further in the subject and seek out more information about it (perhaps even to leave the sofa).

Our success to date has mostly been with formative assessment – it seems that this type of content is the easiest for a tutor or course team to put together and the provision of immediate feedback on the answers chosen works very well for these 'micro revision' sessions. To provide this type of content on a mobile phone you can use SMS messages, create mobile websites or install specific software. We found challenges with all these approaches and finally decided that installing Java software on student phones was the most effective method.

The time lapse from submission of an answer to the response by SMS message is quite long, which does not provide a very good user experience. The more SMS messages sent the more it costs both to run the service and for the student using it. The good thing about SMS messages is that students already understand the technology and that they are compatible with all phones. Mobile websites can be slow to react depending on the speed of the network connection and many users worry about the expense of using the internet. Making mobile websites that work on all phones is not easy.

Software that is installed on a mobile phone is expensive to develop and test on all target phones and, in addition, installing software can be daunting for users. However, installed software has the advantage of giving the user a much better experience: the software is quicker to start, more responsive, better looking and faster, with immediate feedback. Users do not need a network connection to take tests which means that they need not worry about cost, something our research showed as a significantly positive aspect.

Having analysed the problems related to using mobile phones we decided to create software that can run on any mobile phone. Our aim has been to remove the expense of developing and testing for all mobile phones, and make it easy for educators to distribute quizzes to their students. We also considered it important to develop an easy method of distributing the software and enabling course tutors to upload results from the phone to a central system in order to review results.

If you would like to try out our system you can see it in action in the UK driving theory test at: <http://app.uHavePassed.com> – just register for a trial account.

If you would like more information about using our software on your course or in your organisation then visit <http://luziaresearch.com> or email al.briggs@luziaresearch.com

Student Support Mechanisms: Bacchus Student Society at Oxford Brookes

Benjamin McEwen,
Bacchus President
2007-2008

Background

Bacchus is the student society for the Department of Hospitality Leisure and Tourism Management (HLTM) at Oxford Brookes University. Under an overall President, Vice President, and elected sub committee, Bacchus organises and assists at social, educational and networking events for staff and students within the department. The President is traditionally a 3rd or 4th year student and normally holds the position for one year, along with the other committee members who are made up of both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Students enrolled within the department are automatically invited to join and the level of involvement is entirely up to the student. Events organised by Bacchus are typically lectures, dining events, social nights out and the end of year Bacchus summer ball. In addition to this Bacchus supports departmental activities and events.

Bacchus as a Support Mechanism

Bacchus can make a significant difference to the first year experience of students embarking on a course, as a vehicle for introducing them to the rich social culture of the HLTM department. During induction week, Bacchus hosts a drinks reception in Brookes restaurant where new students are able to meet their peers, their tutors and some existing Bacchus members in a relaxed environment. The outgoing President addresses the students, inviting them all to join Bacchus. This is really the beginning of a wonderful offering to students from Bacchus, which remains available throughout their time at University. Many students really flourish and enjoy taking a position within the committee. Where there are changes in modules, living arrangements and all the other vagaries of student life, some students find Bacchus is refreshingly constant and something to which they can really apply themselves.

Social Support

For many students, coming to University can be quite intimidating. Bacchus is an ideal means of making friends and meeting students from their own and other year groups. For students returning from work placements, Bacchus events provide wonderful opportunities to catch up with old friends. More importantly, because students run Bacchus, they gain hands on experience of organising and running successful hospitality-related events, and this serves to reinforce the learning on their courses.

One of the most successful events Bacchus runs is the annual cocktail taste at Raoul's Bar in Oxford City centre. This event takes place right at the beginning of the year and primarily attracts first years, giving them a real opportunity for an interactive, informative and fun night out. The bar staff are experts in their field and the students are able to try their hand at making and tasting cocktails, while benefiting from the myriad of anecdotes and fun facts. Other successful social events held by Bacchus include the dining club events, during which students sample good food and learn something about the establishment (for example at the Ivy in London) and the Christmas Quiz. The Bacchus Ball is the final event in the calendar and is a celebration of the social tapestry of the department. It is always well attended by students, alumni and staff.

Of course, students are perfectly capable of taking themselves out to restaurants and bars but Bacchus enhances the experience of eating out and adds benefits that they might not get when acting alone. For example, during a Bacchus trip to Café Spice Namasté in London, we were able to secure a talk from proprietor and celebrity chef, Cyrus Todiwala.

Academic Support

Bacchus has also proven to be an excellent means of enriching the student learning experience through arranging extra curricular activities and events which complement the academic curriculum. Informal events such as wine tastings allow students who have not had much access to wine and wine knowledge to receive an informal and interactive experience, which builds upon the more detailed and technical content delivered in the operations module.

Last year Bacchus launched its own lecture series, the first of which was entitled 'A Conversation with Robert Cook; CEO of the Malmaison Hotel Group' kindly hosted by Malmaison at their Oxford venue. This was an excellent opportunity for a small number of students to meet, talk and engage with an industry leader in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. The evening was of particular interest to the first year students who were hoping to go on work placement at Malmaison; for students writing dissertations on boutique hotels; and for any student looking to see the view from the top!

Later in the year, Bacchus hosted a debate at the Randolph Hotel featuring three prominent industry figures and one of the academic team at Brookes, who debated a human resources issue.

This perfectly complemented a 3rd year module running at the time, which required students to debate human resources issues as part of the assessment. By choosing to operate events in this way Bacchus can ensure a good take up rate from the students and more importantly reinforce academic learning from a different perspective and using an alternative medium. Students who found debate theory dry were able to see their module leader in action and learn by example. Wherever possible we aim to hold events outside the University, for example and as mentioned above, at the Randolph and Malmaison, thus helping to support practical understanding of the real life industry as well as the theoretical aspects – all in an effort to facilitate positive hospitality experiences for students.

Supporting Student Networking and Careers

Through the hard work of the Bacchus committee over recent years, the society has built up some good links with industry and my personal aim as President was to help current students make the step from University to Industry by seeking out comfortable forums in which students could meet people in the industry. The H Talks organised by En Passant magazine provided one of the best environments we found, and through continued attendance at these evenings the Brookes contingent established a presence. Soon introductions were easy and instead of being faced with having to try to approach a room full of professionals, we found ourselves with a roomful of professionals keen to meet us! In addition to the student society's efforts the department is very fortunate to have a strong alumni culture and there is a Bacchus Alumni Association, which frequently contributes to Bacchus Student activities, both socially and in support of academia.

The latest venture is the Bacchus Alumni mentoring scheme involving approximately 50 leading industry figures who mentor final year students as part of the career planning module. The advantage of such a strong impetus from our alumni is that students have an opportunity to network with a wide range of people in industry who were once students themselves. This gives students an opportunity to see someone else's career

progress and then begin to visualise and map their own paths. The mentoring programme and the graduate networking evening, which is assisted by Bacchus and Bacchus Alumni, really work well with the programme of study and serve to further embed existing careers and academic information. This does not end when students graduate – Bacchus can assist those students who wish to contribute to the department through Bacchus initiatives.

Conclusion

Bacchus student society is an integral part of the student experience in the department of Hospitality Leisure and Tourism Management at Brookes, and brings together students – past, present and even future – staff members, and industry, to support and enrich the excellent programmes of study being delivered to the students. Through a multitude of social and educational initiatives and activities, and sometimes just through good old-fashioned fun events, Bacchus really does serve as an effective and enjoyable vehicle for supporting students throughout and after their University careers.

Personal Tutoring: A Comparison of Two Systems

Cassie Wilson and Richard Tong, UWIC

Introduction

The rising numbers and increasingly diverse backgrounds of students entering higher education means that the role of the personal tutor as a means of supporting students and facilitating their education and development is more important and challenging than ever. Many different systems currently operate in higher education institutions to accommodate the diverse nature of institutions, degree programmes and number of students. The School of Sport at the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, offers seven undergraduate degree programmes in sport-related areas. There are over 500 students in each year of the programmes taught by over 80 academic members of staff. In contrast, the School for Health at the University of Bath offers one undergraduate

sport programme, namely Sport and Exercise Science, which has cohorts of approximately 60 students in each year group and an academic staff base of 13. Both schools have personal tutoring systems which aim to provide academic and pastoral support for all students throughout their studies. The difference in student numbers means there are some very clear differences between the two systems. However, there are also

a number of similarities. Here we discuss the effectiveness and potential barriers to success of the two personal tutor systems which operate in these very different sport related provisions.

The Two Systems: An Overview

The system operating in the Cardiff School of Sport means that each tutor (all academic members of staff) has approximately ten tutees per year group. Meetings between tutor and student are scheduled to take place at least once per term, either on a group or individual basis. A site on the virtual learning environment (Blackboard) is used to support the system. The Cardiff School of Sport is currently developing online support for personal development planning (PDP) and students are asked to complete a variety of online tasks in order to pass this module. These involve reflective practice and the tasks are discussed during meetings with personal tutors.

In the School for Health at the University of Bath, each academic member of staff in the Sport and Exercise Science group acts as personal tutor for between five and seven students per year group. In the first year, meetings between tutor and student are formally scheduled into the timetable, and are an integral part of a study skills and research methods unit. These meetings are in addition to the less formal sessions which take place during office hours, which each member of staff has for a minimum of 2 hours per week. During office hours students can sign up for one to one meetings. These slots become particularly important when coursework is returned. Mixed year group tutorials for students from all year groups have also recently been introduced as a way of sharing information between students in different year groups. PDP is currently carried out separately by the University centrally and is therefore not part of the personal tutor system. Students in both systems remain with their assigned tutor for the duration of their academic career. However, during their final year, dissertation supervisors may also play a personal tutoring role.

What Makes Each System Effective?

The main features of the Cardiff School of Sport system which make it effective are:

- (i) the integration of PDP into the system,
- (ii) the fact that the system is supported by a virtual learning environment, and
- (iii) the way the system forms part of an effective programme management structure consisting of programme directors, year tutors and personal tutors, all of whom have a clearly defined role.

The main features of the Bath School for Health system which make it effective are:

- (i) the integration of the system into the first year study skills and research method unit,
- (ii) the timetabling of meetings in the main timetabling system and
- (iii) the regular contact between tutors and students, which is a result of both the size of the programme and also the role the tutor has in the return of coursework.

Although timetabling of sessions is only for the first year students, this is considered the most important year to develop the tutor-student relationship. The other parts of the system are consistent across all years.

A Comparison of The Two Systems

Despite the much larger cohort in the Cardiff School of Sport, the personal tutoring system operates effectively due to a good programme management structure. However,

the different roles within the management structure (despite being defined) occasionally overlap which can result in confusion for students (and sometimes staff). The barriers to the system's success lie in the willingness of staff to buy into the system. At Bath, the relatively small programme and the fact that in the first year meetings are formally timetabled makes the buying in of staff less of a problem. Personal contact between staff and students happens on a regular basis and this is what students want, even though they are able to get a great deal of information from written documents. In addition, smaller cohorts seem to foster a more inclusive environment. Integrating the PDP process into the system could improve the support offered to the student by taking a more holistic view, and it could also develop and enhance the interaction between tutors and students.

Future Directions

As factors which contribute to the effectiveness of the systems are not specifically related to student numbers, it would appear that the size of the cohort is not a major contributing factor in the effective provision of a personal tutoring system. Therefore it might be useful for universities to share their developments in personal tutoring more freely in order that we can enhance the student learning experience. With the increasing diversity of issues that students are presenting to their personal tutor, one of the key issues that needs addressing is what are the boundaries of personal tutoring and when do students services need to be involved. This link between teaching staff and student services is critical when dealing with serious issues and personal tutors need to be aware of when to seek advice from specialists, and when and where they need to refer students to.

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The Challenges of Supporting Employer Engaged Students who are Learning in the Workplace

Darryl Bibby,
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Working with employers to develop the UK's workforce is a current priority for the Government and consequently for HE and FE. We are all being driven to increase our employer engagement activity, and to innovate and improve programmes so that they are more appropriate for employees and are beneficial to their employers. Employer engagement was also the focus of the last edition of LINK and as we know it is an activity that can stretch our institution's processes and cultures to the limit.

Supporting students who enrol as a result of employer engagement activity can be as challenging as employer engagement itself, since occasionally students may be

conscripts rather than volunteers. This article is a brief summary of experiences of working with employers on HE programmes and the considerations that need to be given to supporting students undertaking work-based learning. It also explores my own view that there is a real need to provide support to the employer organisation itself to encourage and facilitate learning for its employees.

To begin with, just what are the support needs of students in the workplace and how do they differ from those of traditional students, or of mature and part-time students? The table below illustrates potential differences.

Aspect	'Traditional' FT student learning on campus	Part-time/mature student learning on campus	Employer engaged student learning at work as part of an 'employer commissioned' course
Motivation, choice and initial assessment of personal ability to succeed	Student choice of subject studied; where there are doubts there are existing processes to support. Plenty of pre-course support is available. Assessed through prior qualifications /experience	Student choice of course studied, where there are doubts there are existing processes to support. Some pre-course support and assessment is available	Employer chooses course studied – there are no processes or alternatives for students. May not be any pre-course support or assessment Students may also not want to reveal a weakness that could be perceived as making them less able to do their job eg. dyslexia
Proximity/ access to student support services	Access to services and personnel who can provide academic and pastoral support. Peer group support	Have limited access to support depending on the time spent on campus. Limited access to peer group (other than through VLE)	Unlikely to be contact with University personnel and services – other than through VLE – which they may not be able to access at work. Also, often if there is access to support it is mediated through the employer, so if the problem is the employer....
Non-academic learning related	Pastoral services and Students' Union facilities and peer group support available	May be pastoral, Students' Union, peer group support for issues that arise concerning changes in external circumstances (eg finance, lack of time, move of house etc)	Issues are likely to relate to work as the study is in work time. Busy work schedules or changes in duties may interfere with learning and cause problems
Finance	Systems and staff on campus to support students	Systems and staff usually available to support students	Unlikely to be an issue as Employer pays the fees
Time	Full time student has a timetable to fit the learning programme.	Time to study needs to be fitted in with part-time students home and work routines. Problems arise where planned circumstances change including changes introduced by Universities and Colleges.	Time to study can cause major problems and particularly where assessments include extensive written work and the students a) have no study time allocated in work and problems can arise relating to the unpredictability of workload b) have little previous experience of writing for academic assessment c) have essential skills needs
Career progression	Careers Offices and staff on campus, careers guidance for 'traditional' undergraduates is extensive.	Careers Offices and staff on campus. Guidance for part-time/mature students is likely to be much less well resourced (if at all).	Progression advice and guidance should be provided by the employer, although this is not always the case. Seeking career guidance may be viewed well by the employer paying for the study; in some cases students may have to pay back fees.

Academic / learning related	May be allocated a Personal Tutor. Learning support staff are available on campus. Learning support resources may be provided online.	May be allocated a Personal Tutor or there may be a Mature Student Advisor. Learning support material may be provided online which can be accessed on campus if not at home.	Unlikely to have a Personal Tutor. Learning support material may be available online but there may be little opportunity to access it in work (or at home). Establishing a peer group for support may not be straightforward for learners and depend on the employer and the cohort size (eg multi-site employers or those who operate shifts for their employees). There is also the complexity that those in the learners 'peer group' may be superiors, making the emotional relationships difficult for learning
Learning facilities	Library and learning facilities on campus	Able to access library and other on campus learning facilities	

In my experience, students who enrol as a part of an employer-commissioned course differ significantly from part-time or full time students who study at the University. Differences are in geography and access, prior qualification and experience, but also the important dimension of the context of the course and the learning culture of the employer.

Virtual systems only address some of these issues and even in large employer organisations they may not be easily accessible. One recent large RDA funded project developed an online environment to guide and support learners who were considering a course in HE. The website included self assessment diagnostics, links to learning support services and material, and links to providers' websites as well as careers and prospects databases. Although promoted as a site for all students and those considering studying, including employer cohorts, it had most success with traditional part time students studying on campus who used the system mainly to access the personal email-based support service that was integrated with it. Employers who were consulted saw the environment as threatening, in that it presented their employees with guidance that might lead them to leave their organisation. Interestingly, however, where it did strike a chord with employers was the idea of creating a dedicated environment for their own organisation (initial interest came from the public sector). This promoted the realisation that there is opportunity to work with an employer holistically to support and develop learning across their organisation, as well as the provision of programmes and courses focusing on individual employees (towards which systems and expertise are geared).

One successful (but radical) approach taken to meet the challenge of supporting work-based students is to locate a tutor onsite in the workplace. This can bring huge benefits to the individual students, the employer organisation and the University itself. The student has the equivalent of a personal tutor on hand but with the added advantage that the tutor is fully aware of the context of their workplace, and can advise and act accordingly. So, for example, the tutor will be aware of fluctuations in workload and of company policies. Work-based tutors can also build a repository of learning material specific to the organisation making the learning for the student applied and relevant to their roles, so helping with motivation. The employer gains what is effectively a dedicated coach/

mentor able to ensure that curriculum fits with work and that learning is effective – they are also able to gain and give continuous feedback about the learning and the programme.

In many cases, employers have little expertise and weak structures to support learning in their organisations. Those who commission or purchase courses (not just from Universities) are usually senior staff often from HR, with those who work for them tending to have roles focusing on administration rather than development. In this context the onsite tutor also gives employers added capability. The benefit to the University comes from gaining an intimate knowledge of the employer's needs that can inform curriculum development, and deepen the relationship building trust and shared learning. Consequently, the University improves its own capability to support the employer more sustainably as the organisation itself develops and faces new challenges in its own operations.

Summary

Supporting 'employer engagement' students who are enrolled as a part of an employer cohort, and whose learning is delivered in and through work, brings new challenges and opportunities for HE and FE. These challenges can be met with increased flexibility but a move to consider the employer's learning needs as an organisation may reap far greater and more sustainable benefits. The time may be right for those higher and further education institutions with the interest and ability to take on a wider role supporting organisations in their learning. This may not only change workplace learning cultures and support learners whose study is based at their place of work, but also could bring higher and further education and employer organisations much closer together through deeper and longer term relationships.

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Desk-Top Conferencing: The Virtual Placement Visit

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Introduction

The development of Web 2.0 technology (the changing trend in the use of the World Wide Web that enhances creativity, collaboration, functionality and secure information sharing) has opened up a whole new world of communication possibilities (Graham and Ure, 2005; Virkus, 2008). Such web based 'conversations' have been embraced by the current generation of students, with frequent postings on internet social-networking sites, video sharing sites, wikis, weblogs and folksonomies.

Web based social networking, video and voice communication requires a personal computer (PC) with the additional hardware of a web-cam, microphone and speakers/headsets, together with access to broadband internet. Frequently these additional hardware components form part of the build specification of many PCs and laptops available on the high street. As the trend is towards many HE students owning this type of equipment, they in effect own a ready-made digital communications centre.

With Web 2.0 technology and easy access to digital communication centres, it is common for students to have a well established and active personal profile on sites such as Bebo, Facebook, MSN Messenger, MySpace, Yahoo and YouTube, with some students even managing multiple sites, using the software for 'live' conversation.

Teaching staff have already identified the potential of using social networking sites to create personal student alumni. For example, we have a combined e-alumni network of just over 400 past students. It was through the e-alumni network internet site that we identified that it would be of interest to further extend their use of Web 2.0 technology, particularly to those features which are regularly used by students outside the university, and applying this to their teaching and learning strategies.

E-Conferencing Project

The initial project was to establish computer-to-computer communication using a live video communication tool and to create a personal desk-top conference or an e-meeting. This would offer the opportunity to provide virtual tutorial support to students. We rationalised that:

- such communication methods are ones that students easily identify with
- the software (or freeware) is readily available to download

- students regularly use such software to communicate, often multi-tasking between holding e-meetings, while undertaking academic work
- the software allows network circles to identify when its members are on line and available to chat. Hence it offers the ability to track students and instigate academic conversations with students who perhaps would be less likely to engage with staff using more traditional approaches.

The first challenge for us was to identify a pedagogic application for the 'desk-top conference'. The authors followed the principle that teaching and learning must drive innovation, and that the technology supports learning and adds value. The aim was not to simply use technology for technology's sake.

The project needed to support a current module, one in which Web 2.0 technology could clearly add value to student learning. Geographical distance of delivery/support was the key feature identified. As Sheffield Hallam already has a highly developed model for distance learning delivery, it was felt that to use any of these modules would only add an unnecessary second level of tutor support, and might also generate a level of module inconsistency. Two modules that have a traditional delivery model were therefore selected. The first module was the undergraduate international work placement module and this would be used to support students who historically felt isolated from the university on overseas placements. The second module was the postgraduate dissertation module and the technology would be used for continued supervisor support for students who had returned to their county of origin while completing their dissertation.

E-Meeting Software

From interaction on the e-alumni we identified that freeware would be most easily accessible by students enrolled on the selected modules. MSN Messenger was identified as being one of the most popular e-meeting freeware programmes available, offering Voice over Internet Protocols (VoIP) that students used regularly, so we decided to use this software for the project.

The first step was to request a software upload from the central IT team, as the University has a policy of restricting IT administration rights. This created a problem in that any further software upgrades had to be requested from central IT support – a rather frustrating process. Once the software had been loaded onto our it was tested to ensure that visual and audio communications could be established from different locations – office, home, internet café.

Three e-meetings were planned using MSN Messenger: two with students on placement in New Zealand and a third with a postgraduate dissertation supervision meeting in Beijing. The placement e-meeting at the student end was facilitated through an internet café in Queensland. The link was established but only live text communication known as 'instant messages' (IM) could take place. Although this was productive, the goal was for a live video link up. After various attempts the conference call was terminated. The apparent reason for the poor link was that the PC at Sheffield Hallam ran a different version of MSN Messenger software to that on the PC in New Zealand. At the time, new software was available to download but due to administration right restrictions the upgrade was not immediately possible.

The dissertation conference call was made the following day to Beijing, to the student's personal laptop computer. A voice and text link was established, but the video link was of poor quality so it was terminated. However, the audio link was highly successful. What proved useful from this e-meeting was the ability to use the IM facility while undertaking the audio call. This allowed for clarification of key points and language misunderstandings between the UK tutor and the Chinese student.

The lack of complete success from these pilots caused frustration and disappointment with the software, but also highlighted the potential added value for educational support using e-conferencing or virtual tutorials.

As a result of ensuing discussions with colleagues, other problems with MSN Messenger were also identified:

- advertising downloads while using the software
- Trojan viruses attempting to download during the e-meeting
- the University firewall slowing down any e-meeting due to the above

Following this experience, it was decided to investigate other packages as a vehicle to e-meeting communication. We identified that Skype matched the criteria as it offered:

- a more stable platform
- reduced banner advertising
- different versions of the programmes were compatible with each other
- the possibility of being downloaded to the work desktop PC without having to obtain administration access rights
- an e-mail contact linked to your 'Skype account' can be your work e-mail
- worldwide connectivity with over 53 million registered users

Findings

Using the Skype platform, seven e-meetings, each over 20 minutes long, have been held with six students – three UK undergraduate students on placement in New Zealand and three Chinese postgraduate students on placement in the UK. Each of the e-meetings used the video as well as the IM feature. The 'snapshot-photo' facility has also been used successfully and the photography sent to each student. The student feedback from these e-meetings, particularly from those in New Zealand, is that they "feel much more connected to the university while away on placement, particularly through the video facility than they would just through a 'faceless' telephone discussion".

Being able to 'view' the student tells the placement support tutor far more about the student's real wellbeing. We also identified that a stronger student-to-placement tutor relationship developed. The placement discussion has in effect become a 'virtual placement meeting'. The next phase of the virtual placement visit is to involve the placement provider through the employer's PC.

A further and unexpected benefit gained from using Skype was mentioned by one of the students in New Zealand. He discussed the use of this communication tool with his parents and they now use it as a means to hold better family conversations while they are apart.

The use of the e-meeting as a vehicle to add value to student support (placement and dissertation) is clear to see – greater connectivity, more meaningful communication and a stronger pastoral bond developed. The use of technology in this way has demonstrated the value it can have in enhancing learning and student support. Also, we have felt no addition to our workload, not always the case when the use of technology drives the teaching and learning process.

References are available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications

Using Problem Based Learning (PBL) to Support and Develop Learner Autonomy and Clinical Reasoning Skills

Earle Abrahamson,
Middlesex University

This article reports on the use of a problem based learning (PBL) approach to help support students on a sports rehabilitation degree programme develop autonomy and clinical reasoning skills to enhance the clinical competencies of sport rehabilitation practice.

One area within the sport science extended curriculum that benefits from PBL is sports rehabilitation and injury management, and related programmes that develop clinical skills and practices. Students on these programmes are expected, on graduating, to demonstrate their competency in assessment, treatment and management of injury. The expected competency relies on a process of reflection, action and the ability to make informed decisions based on relevant evidence and knowledge of condition. Ensuring that students meet the prescribed competencies for professional practice often demands that lecturers use creative and varied teaching and assessment methodologies within the module specific content. Thinking 'in action' as opposed to thinking 'about action' defines the boundaries between competency and incompetency in practice and professional development. Asking appropriate questions is an essential ingredient of PBL and for the developing critical thinker and analyst. Less effective critical thinkers generally fail to understand the demands of PBL, and are unable to read the environment accurately and interpret information available to them. If this stage of reasoning is unsuccessful and students fail to recognise the problem then the ensuing process of solving it will be flawed. The concern is how can PBL be used to help learners think critically instead of supplying answers which lack the need for deduction, insight and analysis, serving merely as the transfer of information?

Final year students on the undergraduate degree programme in sports rehabilitation at Middlesex University in 2007/8 were exposed to problem scenarios within the advanced rehabilitation module. This module demands that students work collaboratively to discuss, analyse and justify treatment and rehabilitation choices and outcomes. Students were carefully assigned to working groups of six to eight learners. This resulted in four learning groups of eight learners per group. Before assigning to their groups, each learner was asked to consider a difficult knowledge concept: one that creates a potential barrier to learning. Meyers (2008) describes *troublesome knowledge and threshold concepts* as learning barriers that present both

learner and educator with the challenge of navigating through and around the constraints of the concept.

Part of the exercise was to ascertain whether a PBL approach could be used to assist learners in navigating and developing skills to conceptualise and better understand these barriers. After learners presented their difficult knowledge concepts, members of the academic team met to carefully integrate these concepts into PBL scenarios. Wood (2003), claims that in order for PBL to be effective, the PBL scenario must be considered carefully and match programme specific outcomes. A summary of the key components of creating effective PBL scenarios is bulleted below:

- learning objectives likely to be defined by the students after studying the scenario should be consistent with the faculty learning objectives
- problems should be appropriate to the stage of the curriculum and the level of the students' understanding
- scenarios should have sufficient intrinsic interest for the students or relevance to future practice
- basic science should be presented in the context of a clinical scenario to encourage integration of knowledge
- scenarios should contain cues to stimulate discussion and encourage students to seek explanations for the issues presented
- the problem should be sufficiently open, so that discussion is not curtailed too early in the process
- scenarios should promote participation by the students in seeking information from various learning resources

The above guidelines were used in the design of the problem scenario. Learners were then assigned to the groups and given instructions on how to proceed towards a solution for the presented problem.

Students on the programme, and those taking the advanced rehabilitation module, were also part of a peer mentorship scheme, which was acknowledged as an important resource in considering potential solutions to the problem. Academic staff acted as facilitators and mainly supported students in posing additional questions to help direct learners towards possible resources. The problem scenario was presented in the last ten

weeks of the module, and the learning groups had eight weeks to consider answers before presenting their findings to the rest of the learning groups. Each group was given a different scenario to consider.

Initially the majority of students struggled to understand and apply the dynamics of evidence-based learning and to provide justification for answers. Most learners attempted to match theory with practice but soon realised that this approach was restricted and did not fully support treatment options. It was interesting to observe the team interactions, and out of class meetings. After the fourth week, learners began asking different types of questions, and created mini debates within their learning groups. Groups then started to consider how best to use resources, including visits to practitioners and attendance on professional development seminars. The mentorship scheme proved to be a valuable and useful resource in that final year students were able to discuss their treatments with graduates and other learners.

To best decide and agree treatment and rehabilitation options, learners engaged in a series of questions and consequences:

1. What is the main problem/issue?
2. Am I qualified to deal with this problem/issue?
3. Subjective assessment – Does it fit a pattern? If not what further information do I need?
4. Am I asking the right questions to elicit the information I require for treatment?
5. What do I expect to find on examination?
6. Do the findings meet my expectation?
7. Does the problem fit a pattern now? If so, what is the diagnosis? If not what further information do I require?

The sequencing of questioning and consideration of consequence determines effective analysis and management of the problem. Surface learners or ineffective critical thinkers could well deviate from the main clinical questions and arrive at solutions that do not fit the pattern of injury presented. These learners fail to understand how to use their knowledge and are, at best, skilled technicians of knowledge transfer hoping that their response will meet with client approval.

When learners finally presented their treatment plans after the ten weeks, an interesting dynamic was revealed. It was clear from the nature and quality of the treatment plans presented, that a transformation in thinking and application of knowledge had occurred. The vast majority of students were able to consider creative and varied solutions to the problem presented, and became more confident in navigating through what was initially a troublesome knowledge concept. There were a few learners who were only able to transfer knowledge and had limited understanding of the application of knowledge. Three main groups of learners emerged as a result of this exercise and using a PBL approach. The first group of learners were able to move knowledge, i.e. transfer and repeat concepts, but had limited understanding of the application of knowledge. The second group, more autonomous than the first, were able to move with knowledge. This group had some understanding of how to apply differential knowledge in providing solutions to complex problems. The final group of learners were able to use knowledge. This group clearly demonstrated their ability to consider multiple sources to obtain knowledge and were further able to integrate, analyse and debate the usefulness of the knowledge in an attempt to solve and provide evidence based answers to the problem presented. This final group clearly demonstrated their

ability to think critically and clinically, and were able to acknowledge limitations within their knowledge, but simultaneously were able to appreciate how best to improve their current level of understanding.

The main factors students identified for their growth and for the change in their use of knowledge were: learning from peers, being prepared to adjust their own thinking, and being open to other professional views, perspective and clinical practices.

When using PBL with sport rehabilitation curricula it becomes important to prepare students for receiving problem-focused information. Similarly, students need time to develop and accommodate new learning skills and cognitive functions. Asking questions and asking problem based questions reflect and involve two different processing styles. PBL, as evidenced through research studies, has the advantage of fostering active and inclusive learning, improved understanding and development of lifelong learning skills. It also allows students the opportunity to reflect on practice and consider alternative solutions to problems. If used effectively PBL can motivate students and maximise student engagement with the subject thereby fostering a deeper learning of the subject area (Duncan, et al., 2007; Wood, 2003).

References are available at:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications

Personal Tutoring in Cardiff School of Management, UWIC – The Story so Far

Jane Levy and
Elspeth Dale, UWIC

Students can get a great deal of information from written documents. What they want is what all human beings have always wanted: personal contact. (THE, 2008)

Cardiff School of Management's (CSM) bespoke Personal Tutoring unit was set up in September 2007 to provide for students studying in the Department of Tourism, Hospitality & Events Management and UWIC Business School. The unit is CSM's unique approach, within UWIC, to fulfilling both organisational and school strategic aims and was in response to the need for one-to-one support for students ancillary to the pastoral care offered by academics, programme directors and year tutors. The approach taken by the unit was, and is, to provide an easily accessible, very personal learning experience for each and every student. The onus is on these dedicated personal tutors to engage with the students and make the idea work in reality.

Defining Personal Tutoring at CSM

The school's vision, as stated in CSM's Personal Tutoring Strategy (2008) is that:

Personal tutoring will become part of the culture of CSM and will be recognised by both students and staff as an integral part of the student experience. It will be made easily accessible to all students through a dedicated personal tutoring unit based on campus and through a computerised booking system that allows appointments to be made with other members of staff offering personal tutoring. A simple database will form the backbone of the personal tutoring system allowing colleagues to share information about students to ensure a joined up approach to support.

The provision of this service is still evolving but the baseline definition of the function as defined in the CSM strategy document (2008) is:

A one-to-one meeting between student/s and academic member of staff which seeks to improve the student's university experience through providing access to academic support, personal guidance and/or access to student services. The main outcome of each meeting should be that the student feels more confident in both academic and personal terms.

The service which, although provided by all staff, is delivered by a team who are full-time personal tutors, aims to instil confidence into CSM students by encouraging their personal development planning along with strengthening key skills with a view to continually focusing on employability. The Personal Tutoring service also provides an access point to other Student Services but the aim is specifically to ensure that each student feels better personally about their experience at CSM after each meeting.

The Process

Three main areas were identified as the anchors for personal tutoring sessions: *academic studies, welfare, and personal development towards employment*. Open questions, that are focused but not exhaustive, were developed around these areas and designed to prompt discussion. This also gives tutors the opportunity to identify any issues that may require student referral to student services for specific support, e.g. debt management or emotional problems.

Examples of questions used to initiate conversation and establish:

Academic Issues:

- Are you enjoying your course?
- Do you understand what is required of you?
- Are you managing your workload?
- Are you using the information learnt in PDP when doing assignments?
- Do you need help with Harvard referencing; project planning; presentation planning and skills; essay writing skills; avoiding plagiarism?
- Are you working part time and if so does this have implications for your studies?
- Are you aware of all the support systems that UWIC offers for students i.e. Careers Services etc?

Wellbeing:

- How are you in general?
- Are you finding it easy to settle in?
- Have you made friends?
- How is your accommodation?
- How is your health?
- How are you managing your money?
- Is there anything worrying you?
- How is your family getting on without you?

Students are also encouraged to build awareness of Personal Development towards Employment:

- Do you know what you want to do when you leave?
- Do you know what personal skills are required for this role?

- Are you already working in a related field?
- Have you been to see the Careers Service? (2nd and 3rd years)
- What goals would you like to set yourself for this year?

The main focus of the first meeting is to establish if there are any barriers that might prevent the student from being able to learn, to find a way to bring down those barriers and then, in theory, enable the student to concentrate on their studies and improve their grades. It also helps them start thinking about what they want to do when they leave UWIC, why they feel this way, and which core competences and skills they might need to be able to demonstrate in order to find work in their chosen area. Subsequent meetings ensure that they are receiving the necessary support if they have problems and focus on targets set by their tutor to improve skills.

The Practice

The approach to personal tutoring as it currently stands is one whereby the student and their individual needs are at the centre of the personal tutoring session. Discussions are held around the three areas identified previously, although these are not exclusive. Objectives are set at each meeting and follow-up sessions to monitor progress are booked in. If additional services are required, either those from student services or academic workshops, appointments are made with the student present. No specific number of meetings is specified per student as it is deemed by the unit that those who need more attention should be given it, and those who feel more confident will come back as and when they need to. Ideally, a minimum of three sessions per year would be a baseline provision for all students but the "as and when" approach currently taken works well for students and means that as students choose to come to their sessions, they are engaged in the process.

At this point it is also important to mention the database system CSM personal tutors use as it is possibly one of the first in its kind in the UK. The system allows all sessions to be logged on a shared database and tutors to share key points of discussions held with students. By using this system, if a student drops in without an appointment, key information is readily available ensuring that no time is wasted during the session. Shared access is also important in building up the confidence of the student in the service as it appears "joined up" and managed. The system also enables demographic data to be collected about the students who use the service, helping the team with its future marketing to under-represented groups. It can also pick up on trends in particular difficulties as the main point of discussion in each session is logged. In future, this information could be used to respond very quickly to generic student needs. As the service develops, this database could be accessed by other staff carrying out personal tutoring, thus enabling CSM to provide personal tutoring in a flexible yet managed fashion.

The Proof of the Pudding...

This bespoke system of personal tutoring developed at CSM, although still in its early stages, is proving invaluable to both students and academics. The founding belief of the unit is that students need to be at the centre of teaching at UWIC and its delivery is entirely student focused. Since opening its doors in October 2007, 930 one-to-one meetings have been conducted with students, over 600 students have been tutored individually, and more than 400 students in the MBA cohort have been catered for in small group tutorials. Considering that there was no service of this kind before October 2007, awareness has developed rapidly through consistent and proactive marketing to students and growing word of mouth referrals.



Marketing has been direct and user specific through media such as posters, personalised emails, texting and a massive visual presence. In 2008, UWIC Student Services, based on other campuses, reported an increase of 135.7% in numbers of CSM students accessing counselling, an increase of 50% accessing debt advice and overall the Disability Unit supported 16.2% of the CSM student population in contrast with 12.6% the previous year.

Where to Go From Here?

As it becomes an integral part of the culture, more and more students request personal tutoring sessions of their own accord. We recognise that work still needs to be done to encourage academic staff to refer students to the unit, as some departments are more proactive than others, but the development of these relationships is continuing. They are seen as critical to the success of personal tutoring. Part of the issue to date has been helping staff to differentiate between what is offered by the unit compared to tutoring already offered as part of academic programmes, but the message is getting through. It seems academic teaching staff are starting to see the benefits of the service. Some comments included the "freeing up of time", how "invaluable continual study skills support for students is", that it helps "develop the literacy skills of non-EU students", "students seem to find the effect of the service very positive" and finally, one member of academic staff reported "my students use the service; that says it all really".

The unit is based on an ethos of continuous improvement and is constantly seeking ways to improve its offering and add value to the student experience. The bottom line is that the students have embraced what really is “their” Personal Tutoring service and, in the 2008 independent student evaluation, these were just some of the comments which basically sum up how CSM students feel:

- Really friendly, knowledgeable and helpful.
- I used personal tutoring to improve my writing skills and I found it very useful.
- Very helpful, answered my questions very well, definitely helped me to improve my work.
- Keep up the good work.

- Help is done informally but very well. Helped me loads.
- I was seen when needed to be even if I hadn't made an appointment.
- I found having someone to listen to me who could relate to what I was going through helped me immensely through my first year.
- Without the tutoring service I would have dropped out of uni this year. With your help I stayed and am working on the problems that I currently have. I just want to say thank you.

If you would like more information on Personal Tutoring at CSM, please contact Elspeth Dale (edale@uwic.ac.uk) or Jane Levy (jlevy@uwic.ac.uk).

Creating a Positive Learning Experience for First Year Students at the University of Gloucestershire

Joanna Hardman,
University of Gloucestershire

Introduction

There are currently nine sport-related undergraduate programmes run by the Department of Sport at the University of Gloucestershire from which prospective students can choose. During induction 2008, the Department welcomed approximately 350 new students onto its campus in Gloucester. Creating a positive and welcoming climate for all learners is central to the Department's teaching and learning ethos. In the past, induction week has been a busy period, during which staff and students engaged in a variety of scheduled activities that provided opportunities for students to get to know their peers, academic staff, university systems and day-to-day details about university life.

Feedback from previous induction events suggested that although students had enjoyed the activities planned for 'Week Zero' they wanted to know more about the course that they were enrolled on. Students suggested that they “would have liked to have had a taste of what to expect from (my) course earlier”.

Data collected from a follow-up questionnaire which was sent to all level one sports students after induction also suggested that incoming students wanted to be involved in their studies right from the start.

Induction Plans

In response to the student feedback, the Department collaborated with the University's Centre for Active Learning (CeAL) for the 2008 induction. The Department received funding from CeAL to design and deliver an induction week that encouraged all incoming students to engage in an inquiry based project related specifically to their field of study.

During induction week, staff and students in the Department of Sport were involved in a range of inquiry based projects designed to provide new students with a taste of what they could expect during their undergraduate studies. A member of staff from each of the sports based courses was responsible for designing a project that required students to complete:

- a) A research based task,
- b) A problem solving activity,
- c) An informal assessment.

Supporting Students – the Role of the Academic Review Tutor (ART)

Although incoming students were expected to get involved right from the start, they were not thrown in at the deep end! When they arrived, the first people they met were their Academic

Review Tutors (ARTs). In their tutor groups (a maximum of 20 students per group), they spent the first morning participating in a variety of team building activities, providing an opportunity for them to get to know their ARTs and peers. After lunch on the first day they met their course leader who introduced them to Level II and III students studying on the course. This gave them an insight into all the great things they could expect over the next three years!

Introducing the Projects

The students were then provided with an outline of their project and a timetable of the week's events, so they knew what to expect. For example, the Sport Education students were introduced to their project (entitled "Yee Ha"), which aimed to explore the concept of high quality physical education in schools. The National Curriculum for PE suggests that pupils should work as individuals, in groups and in teams, developing concepts of fairness, and of personal and social responsibility. Team building activities can help increase the confidence and self esteem of pupils. The aim of the project was that the students on the BSc Sport Education programme would begin to reflect on these theories whilst participating in practical learning activities.

Developing Study Skills

Students were set a research-based task before they went out on their project. Each ART introduced the task, showing the students how they could access the University's learning centre on-line resources. Each ART group then had an independent task for which they were required to access learning centre resources (hard copy journals, online journals, books that related to their specific project and would help them complete the assessment task due on the Friday morning.

Putting Theory into Practice – The Field Trips

On Wednesday each student cohort went off-campus to participate in their project. The aim of the day was to provide an opportunity for students to mix with students and staff in their chosen field of study, and engage in a range of activities that they could expect to study in modules on their course. The table below highlights the projects that each course designed and implemented.

Assessments

Once they returned from their respective field trips, students were expected to collaborate with other students in their ART groups to complete an informal piece of assessment work. The assessment required the students to reflect on their experiences, and present the findings from their research based task to their peers and

Programme / course	Projects
BSc Sport Education	Team building activities in the Forest of Dean – focusing on the development of communication, leadership and group dynamic skills.
BSc Sport Development	Community based sports activities at the local leisure centre in Gloucester.
BSc Sport Science	Working with a local school in the Forest of Dean, providing sport science support for talented and gifted athletes
BSc Sport & Exercise Science	Orienteering competition over Cleeve Hill, measuring and interpreting changes in fundamental aspects of human performance.
BSc Sports Coaching and Foundation Degree Sport (Coaching)	Observation of a high profile, local sports event, during which students worked in teams to collect data as feedback in the coaching process.
BSc Sports Therapy	A live anatomy demonstration at Bristol Medical School, where they had the opportunity to put theory into practice.
Foundation Degree Sport (Development)	Participation in the sport of rowing at Gloucester Rowing Club.
Foundation Degree Sport (Fitness)	Participation in various walks within the city of Gloucester, with the aim of determining energy expenditure.

Table 1: Outline of Projects

staff. For example, once the students on the Sport Development Foundation degree had participated in a rowing activity at Gloucester Rowing Club they then had to complete a SWOT analysis of factors that might affect participation in this minority sport. Then they had to design a campaign for increasing membership at the new site of Gloucester Rowing Club. The students presented their findings either through PowerPoint presentations, digital stories or campaign leaflets – this was left to the students to decide.

On the Friday morning of induction week the campus was bustling with students presenting their work. The students were assessed informally and provided with constructive feedback, allowing them to see what was expected from them in terms of academic work. Feedback indicated that the students engaged thoroughly in the process and enjoyed seeing what other students in the Department had done on their day out.

The day ended with a free lunch for all staff and students. Various food companies from the Gloucester area were invited in to provide food (Chinese, Indian, Italian, Subs and the result was one big food court where staff and students sat together reflecting on the week.

Induction Week Evaluation

After the event all Level 1 students were provided with the opportunity to complete a feedback questionnaire. The survey was completed by 159 students, and only one of them responded negatively. The majority of students stated that they had enjoyed the week. In a follow-up focus group students commented:

Impressed with how they inducted us ... the way they showed us other people in my group showed me how to lay out the presentation – I had no idea, it's been a long time since school. It was helpful.

Fantastic as a social exercise, brilliant.

You go to lectures and you recognise faces and you can talk to people and know who you get on with. The week was good for that, for getting to know people better. The orienteering was good ... for getting people in groups because characters come out.

Staff also responded positively to the week, which was interesting as some colleagues were initially unsure about how the whole process would work:

Don't know how students will react but we're sure we couldn't carry on with what had been done in the past. (It was) unfair on certain students for whom staff had decided they wouldn't

bother – so it's going to be much better in terms of the consistent approach.

After the event staff feedback was extremely positive:

It was only a snapshot but I was able to introduce various academic transferable skills which they will need to develop.

It was a really good introduction to the students to the type of things that they can get used to ... 'yeah, I am actually learning here, but I'm learning through doing' ... a really good scene setter for them.

Conclusion

The department recognises that there are some issues that need to be revised. The week was very busy, so next year the structure of the week will be reviewed. The focus of the week will also be looked at – should it be an induction or transition into university life?

On the whole, though, as the follow up findings from CeAL indicate, the whole experience was extremely positive for both staff and students:

I think it's the best intro our students have ever had and this is my 4th induction experience ... I'm a convert ... I had my doubts and they've completely cleared.

Field Trips Enrich Student Learning

Maria Konstantaki, Buckinghamshire New University

Field trips are commonly used in higher education as a way to support and solidify student learning. New research and understanding of how the human brain processes information supports this notion and provides an understanding of why field trips are so important to learning (Shephard, 2008). Field trips are a critical tool for creating episodic memory (our most powerful memory in terms of capacity). Episodic memory is created through sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, location, and emotions. Field trips combined with activities before, during, and after the experience enable students to create powerful memories, provide emotional content for the episode, and establish emotional triggers that enhance storage and recall of information. Skilful educators can use field trips to effectively organise content and instruction so that students will be able to recall information over the long term (Shephard, 2008). In addition, Tal (2001) suggested that field trips are activities that have the potential to develop autonomy, collaboration and interaction, while they also offer opportunities to develop problem solving skills.

There are many other reasons for considering field trips as part of the curriculum. Field trips undoubtedly constitute a rich learning experience. They introduce variety and break up the monotony of traditional classroom-based delivery. In addition, they have the potential to equip the students with 'real life' experiences, which act as

catalysts for developing their experiential knowledge. Moreover, field trips introduce different perspectives to the way a subject is taught while also accounting for differing learning styles within the notion of cognitive learning. Field trips can stimulate student interest in industry practice and may act as a platform to generate placement opportunities. For the lecturer, field trips can provide an opportunity to extend knowledge, develop industrial links, create opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, and establish useful contacts. In addition, let's not forget that field trips also provide a much desired 'breather' from lecture preparation. Field trips, therefore, can bring about benefits for both students and lecturers, e.g they contribute to exposure of university courses on offer, thereby also providing a marketing opportunity.

For the past few years, I have organised field trips as part of an anatomy and physiology module within a sport science

curriculum. The University has a fully equipped Human Performance Laboratory and all materials necessary for teaching this subject. A visit to the local hospital however, where students can attend a post-mortem examination, is the ultimate learning experience. One might think it a rather peculiar method to introduce students to anatomy and physiology concepts and, let's admit it, the sight of dissected organs certainly does not appeal to everyone. I organised the trip for the first time (following students' requests) by contacting the doctor in charge of the post-mortems at the local hospital. The lead pathologist was very welcoming and gave a one-hour narrative of the different organs before stating the cause of death. The trip has proved a success ever since and those students who choose to attend find it stimulating and interesting. At the end of each visit I ask the students to write a reflection on their post-mortem experience. Two students gave me permission to use their name and reflection for this article. Here is what they wrote:

Victoria Slater, 2nd year BSc Sport Science

The opportunity to see (things) in real life instead of in text books gave a more in-depth look at the human body and its functioning. Being able to see all the organs as they lay was a real insight and having an experienced pathologist explain the functioning of each organ and their orientation and how specific damage could cause significant problems in normal function, really appealed to my way of learning. I think taking students to something as interesting and 'off the normal way of learning' is a great tool and I have definitely benefited from this. Thank you for the opportunity and I hope to join you next year.

Darren Benedick, 2nd year BSc Sport Psychology

A trip to view a post-mortem does sound like a daunting prospect. However, after making this visit I can honestly say that it was one of the most valuable things I have done in my life. It is a once in a lifetime chance to see what happens to an individual when death occurs. From an educational perspective, you can further grasp the workings of the human body, as well as really gain a good idea of what organs actually look like. What amazed me the most was the size of the human liver. Despite the smell- which indeed can be overwhelming at times- you literally see everything, from the body being cut open to the organs being cut out of the body, cut up and weighed

to indicate abnormalities in size and weight which in turn may underpin the incidence of disease that caused death. Overall, it was a fascinating trip and one that I cannot recommend enough. Just don't have a heavy breakfast on the day!

To conclude, the students' reflections are certainly testament to the rich learning experience this type of field trip offers. I would highly recommend this field trip to any sport science academic. The time spent organising the field trip is time well invested in learning for everyone concerned. I must not forget to mention that the link developed with the pathologist has since been extended to further educational opportunities including guest lectures.

Acknowledgement

Many thanks are owed to Dr. David Bailey, lead pathologist in charge of post-mortem examinations at High Wycombe Hospital.

References are available at:
www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications

Supporting the Army Online

Monica Or, Westminster Kingsway College

It is one thing setting up lessons on Blackboard, but it is totally different when the courses are live and being used. Out of sight is not out of mind.

Foundation Degree qualifications are now gaining recognition from both employers and students, and Westminster Kingsway College was approached by the Army to develop a Foundation Degree specifically tailored to their needs. Since the students on these programmes are from widely dispersed geographical areas, many adjustments to the original programme were needed to meet student needs. The Foundation Degree in Hospitality and Food Service Management is being run completely online for the Army, so that if students are called away on a tour of duty they are still able to study from overseas, access their resources and interact with their fellow students and tutors online.

Westminster Kingsway College uses Blackboard as their Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Initially it was used as a tool to upload materials and resources which students could refer to. As programmes have developed over the last six years so has the

use of Blackboard, which has been revolutionised in relation to interactive online activity. This has altered the way our students are supported while studying at a distance.

A New Way of Teaching

For the lecturers on this programme, teaching online opened up a whole new set of teaching strategies – it was imperative that interactivity between students and lecturers continued,

even though face-to-face contact was no longer possible. Gone were PowerPoint presentations and along came wikis, discussions forums, blogs and videos.

The use of video was interesting in this case, as there are several ways videos can be embedded in lessons on Blackboard. Videos of past lessons or student presentations and role plays were uploaded (and our Army cohort particularly liked this), as was footage from television programmes. Videos were also put on YouTube, recorded via a webcam and embedded. The shorter videos could be uploaded onto Blackboard by the lecturer quite easily, while other videos needed the assistance of the IT department, as files had to be converted or compressed and set up in a particular way to shorten the time taken to download. This is where the preparation of materials became quite technical and the IT department were extremely useful and supportive.

Once lessons went live it was no longer just a case of teaching the course as, at the same time, the lecturers also had to teach the students how to use these new interactive tools. This meant that once the lessons were written and uploaded, there was constant monitoring of the VLE to see who had been contributing and who was "lurking". Continual feedback was given on the work students were putting on Blackboard, increasing the support given to them and making this aspect of the role of e-tutor more apparent to us. Through carrying out these interactive tasks, both tutors and students became more familiar with how to edit a wiki, add a new thread to a discussion, and update their blogs.... and tutors learned what to do when things went wrong, such as weblinks breaking, or students deleting content from a wiki page by mistake.

A New Way of Learning

For the Army students this was a whole new concept. Logging on to Blackboard was one thing, but working out where content was and how to contribute to the various asynchronous activities made them realise they needed to be very organised in order to keep on track with the weekly lessons. Some eager students would jump ahead, while others would take their time – an e-learning course gives that flexibility.

One of our Army student's comments on using Blackboard:

I really thought it would be a nightmare... especially after my first few attempts to navigate around bb!! However, it has got a lot easier and I find it really useful – the way bb is set out – and sending assignments in electronically is great. I'm more and more 'onside' as the journey goes on! Many thanks for all your patience and assistance – top drawer!!!

At first the students were a little apprehensive about using Blackboard, although after they had a go at using the different tools their confidence grew, and now they regularly contribute to discussion forums and update their blogs. They have produced some outstanding wikis and their own videos. They are particularly keen on external weblinks for further resources and have, for example, found the Institute of Hospitality's e-books and journals extremely useful.

Communication is Key

There are various methods for the tutor to communicate with students and monitor their activity during an online course. Other than email and phone, we have found text messaging via Blackboard excellent for giving a quick reminder of what needs to be done. The use of wikis helps the tutor to track who has been contributing, as a breakdown of the different versions of the wiki and who updated it when is available. The discussion forums clearly show who has been active and the blogs are a good way for student and tutor to communicate one-to-one. If there is a student that has been

very quiet or inactive then a gentle email to remind them or find out how they are usually nudges them back into action.

Tutors have gained feedback through online surveys completed by the students. Some of these have been set up so that students can indicate how they have been getting on with Blackboard; other surveys have been set up in relation the modules they are studying.

The tools mentioned so far have very much been focused on asynchronous activity, during which students upload their views, opinion or work. This is only seen when a fellow student or lecturer goes into that forum, wiki or blog, at which point they can add their comments if they wish.

Synchronous activity, with everyone online and interacting at the same time, has been set up through messaging services. Group messaging meetings need to be well facilitated, as conversations can get confused if several members of the group try to "speak" at once or there is a fast typist jumping ahead of the conversation while a slower typist is still responding to the first question.

For those students who like to actually see people, the use of webcams has proved invaluable, and vivas carried out online via webcam have been highly successful. As a tutor in London I can speak to my tutee in Ireland and see them face-to-face. This is also good for one-to-one tutorials.

Constant Improvement

The first cohort for the Army is up and running. As the students work through the lessons and submit assignments online, there is constant feedback on what works well and what needs to be improved. It is from this feedback that a protocol has been set up on how lessons are set out online, so all lecturers can amend their materials and resources to make them more user-friendly and interactive for online use, and development is of course ongoing.

Top pointers on how to support online learning:

- set up all lesson materials in advance of a module starting for each semester and keep them interactive
 - Include text, pictures, graphics, colour, video in lesson materials where appropriate
 - enrol a dummy student to check the student view and double check links have been set up correctly
 - ensure instructions for activities are crystal clear, with guidance such as expected time frames (how long to spend on formative exercises) and word counts
 - give examples of good practice, so students can see what standard they are expected to work to – if they have to produce a wiki page, show them an already completed one to give ideas of what should be included
- contribute to discussion forums yourself, don't just leave it to the students
 - regularly comment on wiki pages and blogs, so your students know you are around and you can see what they are doing
 - be accessible to your students via VLE, email, text, phone and instant messaging

Effect of Formative Feedback Following Computer Aided Assessment

Richard Tong and Carl Beynon, UWIC

Aims

The aim of the project was to assess the effectiveness of different levels of formative feedback in improving the learning experience, engagement and future student performance following computer aided assessment (CAA).

Context

There has been a dramatic increase in the use of CAA in higher education in sports-related programmes but the use of feedback from CAA has not been fully explored. Therefore it was decided to investigate which are the most effective types of computer aided feedback (CAF) for improving student learning.

A cohort of first year undergraduate students at UWIC was exposed to four different types of formative CAF in a Physiology module. The module was delivered in the same format as for the previous year but each 6 week block of teaching was assessed by a CAA. After each block, CAA students received four levels of feedback. Each CAA was live on Blackboard for one week and students accessed this remotely. They were allowed one attempt and the different levels of feedback were:

1. Their score.
2. Their score plus which answers were incorrect.
3. As (2) but they also received an electronic explanation for questions which were incorrectly answered.
4. As (1) except they were invited to attend a group tutorial with a member of staff 7 days later.

Results

- the overall performance of the year group improved by 28% from the previous year (52-80%)
- students preferred option 1 to the anxious wait often endured following a formal examination
- option 2 provided the same benefit as option 1, but with the additional benefit of providing an indication of which areas they needed to work on
- option 3 was the preferred option by most students as it provided an instant explanation of areas they had not initially understood
- students felt that whilst there were benefits of interacting with the tutor in option 4, the delay of seven days was too long after the assessment

Conclusion

- student performance can be improved by formative assessment and feedback
- students want instant feedback on assessment
- some students are more comfortable with remote electronic support rather than face-to-face tutorial support

A more detailed description of this project can be found in the associated case study and the final report on the Pedagogic Research Project Round 7: Can computer-aided assessment assist student learning? www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/ourwork/pedagogicprojects/round7

Finding A Better Way To Teach Coaching: The Case For Action Research

Robyn Jones, Kerry Harris
and Kevin Morgan, UWIC

Aim and significance

The aim of this study was to critically evaluate an action research approach to teaching coaching from both teaching and learning perspectives. The curriculum was established around a set of practical experiences and theoretically driven discussion groups with the intention of developing, in students, an integrated, realistic knowledge base of how theory can and should be reflected in practice. The significance of the work lies in providing student-centred learning opportunities inclusive of an explicit opportunity to implement theory in practice. It was considered that such pedagogy would allow students the chance to better engage with their own learning, thus increasing the perceived relevancy of the experience. Developing the perception of relevance is crucial, as commitment to continuing professional development in any real sense is largely dependent upon the inclusion of meaningful activities (Chen, 1998; Jones & Turner, 2006). Echoing Greenwood and Levin's (2003) critique of the applicability of social research in general, we also consider that a key challenge in teaching coaching is to refer to learning situations where theoretical and craft knowledge are put to use in addressing real-life problems.

What is Action Research?

Action research has commonly been portrayed as a methodology which pursues outcomes of both action (change) and research (understanding). Recent years have seen a growth in its popularity, stemming in part from recognition that the accelerated pace of change requires research methods that are dynamic and flexible, capable of capturing the ever shifting complexity in how we live, work and learn (Tsai et al., 2004). It is a process of longitudinal study in context, involving basic cycles of observation, interpretation (including the integration of theory), action and reflection. This allows for the continuous construction and testing of explanations in practice, leading to improved understanding and learning (Tsai et al., 2004). According to Dick (1997), the purpose, through critical and considered reflection, is to allow both tacit and explicit knowledge to inform each other in order to better deal with difficult and complex real-life problems.

A key characteristic of action research is collaboration between researcher and participants. In this respect, action research can be seen as cogenerating knowledge through collaborative

communication, where the diversity of experience within a group is viewed as a catalyst for enrichment (Greenwood & Levin, 2003). It recognises that people learn through the active adaptation of their existing knowledge in response to their experiences with other people and their environment. This experiential learning process is a natural one for most people and action research helps by providing a framework for formalising it, thus making the process more effective.

Methodology

The unit in question

Eight students were registered on this unit which formed part of the MSc (Coaching Science) at the University of Wales Institute – Cardiff. The initial session highlighted the unit's aims, learning outcomes, assessment procedures and teaching method (i.e., action research). The first half of the second week's session focused on reflection; its purpose, limitations and value. The second half was given over to an explicit theory, with the students asked to implement the knowledge in their following week's (coaching) practice. Week 3 began with a discussion centred on the student-coaches' implementation of the theory given the previous week. The remainder of the module followed this bi-weekly cycle, covering eight separate theories.

Procedure

The principal method used to gather data on the student learning experience was that of participant observation. Consequently, an experienced qualitative researcher was deployed in all the sessions, recording her observations and chatting informally to the students as appropriate. In addition, the views of both students and teachers were canvassed post-unit through the use of semi-structured focus group interviews.

Results

From the Students

All students agreed that the module had given them a better understanding of their own coaching. Being able to 'put a label on' certain coaching practices, as a consequence of new theory, catalysed the further development of the students' knowledge. There was thus a recognition that the content had contributed to new insights. As one student explained, 'it was really good to think with new stuff in your practice', whilst

another concluded 'it has made me aware of different areas of coaching that I am interested in and willing to investigate further'. The students undoubtedly found some of the theories easier to implement than others, which forced them to think harder about the theories as working tools rather than as behavioural prescriptions. The students also unanimously agreed that the module had made them more reflective in their practice. In the words of one, 'we have to be reflective to be in line with what we are doing in the module, the whole process is geared towards that...you are evaluating yourself as you go along, and when you finish you are a lot more aware of your practice'.

As stated, the weekly sessions also included follow-up, small group (4 per group) discussions of the participants' coaching experiences. This interactive student-centred focus was seen as a vital part of the module by the students and contrasted sharply with previous learning experiences. Social learning then, where students had the opportunity to learn from sharing each other's experiences of applying the theories, was a key element of the module and developed something akin to a genuine 'community of practice'. There was also a feeling that it was vital to attend all sessions for fear of missing out on the learning experience. Hence, the students felt tied to an on-going learning process, in which it was deemed important to experience every step.

From the Staff

A number of themes similar to those identified by the students emerged from the staff focus group. For example, the follow up sessions were considered to be a crucial facet of the teaching approach. They resulted in staff members feeling more involved and more accountable for their sessions. A perception also existed that the action research approach improved students' reflection and learning.

In terms of integrating other theoretical standpoints into their own delivery, the suggestion was made that it would be beneficial for the teaching team to meet more regularly during the module: an ironic point given that a principal objective of the exercise was to share practice. Despite this perceived limitation, the overall feeling amongst the staff was that by the end of the module the students were able to make the links between the different theories and personal practice effectively.

One of the final discussion points within the staff group centred on future developments. An idea debated was the potential use of observational analysis of student coaching episodes to further develop the reflective process within them. Another was to include electronic discussion boards of the different theories into the module to further secure and stimulate the shared learning experience. Overall, however, there was a feeling amongst the staff that the module had been very successful in achieving the Masters level learning outcomes and that,

consistent with most of the students' opinions, it could also be a very effective coach education unit or CPD course for more experienced coaches.

A Tentative Conclusion

The students' raised awareness as a consequence of engagement with the theories given realises an ambition of Wengers' (1998) 'communities of practice'. Through progressive engagement with the theoretical concepts given and with each other's experiences, the students came to recognise increasingly the specificity and limitations of their own knowledge. The action research structure of the unit, in terms of forcing critical reflection on practice, gave credence to the student's existing coaching knowledge and a subsequent impact was an improved ability to conceptualise that knowledge (Elbaz, 1983). Similarly, through the follow-up group discussions, the students colluded, collided and conspired in developing their understanding of coaching practice. In this way, as is the intention with communities of practice, the students acted as resources for each other, "making sense of situations, sharing new tricks and ideas" (Wenger, 1998: 47).

As with previous pedagogical experimentation (Jones & Turner, 2006), we recognise the limits of what can be achieved by, and claimed for, a teaching approach undertaken in a small scale study. Nevertheless, we believe enough promise exists to warrant further investigation of the potential of action research to cross the theory-practice divide. This particularly in developing students' personal transferable knowledge, sense of empowerment and critical reflection not only in relation to improving the "rationality and justice of their own practice, [but also] their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out" (Carr & Kemmis, 1998: 162).

References are available at:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications

Using Imagery to Enhance Student Performance in Verbal Presentations

Ross Roberts and Nichola Callow, Bangor University

In 2007/8, the HLST Network funded a Pedagogic Research and Development project which aimed to assess the effects of using imagery to enhance student performance in verbal presentations. Many UK institutions have a verbal presentation as part of their assessment portfolio. In the School of Sport, Health, and Exercise Sciences at Bangor University, this verbal presentation is performed in front of an audience including staff members, postgraduates and undergraduates. Reports from staff and student forums indicate that the verbal presentation is perceived as a stressful experience by students. These anecdotal reports are consistent with the literature demonstrating student perceptions of stress and anxiety associated with verbal presentation performance (Matthews et al., 1986). Given that anxiety can have detrimental effects on performance (e.g. Woodman & Hardy, 2003) and that presentation skills are an important transferable skill, strategies that support students with this type of assessment are vital.

Strategies which attempt to counteract this stress can be found in Sport Science degree programmes in the form of psychological skills practice such as goal setting, relaxation, imagery, and self-talk. The effectiveness of these psychological skills in sport settings has been well documented (e.g. Duda et al., 2005). Attempts have also been made to examine the effects of psychological skills in 'out-of-sport' contexts (e.g. Curry & Maniar, 2003). These have examined the effect of various psychological skills on life skills and academic performance, and show positive results. However, research has tended to examine the impact of psychological skills programmes on a range of dependent variables including decision-making and problem-solving instead of focusing on specific academic performances. We therefore decided to examine the effects of an imagery intervention on verbal presentation performance in an academic context.

Our study focused on *visual imagery perspective* and *narcissism*. Imagery perspective concerns the view taken by the imager and is commonly divided into internal visual imagery (IVI: the view a person would get if they imagined looking out through their own eyes), and external visual imagery (EVI: the perspective a person would get if they imagined watching themselves performing the task from a third person perspective). Narcissism is a personality variable which reflects an individual's self-admiration and perception of being an exceptional performer. Given that narcissistic individuals enjoy looking at themselves from external viewpoints (similar to an EVI perspective) we hypothesised that narcissistic individuals using EVI would perform better in their verbal presentation than those using IVI, because EVI allows a narcissist to see himself perform, whereas IVI does not.

To examine this hypothesis we explored the effects of a 6 week imagery intervention on the performance of 2nd year students' project proposal presentations. At the beginning of Semester 2 (February 2008), students attended a workshop in small groups as part of preparations for the project proposal. In total, 10 workshops were run and each workshop contained two sections. The first section of the workshop provided students with information on how to prepare and perform a verbal presentation (e.g. different aspects required in the talk, presentation skills). The second half of the workshop was comprised of the imagery intervention.

The 73 students who agreed to take part were led through an imagery script by the researcher. They were asked to practise with the imagery script for 5 minutes every other day, and were provided with a diary to record any actual preparation done for the presentation (such as reading or meeting their supervisor) and the amount of imagery practice done each day. Students were also asked to record, in the diary, how vivid and lifelike their images were, and how effective they felt the imagery practice was for their preparation. In the 6 weeks between the workshops and the presentations students were given regular reminders to ensure that they were carrying out the intervention.

Our results confirmed the hypothesis. Specifically, a significant interaction was revealed, with those high narcissists using EVI gaining higher verbal presentation scores than those using IVI. The results also revealed that all those who attended the imagery workshops performed better in the verbal presentations than those who did not, thus confirming the efficacy of using imagery in this situation. It would seem that, irrespective of the personality of the students, an imagery workshop is useful in supporting students in this type of assessment.

Getting Started With an Imagery Intervention

1. Assessment of Imagery Ability and Narcissism

Although not specified in the study report, we also assessed students' level of imagery ability. A moderate level of ability to image is need for the activity

to have any effect. Therefore, assessing student imagery ability before an intervention shows whether the individual is likely to gain any benefit from taking part immediately or whether a period of imagery training is recommended. Imagery ability can be readily assessed using questionnaires such as the 'Vividness of Movement Imagery Questionnaire – 2' (Roberts et al., 2008). After doing this we would suggest that the narcissism levels of students are assessed. This can be achieved by using Raskin and Hall's (1979) 'Narcissistic Personality Inventory'. Students can then adopt the imagery intervention that is likely to have the most benefit: an IMI intervention for low narcissists and an EVI intervention for high narcissists.

2. Writing Imagery Scripts

The next step is to design the imagery scripts for your students. Imagery scripts are crucial to the success of the intervention, as the scripts provide the students with the detail of what is to be imaged. Hale's (2005) 'Imagery training' book has an excellent example of how to write an imagery script. First, try to tell the basic story of what you want your students to image (in the context of verbal presentations this would include all the components that make up the presentation, such as the room and audience, and the different parts of the presentation). The next step is to add some detail to these basic components. Hale suggests using appropriate adjectives and descriptions, and to incorporate the use of as many senses as possible into these. In both these sections it is important to think about the imagery perspective used. For example, if you are writing an IMI script, what might the student see as they stand waiting to present? If it is an EVI script, the student is watching themselves, so how do they look (standing tall, good body language etc.)? It is important to then think about any emotional components of the story and consider how those could be included (e.g., a student may feel their heart racing as they begin to present). Finally, the script is refined by taking all the information from the first three parts and putting it into flowing prose.

3. Practise the Imagery Scripts and Format into Appropriate Media

When the script is written, it is important to practise it and get feedback from students – what parts of the script were clear, and resulted in good images, and what parts were not. If changes are needed they can then be made. Discussion with students is important as it allows the scripts to be altered and personalised to some extent. It also allows the students to express opinions on what should be imaged. Once this is all completed, it is important to think about the best media format in which to present the scripts. Some students like to read the script to themselves and then image. However, others prefer to listen to the script in an audio format. Providing students with both options allows them to use their preferred format.

4. Using the Imagery Scripts

When students have their preferred script, we recommend that they read or listen to the script while in a comfortable position (sitting or lying) somewhere that they will not be disturbed, to enable them to become relaxed, yet remain alert so that they can concentrate. Some students choose to close their eyes, while others prefer to keep their eyes open. When students are in this position they can begin to use the script. If they are reading the script to themselves, it is probably best to try and divide the script into sections so that they can read a section and then image it. Once the script has been imaged in sections, it can be imaged in its entirety. If students are listening to the scripts on tape or CD they can listen to the script in sections and image each section (and then listen to the script in its entirety), or can image the script as they listen to it.

Over time, students may wish to change some of the content of the scripts. This is fine and in fact we would recommend it so that scripts become more personal to the student. It's just a case of practice, and then being creative with what you want to try and image.

The full report is available on the HLST website in Pedagogic Research and Development Projects, Round 8: Effects of an Imagery Intervention on Students' Verbal Presentation Performance
www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/ourwork/pedagogicprojects/round8

The Educational and Continuous Professional Development Value of a Study Visit to Malawi

Sarah Whitfield, City College Norwich



Tourism Training Day

In May and June of 2008, ten students and two members of staff from City College Norwich went on a two week study visit to the Dedza District in Malawi. The project was funded by the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) and supported by the Norwich Dedza Partnership (a small local charity) and the District Commissioner, Dan Piri in Dedza Province, Malawi. By setting clear and achievable objectives and with very careful planning, staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and student personal development and learning can be considerable on visits of this sort.

Study visits and field trips are often incorporated into the curriculum of courses at all levels, varying from day trips to international visits of several weeks. Kent et al. (1997: 313) stated that:

fieldwork is widely regarded as an essential part of undergraduate education in geography and lecturers agree that it represents one of the most effective and enjoyable forms of teaching and learning.

Linked to this, "travel for learning and education is not a new concept...the Grand Tour was seen as the beginning of cultural and educational tourism" (Ritchie et al., 2003:9). Ritchie (2003:191) continued by adding that many 'students now have the opportunity to take part in international travel as part of their degrees'.

Much has been written about student travel, mainly 'gap year' travel. The increase in student gap year travel, linked to the growth in the student population, has brought the market segment onto the research agenda (Richards & Wilson, 2004:59). Research on study abroad programmes to explore cross-cultural interactions between students and foreign environments is also gaining attention (Emmoil, 1999; Gareis, 2000; Robson cited in Xie, 2004). However, little has been written on the impacts of tourism field trips on students and staff, although Moxly et al. (2000) identified improved retention as a direct result of well planned field trips and Xie (2004: 109) added that

"as experiential education, college-level field trips create opportunities for students to actively observe phenomena such as tourism planning by visiting destinations".

Previous City College Norwich student feedback/course evaluation consistently identified the International Tourism Project as one of the highlights of their time at the college and of the course. Ten years ago I led annual trips to Northern Spain for research into Spanish Civil War sites, winter ski and rural tourism development. This was followed by annual visits to Romania (in association with a Bucharest based tour operator) which included research into developing tourism for UK based tourists in parts of Transylvania, and to the Danube Delta for the development of new products such as wine tourism. The objective for all these international trips was the attainment of the learning outcomes for the International Tourism Project Module. The field trips were carefully structured and took advantage of local industry speakers, visits to attractions, transport and tour operators, and public sector tourism offices. Student achievement of the module learning outcomes was the vehicle for assessment. However, unlike on the Malawi trip, no projects were commissioned by any of the supporting organisations.

Trip Planning

Early in 2007 the Head of the Hotel School at City College Norwich was approached by the Chair of a local charity – The Norwich Dedza Partnership (www.norwich-dedza.org) – to determine the possibility of a tourism lecturer visiting Dedza in Malawi, with a group of tourism students, to advise on tourism development and assist in

projects such as tourism training and small business development.

I made a preliminary visit in August 2007 to discuss possible projects with local economic development agency representatives and business people. A rigorous risk assessment was undertaken at this time to comply with college and county health and safety requirements. The reconnaissance visit also led to the development of a series of five *Information Bulletins* for the participating students.

Ten final year BA(Hons) Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Management students signed up for the two week trip in 2008. I believe that the overall success of field trips is determined by the setting of clear and achievable (but challenging) objectives; the support of a 'link' person or persons 'on the ground'; and rigorous planning and risk assessment/health and safety checks. The following primary objectives were finalised:

- to gather information from approximately 30 local businesses and organisations (public and private sector) with a view to compiling a Dedza visitor website (in association with Norwich City Council)
- to stage a Tourism Training Day in Dedza for local people in tourism related small businesses
- to cover the learning objectives for the International Tourism Project module (Level 3 Module Specification Form)
- to update industry-related professional development for two members of staff (CPD)

Secondary objectives included:

- to develop students from a personal and team work/group dynamic perspective (PDP)
- to improve/aid student retention and performance on the BA Hons HT&L Management course
- to assist in the development of a country's (Malawi) human resource and economic development (Amoah & Baun, 1997).



Finance Director Presenting Certificates

Student Evaluation

Evaluation consisted of a series of open ended questions about the logistics of the trip, and the educational and personal development benefits gained.

Educational and Personal Development Value

Students cited 'improved communication (with fellow students and local Malawians) and team work skills', 'a greater understanding of tourism and tourism management in a less developed country', 'greater awareness of less developed world issues in general' and 'project and small business management skills'. The students were also able to write up a number of case studies to use as examples in *The Impacts of Planning and Development* and *Strategic Management* modules (both of which were examined soon after their return to college after the visit). The participating students could also see a direct link between many of the modules studied to date on the course and the practical application of theory. One student is using Dedza and Malawi as the basis for his undergraduate dissertation.

From a personal development perspective student comments include 'the visit opened my eyes to new cultures and ideas', 'made me more appreciative of what I have', 'put things into perspective', 'made me place more importance on what I have such as health care, roads and services', 'makes me realise how lucky we are'. All the students expressed a desire to travel more in the future. Two comments that seem to sum up the feelings of the group were 'I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of the trip and feel really grateful to have had the opportunity. It was personally rewarding and I fell in love with the Malawian people and culture, thank you for organising the trip' and 'everyone should do it, a great opportunity to see tourism in the early stages of development...I had a fabulous time with tutors and friends on the course – the first time we had spent time together and actually got to know each other'.



Site visit – Robin Pope’s Pumuani

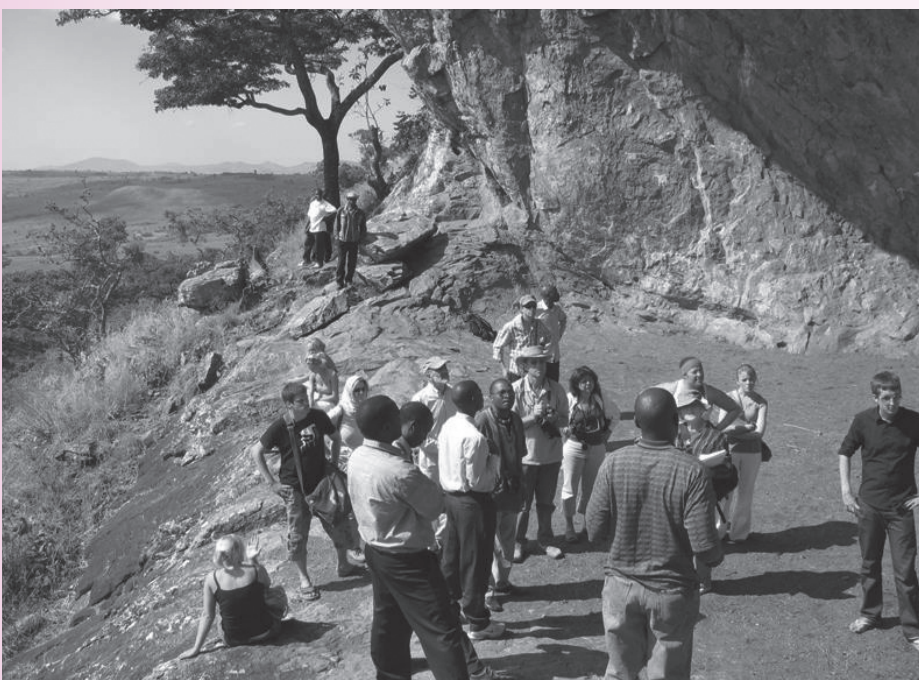
Staff Evaluation

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Staff evaluation of the trip was twofold: achievement of set objectives and from a CPD perspective.

A key factor for both members of staff was the opportunity to see (and work in) a destination in the ‘exploration’ stage, one that has low levels of business sophistication and tourism development. Such a destination offers an excellent base for the development of both theory and practice that can be used as an exemplar for student groups. Opportunities of this nature are rare.

Apart from the time spent and work done in Dedza, the two week itinerary was designed to enable a variety of visits all providing excellent case studies to use in



Chongoni Rock Art Dedza

future teaching. One such visit was to Robin Pope’s Pumulani on Lake Malawi, a new luxury lodge which was only weeks away from opening, and via a series of emails before the trip the author secured a group ‘show round’ with the General Manager. This visit provided an insight into the development of a project from scratch in Africa (including budgets) and all the associated difficulties.

Both members of staff concluded that the trip was an opportunity to work with students in a practical environment and this brought out the best in students and tutors. The Tourism Training Day was planned and developed by students and staff with students offering to conduct ‘role plays’ to assist in the understanding of customer service. The success of the day owed much to a mature collaboration between students and staff.

Visiting a less developed country (Malawi is the 13th poorest in the world) enabled staff to ‘revisit their own life priorities...and those of their jobs’. To be taken into a really challenging situation out of comfort zones, and to realise that very small things can make a difference in terms of the development of an agrarian economy was a very special feeling.

Achievement of Objectives and Conclusions

All the set objectives detailed above were achieved with the exception of the summative assessment of the International Tourism Project module.

- virtually all the information needed for the website including photographs was gathered (The Chair of the Partnership made a return visit in September 2008 to gather any ‘minor missing information’ (www.visitdedza.com))

The students did a splendid job in collecting information and taking photographs of facilities in Dedza...

I was also impressed by the way the students planned and conducted the customer care training day. Their idea to do role play sketches was consistent with the way in which training is often delivered in Malawi...everyone that I spoke to was appreciative of the training day (Nick Nicholson, Chair of the Norwich Dedza Partnership).

- the Tourism Training Day attracted 23 delegates – a substantial representation of the Dedza business community, with certificates presented by the Finance Director Charles Mahoney
- students 'wrote up' the module in the Autumn (2008) term to achieve 10 credits. Grades were good and one student based their dissertation on the visit
- significant CPD for two members of staff
- significant educational and personal development for students
- 6 out of 10 students said the visit 'kept them on the course', 3 out of 10 said 'the opportunity for the visit encouraged them to Top Up in the first place' and 6 out 10 said 'the visit has encouraged them to study further'
- Dan Piri, Dedza Province District Commissioner stated:

Your work has already changed the lives of the people of Dedza. We are so grateful for your interest and support and I thank you all for helping us to put Dedza on the map.

The value of field trips to student learning and personal development, staff continued professional development (CPD) and retention is significant. The success of the visit can be attributed to setting some very challenging objectives (which were all achieved; the link between partner organisations must be identified as a real strength of the project) a thorough risk assessment and careful planning.



Meeting Dan Piri – Dedza DC

The visit to Malawi provided a rare opportunity to experience a destination in the very early stages of development and all the participants benefited enormously. A follow up visit will be made in May 2009, with a further group of 10 students, to assess the effectiveness of the business training provided in May 2008, undertake early evaluation of the website, and participate in the next stage of wildlife (flora and fauna) tourism including evaluating potential guided walks in the area in association with the Forest Department.

References are available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications



Students going on Safari

Student Induction – A Recipe for Success

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Lizzio (2006) spoke of “five senses” of success when looking at retention and engagement at the beginning of students’ university careers. He emphasised that there is no right or wrong way, there are no guaranteed solutions or “magic bullets” that will retain or engage students, but there are elements (the five senses) that can be identified as important to all as they start out on their journey through university.

He names the senses as: a sense of capability, a sense of connectedness, a sense of purpose, a sense of resourcefulness and a sense of academic culture. The content of these senses are noted below.

Capability	Connectedness	Purpose	Resourcefulness	Academic Culture
Community participation and contribution	Student-student relationships	Disciplinary engagement	University-life interface	Clear values
Task and role clarity	Student-staff relationships	Vocational direction	Physical environment	
Academic competence	Institutional identification	Personal development	Systems access and navigation	

Adapted from Lizzio, 2006

In an earlier work, Krause (2005: 9) said, “the face of the first year experience has changed dramatically over the past decade and there is no reason to expect that this will not be the case in the decade to come. However, one constant is that the first year of university study remains arguably the most critical time for engaging students with their learning community and equipping them with the requisite skills to not only persist but to be successful and independent in their learning throughout the undergraduate years and beyond”. Burnett, (2006) identified that first year students are negotiating their new roles, environments, rules, identities, academic expectations and content as well as forming new groups of friends and the tensions associated with these. The theme in these works shows itself as the notion of continual learning, the change process and how students adapt over a period of time.

Awareness of these facts and the ongoing changing student profile led the Hospitality Management Programme team at Leeds Met to embark on a year long induction process.

The Leeds Met Framework

The year induction programme has three clear stages:

Stage 1 – Induction Week

A one week induction programme before the start of academic studies. Here students are equipped with their “recipe for success” (see figure 1), an index which identifies the key activities which will serve as a soft introduction to the university, their course, the team and their role as a student. Students are strongly encouraged to take early responsibility for their learning journey and they are given the opportunity to decide which activities they will engage in. Sessions include meeting the team and fellow

students, a chance to sign up to various clubs and social activities, as well as sessions run by a range of academic support services such as the library, skills for learning, IT and ECIS – English & Cultural Studies for International Students. There is also a guest lecture from Brian Turner, a celebrity chef and recognised industry leader. Brian’s message to students is to ensure they have a ‘career map’ and to remember that the ‘world is their horizon’. This mirrors our philosophy on the course, where we encourage them all to take responsibility for their own personal development and make the most of all opportunities.

In the week following, during the first meeting with their personal tutor, students discuss their engagement with stage 1 of the induction programme and a personalised action plan is devised to target areas which require further development. This is embedded and integrated into the continual professional development module, which is also a year long module, allowing for continual support by tutors.

Students’ comments on this first stage of the induction programme highlight the importance to them of feeling that they are settling into the university environment and getting to know their peers and the teaching team. These comments are collected from a first reflective writing exercise, a crucial component of their learning (Kolb, 1974).

When I first walked into the campus the whole university life/experience hit me properly and made me finally realise I am now an independent student. The first week of enrolment was a valuable one as it allowed me to gain a better understanding of what the course entails; not only that, but I was able to meet other students and develop new relationships.

Recipe for Success

Ingredients:

1 hour : Personal tutor
1 hour : Student liaison officer
1 hour : Team Building
3 fairs to attend – (Faculty Fair, Well Fair and Freshers' Fair)
2 hours : Food Safety
1 hour: IT induction
4 x 15minute slots: various
Pinch of fun and enthusiasm

Preparation:

WELCOME!

Wishing you a successful start to a dynamic student life at LeedsMet and your career in Hospitality.

We hope you enjoy this week and make the most of all the opportunities and information available to you.

To help start you with your recipe, we are providing you with an attached list of essential ingredients to collect during the week. Once you have completed your checklist, return to your personal tutor in week 1, for further assistance and guidance.

Bon Appétit

- Develop your Future
- Expand your Comfort Zone
- Communicate with Others

This week starts with a placement and careers fair organised by a group of level 2 students as part of one of their assessments. The students invite representatives from across the industry to come and talk to students about placement and job opportunities they can provide. This introduces students to organisations and sectors of the industry they may not have previously considered. The week also holds more as students have the opportunity to undertake two industry recognised qualifications – the Level 2 CIEH Award in Food Safety and Catering, and a specifically tailored course run by the Automobile Association (AA). The AA's Consultancy and Training department has designed a workshop specifically for our students focusing on quality awareness and quality management issues in the hospitality industry.

Reflection on this week, and on individual learning and development, is included in the continual professional development module.

Stage 3 – learning beyond boundaries.

This stage is an overseas fieldtrip, and this year will take place in Barcelona. The intention is to allow students to consolidate their year of hospitality management studies, and to infuse them with an international perspective. It is an opportunity for them to meet both level two and three students who have been invited on the field trip, giving them an opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas of what studying hospitality at Leeds Met entails and what they can expect from the years to come.

The next challenge for level 1 students is the placement year, and as many students will choose to go abroad, it is hoped that this field trip will give them a flavour of another culture. It will also be an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with other students with whom they have studied throughout the year, and whom they shall not be seeing for a year.

This year long programme was launched in September 2008 so Stage 3 has yet to take place. However, the students are eager and excited about the trip. The full programme will be reviewed by both the team and level 1 students on completion of the year. Early signs are promising as student engagement and retention to date have been good.

References are available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications

Figure 1: Recipe for Success

It wasn't too intensive. It was a nice gentle start to uni life.

The first day of induction week I was nervous – new city, new people, but the sessions really helped. I was able to meet the teachers and people on the course and find out where help was available.

The talk from Brian Turner was lovely. It was so interesting to hear about the life of a recognisable successful face and only helped to motivate me even further – especially as he was good at giving tips for the future.

The taster sessions about the course were very helpful and answered a lot of questions about things I wanted to know.

Stage 2 – Enterprise week

The second stage of the programme takes place in week six of the academic calendar. Its focus is to instil additional information and skills in students, who are challenged to think about five statements which underpin the week's programme:

- Be Extraordinary
- Ask Questions

What is ISPAL?

ISPAL (The Institute for Sport, Parks and Leisure) is the professional membership body for the sport, parks and leisure industries. It was formed in January 2007 by the amalgamation of two previous bodies: ILAM (The Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management) and NASD (The National Association of Sports Development).

ISPAL's aims are to build on initial positive work, reaching a wider audience with a more contemporary and relevant offer to members across the full breadth of the sports, parks and leisure sector. The institute prides itself on being a fast-moving, adaptable organisation which listens to its members and responds to their needs. It provides a comprehensive range of educational services, conferences and events as well as leading edge information services and playing a key role in representing the views of members when influencing government on policy for all aspects of the industry.

Education and Training

ISPAL provides continuing professional development (CPD) for its members, as well as offering a wide range of training courses at venues across the country, and in-house training courses for members. 2009 will see the launch of the Excellence in Entrepreneurship programme, which will provide a series of short courses aimed at supporting individuals who run their own enterprises or are charged by their employers to be more entrepreneurial in their approach.

Professional Development Board

One of ISPAL's recent initiatives is the Professional Development Board, which guides and supports the Learning Development strategy to ensure that ISPAL fulfils its role in the market place and promotes high standards of professional skills and expertise within the industry.

Chartered Status

To recognise the growth and increasing importance of the sport and leisure sectors, ISPAL is heavily involved in the move towards establishing a Chartered Institute. In partnership with the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM), ISPAL has formed a working group to investigate the establishment of an independent institute, governed by Royal Charter, for the management and development of sport.

Working in Partnership

One of the cornerstones of ISPAL's activities is the forging of links with industry and Higher Education providers. Over the

last year it has recruited a number of high profile leisure industry companies as corporate members, and sealed partnerships with several of the UK's top universities. By doing this, the institute is able to have productive dialogue with those at the sharp end of the sport and leisure sectors, as well as engaging with the professionals of the future at an early stage. ISPAL is also keen to engage with more local authority members, recognising the increasingly important role they have in providing leisure and fitness services during the current economic situation.

Conferences and Events

Each year ISPAL runs a comprehensive programme of events which enables the institute to address the main industry issues of the day while meeting the membership face-to-face.

The four main events in 2009 are:

- The Outdoor Activities Conference, 21st May
- Inspiring a More Active Society Conference, 2nd-3rd July
- ISPAL Scottish Conference, late September
- The National Sports Development Seminar, early November

In addition to these, ISPAL holds regular regional meetings, enabling it to maintain regular dialogue with the membership across the country.

Information Services

ISPAL offers all members free access to its renowned Information Hub, with full-time service support. The Information Hub is a comprehensive information resource which contains the latest industry articles, journals, research and statistics. Members are also provided with a weekly e-zine to keep them up to date with the latest industry news and jobs, INFORM – a full-colour quarterly members' magazine, and free access to a 24-hour business support hotline which offers advice on a wide range of business, legal and financial topics.

Making a real difference

ISPAL works hard to influence government policy in the areas which affect our members. In the last year, ISPAL executives have initiated constructive dialogue with the highest levels of government in England, Scotland and Wales and is looking to build on this as new policy is designed with an increasing focus on the sports and health agenda of the nation. At a time when the need to combat obesity and raise the activity levels of the UK's population is at the forefront of the government agenda, there hasn't been a better time for ISPAL's voice to contribute to policy-making at the highest levels.

Supporting Students Through Formative Feedback via Podcasts

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Introduction

Supporting students throughout their academic careers remains a key priority for most higher education institutions. While support comes in many guises and for a wide variety of reasons, supporting student learning is a fundamental role of academics. This article reports on an experimental approach undertaken by the authors to provide student support through podcasting. Specifically, it describes our experiences of developing podcasts as a formative feedback mechanism to support student learning and the benefits derived from this approach.

Formative feedback is one way to contribute to student learning through the provision of information about performance (Yorke, 2003). In addition, it can help students to take control of their own learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). In order to be effective however, students must engage with the feedback and incorporate it into their subsequent work, and the sooner the feedback can be provided after the learning activity, the better (Taras, 2006).

While the benefits of formative feedback are generally undisputed, there has been a general decline in its use within HE as a result of higher student-to-staff ratios and increased demands on academics' time (Yorke, 2003).

Within the Department of Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism Management at Oxford Brookes University, the potential of formative feedback to support undergraduate student learning is well recognised. However, like colleagues across the UK, we were struggling to find the resources to provide timely and effective formative feedback across large undergraduate modules. A further challenge faced was ensuring that feedback provided was clear and consistent across team-taught modules. It was decided to experiment with podcasts for this purpose in one undergraduate compulsory module. The module was led by one of the authors (Maureen) and the technical consultancy and support provided by the other (Steve). After each week's formal teaching, a podcast was created to offer students general advice on the work they had completed on the module to date, and to deal with students' concerns voiced during the formal teaching sessions. Both of these were informed by all members of the teaching team, and the podcast used to ensure that consistent advice was offered to students.

What is a Podcast?

A podcast is a "series of audio or video digital media files which is distributed over the Internet by syndicated download, through Web feeds, to portable media players and personal computers" (Wikipedia, 2009). The important thing is that a podcast refers to a series of files, arranged as episodes. A single audio file on a website is technically not a podcast.

How to Develop Podcasts

Recording a podcast

The first stage was to record the audio. An inexpensive headset microphone was used to record each 5-minute podcast, using a PC with the free recording software Audacity. Audacity proved to be a simple and straightforward programme to use and it allows the user to edit the audio to remove any mistakes or coughs. Once the recording was complete and saved as an Audacity file, it was exported in MP3 format. MP3 is an established standard for audio on the Internet, as the files are quite small and of reasonably good quality.

At the exporting stage, information about each specific podcast was added, including the author (Oxford Brookes University), and title (Module Title and the week of the feedback). It was also necessary to ensure that the file was identified as a speech file. This information is embedded in the MP3 file and appears on the user's MP3 player or computer.

Uploading a Podcast

It was decided to use the University's wiki system, a collection of pages on the web, to deliver the podcast. There are many other ways to deliver podcasts, such as blogs, dedicated podcast systems like Apple Podcast Producer and Profcast, and podcast plug-ins to a VLE, such as Wimba voice tools. We decided to use a

wiki however, as it allowed students to access the podcasts wherever they were in the world, as the wiki was publicly available. A wiki "space" for the module was set up, and a wiki page created for each week of the module. As the podcasts were recorded each week, they were uploaded to the corresponding teaching week. A transcript of the podcast was added to the wiki page to accompany the podcast. As the wiki has a built-in RSS feed facility, any new podcasts uploaded would automatically appear as new information in the RSS feed. The wiki proved a very successful way of delivering podcasts, as once it had been set up, the podcast production process could easily be controlled. In addition, because the wiki was public, the podcasts appeared very quickly on Google, thus maximising visibility.

Downloading and listening to a podcast

There are three main ways to listen to a podcast and these were all available as options to the students:

1. Click on the webpage link for each podcast, and listen to the podcast on the computer.
2. Right click on the link for each podcast, and save the file for listening later on an MP3 player or other system. Note: most podcasts can be used on any MP3 player, not just iPods.
3. Subscribe to the podcast "RSS feed". An RSS feed can be thought of as a notification service. Whenever a new episode of the podcast is released, the RSS feed broadcasts that information to any user who has the appropriate software. Popular RSS reader software includes iTunes, Google Reader and browsers such as Firefox or Internet Explorer.

Student Perceptions of Podcasts as a Formative Feedback Mechanism

The majority of students on the module took advantage of the podcasts for formative feedback and believed that they helped them with their academic performance on the module. In particular, students reported that the podcasts:

- helped them to complete their coursework
- provided a review or summary of the topics covered in the module
- improved their understanding of particular topics
- helped them to catch up if they missed formal teaching sessions
- helped them to complete weekly tasks on schedule

However, students also reported some difficulty with the podcasts. Despite their being available to download by subscription through iTunes, the majority of students did not take advantage of this option. Instead, they predominantly accessed the podcasts at home through their laptop or pc. In our experience, most students do not set up RSS feeds, preferring to take the simple route and click on the podcast link on the webpage. However, downloading in this way appeared to cause difficulty for many students, despite having full written instructions on how to do this. In addition, not all students on the module found the podcasts helpful and nor would they like to see them used again in other modules. However, the majority of students would like to see podcasts used in other modules, but expressed a preference to see them used in a variety of ways.

Staff Perceptions of Podcasts

From an academic perspective, the podcasts also proved to be a beneficial time management tool. While they took time to write, record and edit, this was done within a planned and regular weekly schedule. In addition, while podcasting is usually a fairly straightforward process, it may require some software training and it definitely requires some local IT support. However, this time was offset as the podcasts served to limit the number of students seeking individual tutorial times outside formal contact time for the module. This meant there was no need to repeat the same information to different groups of students and also helped to ensure that consistent advice was given to all students on the module. The podcasts have also been used to induct new members of the teaching team to the module and have proved helpful and time effective in this respect.

Conclusion

Podcasts have proved to be an efficient and effective way of providing feedback across a large team-taught module to help support student learning. The majority of students on the module used the podcasts and also believed they helped to improve their academic performance. In addition, most students would like to see podcasts used again but in different ways and, as academics, we should therefore explore other ways in which podcasts can be used to support students.

References are available at:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications

The Enhancing Series

Over the past few years, the HLST and BMAF (Business, Management, Accountancy and Finance) Networks have commissioned a number of academic staff to write case studies sharing their experience and reflections on areas of concern to them and to other staff working in higher education.

We are pleased to announce the publication of the third in this series, entitled *"Enhancing Student Centred Learning in Business and Management, Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, Tourism"*.

This introductory article has been written by John Buswell, University of Gloucestershire, and co-editor of the book with Nina Becket, former Assistant Director of the HLST Network.

What is the Point of Student Support? – Its Relationship with Self-Regulated-Learning

On the face of it, a relationship between student support and self-regulated learning could appear paradoxical. Surely, if we want to produce students who can work and think independently, and can manage and correct their learning, then giving them lots of support would be counter-productive. It would almost replicate the very structured and directed conditions in many schools and colleges which we criticise because of their stifling of creativity and inquiry. Leaving students to take more responsibility for their learning enables them to develop and enhance the skills required for this approach to learning.

Well, it is not quite as simple as that. Most higher education programmes in the UK purport to develop independent and autonomous learners. However, the processes for achieving this are sometimes less than transparent, and the true nature of independent and autonomous learning is not always acknowledged and nurtured. Indeed, the case for such an approach needs to be promoted. Personal autonomy is seen as an important element in the 21st century in that the complexities and the rapidly changing demands of modern society require the capacity to change, and to regulate learning and behaviour (Clifford, 1999; Jaros & Deakin-Crick, 2007). This also relates directly to a student-centred approach, founded on the principles of active and self-regulated learning, which has gathered momentum in recent years (Burgess, 2007). This requires not only reflection, reflexivity and self-awareness but also emotional engagement by the student. Student-centred learning implies that the student is more than a passive recipient of knowledge and actively participates in all the mediated learning experiences to develop the capacity of self-regulation.

Self-regulation is the ability to understand and manage our use of cognitive skills and strategies. Self-regulation involves identifying and setting personal goals and monitoring progress in achieving them in a systematic way. It is therefore intentional learning (Jackson, 2004) and leads to an individual taking control of their learning (Biggs, 1985).

Support for students occurs in many guises, as we see in the contributions to this edition of LINK, but the central argument of this article is that it is necessary to enable students to become self-regulated learners. The achievement of the skills for this is both an outcome and a process, and can only occur effectively through a system of support, especially in the early stages. This system of support should progressively provide students with the triggers for reflective learning, and the tools and techniques for making sense of these triggers, as well as guidance and help where necessary. The corollary of this is that the system of support is gradually reduced in its directness and intensity, as the student's capacity for self-managed and self-regulated learning develops. Indeed, the draft revised Guidelines for PDP (QAA, 2008) suggest that PDP is something that an individual does with guidance and support, the latter decreasing as personal capability is developed so that it becomes self-sustaining.

This edition of LINK coincides with the publication of the book 'Enhancing Student-Centred Learning', jointly produced by HLST and BMAF. Many of the 18 case studies in the book feature examples of support and mediation of learners as they gradually develop greater self-awareness and the capacity to manage and regulate their own learning.

The case studies are placed in the following categories of support:

- self-management through addressing the constraints to learning
- feedback, including self-assessment, on learning

- recording and reflecting through portfolios
- the role of staff in inspiring and supporting students
- embedding PDP and student-centred learning in the curriculum
- the diversity of learning spaces

The case studies and the articles in this edition of LINK are testament to the skill and creativity across our sector in designing learning environments for our students. They demonstrate a range of ways in which we mediate and structure our students' learning experiences as we support an increasingly diverse and needy student population. Support in

many guises is necessary to help students cope with the progressive challenges of their programmes and their learning environments, but if it is progressive in developing the capacity for self-regulation, then we are also preparing students for the challenges of an increasingly complex and uncertain twenty first century.

References are available at:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/publications

Further information on all books in the series is available by contacting hlst@brookes.ac.uk

Enhancing graduate employability (2006)

Enhancing the international learning experience (2008)

Enhancing student centred learning (2009)

The next book in the series will focus on Enhancing Learning through Assessment.

HLST Olympics Special Interest Group

In March this year, the HLST Network launched a Special Interest Group (SIG) to focus on the opportunities for curriculum development which the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games bring. Our courses already deliver graduates with a wide range of professional skills, knowledge and understanding, essential for the success of such multifaceted international events, and the learning experiences of our students will be enhanced if they can engage with contemporary ideas, information and issues associated with the planning and execution of the 2012 Games.

At the inaugural meeting of the SIG, HLST Director, Clive Robertson, pointed to the opportunities which the Games bring to raise the profile of the HLST subject grouping and to demonstrate their relevance in a number of areas. He also highlighted the importance of encouraging a critical awareness of the impact which the Games were already having and would have in the future – a balanced, informed, academic view of events. Contributors to the inaugural meeting representing other organisations, initiatives and areas of activity which were complementary to the new SIG were welcomed and included:



Gareth Smith, Head of Podium, who welcomed the launch of the SIG and looked forward to working with the group to capitalise on the opportunities for HE and FE provided by the 2012 Games.



Prof Celia Brackenridge, from the Brunel ICSEMIS Consortium, who welcomed the opportunities for outreach and enhanced impact which working with the HLST Network and other partners in these initiatives would bring.



Terry Hood and Maynard Kirkpatrick from LinkBC, a network of 20 post-secondary tourism and hospitality programme providers across British Columbia, Canada, who welcomed close collaboration between LinkBC and HLST to share experience, expertise and resources and to optimise the outcomes of work being undertaken on both sides of the Atlantic.

The HLST Network signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with LinkBC at the meeting, and Clive welcomed the opportunities this offered to learn from colleagues who had already made great progress in sharing good practice, research findings and resources capitalising on the 2010 Games, and for working together to maximise the impact the Games could have on students in both the UK and Canada.

Brandon Crimes of the University of Hertfordshire, convener of the new SIG, invited delegates to consider its future activities and goals. It was agreed that there should be further opportunities for exchanging experience, expertise and practice through workshops and conferences, both real and virtual, and involving all those with interest in harnessing the opportunities available for HE from the Games.

More information visit http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/ourwork/olympics_sig or contact clive.robertson@brookes.ac.uk

LINK 24 – Assessment and Feedback

Contributions are invited for our next issue of LINK which will focus on assessment and feedback. The need to consider and develop our practice in these areas has been highlighted by the National Student Survey where, consistently, lower satisfaction is expressed by students for assessment and feedback than for other areas of their learning experience. Aspects which could be covered include:

- Assessment “for” learning and assessment “of” learning
- Summative and formative assessment – linking and balancing
- Engaging students with feedback
- Assessment and feedback strategies at programme level
- Assessment Standards – how are they established?
- Learning outcomes – and assessment and feedback
- Graduate attributes – and assessment and feedback
- Employability – and assessment and feedback
- The role of PDP
- Reflective practice – and assessment and feedback
- Assessing work-based learning
- Assessment of Prior Learning
- Technology enhanced assessment and feedback
- The use of portfolios in assessment
- Approaches to moderation
- The role of external examiners
- Plagiarism
- Assessment and quality enhancement

See website for further details.

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst/resources/linknewsletter

www.heacademy.ac.uk/hlst