

“AdvanceHE

+ Innovative Practice Grants 2024

Volume One: Innovations in Teaching and Learning



Contents

Foreword	4
Research clusters at Askham Bryan Wildlife and Conservation Park	5
Thomas Welsh, University Centre Askham Bryan	
Fostering student engagement and employability	9
Danny Wright, Barnsley College	
Integrating artificial intelligence in higher education assessments	12
Joseph Owen, Grwp Llandrillo Menai	
Hartpury Academic Framework	17
Kate Wilkinson and Lucy Dumbell, Hartpury University	
Challenging current practices in partnership with students	21
Daniel Kinne, Morley College London	
The design, implementation and evaluation of an active feedback process	23
Ben Anniss, Plymouth Marjon University	
Sensitive themes in opera programming: research, industry, and best practice	30
Michelle Phillips, Royal Northern College of Music	
Using adapted reflecting in teams to teach and assess reflective practice	34
Mathavi Uthayanan, St George's University of London	
Co-creating a sustainability-focused curriculum	39
Mahruf Shohel, Bedford College Group	
Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Programme	43
Daniel Biggs, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Perth	
Pedagogical development in Audiovisual Technology education	48
Jack Laidlaw, University Centre Middlesbrough	

Foreword

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, the pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning remains at the forefront of our mission. It is with great enthusiasm that we present this collection of case studies, showcasing innovative practices in teaching and learning from Advance HE's Innovative Practice Grants initiative. This program is specifically designed to support and highlight the outstanding work being done by our Small, Specialist, Independent, and College-Based Higher Education members across the United Kingdom.

This collection marks the inaugural year of the Innovative Practice Grants. We are delighted to have awarded grants to 17 institutions, each bringing unique perspectives and innovative approaches to the forefront of higher education.

This volume highlights the diverse and impactful initiatives that are transforming the educational experience across the member institutions who have contributed to Innovations in Teaching & Learning theme.

As you explore these case studies, you will discover a wealth of innovative approaches that have made tangible differences to both educators and students. With topics such as, Co-creating a Sustainability-Focused Curriculum, Fostering Student Engagement and Employability through Innovative Curriculum Design and Integrating AI in Higher Education Assessments.

We would like to thank all the authors of the case studies for sharing their inspirational work.

As you read through these case studies, we encourage you to consider how these innovative teaching and learning practices might inform and inspire your own work. It is our hope that this collection will spark new ideas, encourage pedagogical experimentation, and ultimately contribute to the continued excellence and evolution of teaching and learning in higher education.

Karen Taylor, Head of Membership (Tertiary), Advance HE

Research clusters at Askham Bryan Wildlife and Conservation Park

Thomas Welsh, University Centre Askham Bryan

Introduction

University Centre Askham Bryan (UCAB), the higher education arm of Askham Bryan College, is a specialist land-based provider based in York. UCAB received Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) in 2022 and recognises the importance of fostering a vibrant undergraduate research culture. To further enhance this commitment, we have developed a suite of “Research Clusters” to drive forward research which utilises our on-campus Askham Bryan Wildlife and Conservation Park (ABWCP). The park is home to around 170 species and is accredited by the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums. ABCWP is used by students across the college from entry level through to postgraduate study, with research being a key focus for the higher education provision.

The development of Research Clusters for ABWCP had three aims:

- + Increase the number of research projects disseminated externally.
- + Enhance the student experience by conducting quality research.
- + Improve communication and management of research through collaboration and ownership.

Identifying research clusters

Management from FE, HE and ABWCP collaborated to decide how ABWCP should be broken down into the clusters and what the roles, responsibilities and reporting structure would look like. Some clusters focused on specific taxonomic groups for example, birds whilst others focused on a topic area across the park, such as Education and Engagement. This resulted in ten research clusters (Figure 1), with five co-ordinators who are animal keepers at ABWCP.

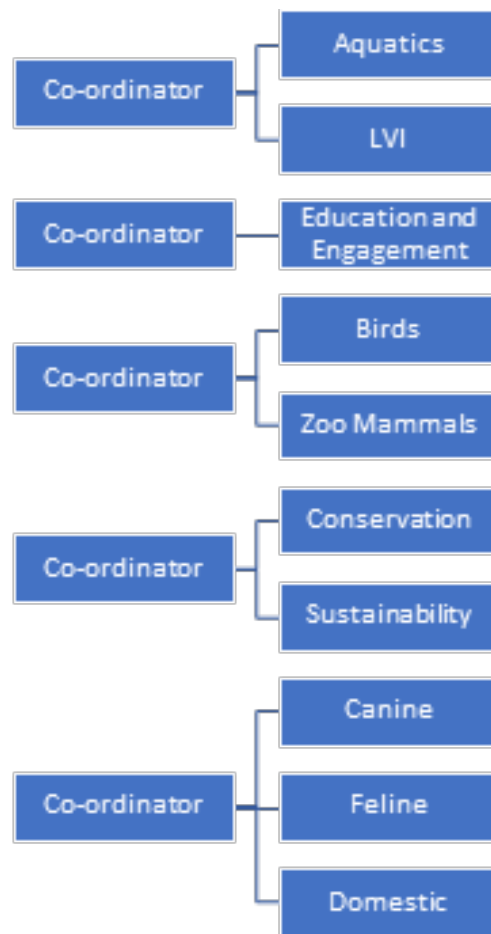


Figure 1: ABWCP research cluster structure.

Research cluster management

Each research cluster has a HE academic assigned to it, with clusters falling under a co-ordinator who is a member of ABWCP staff. The HE academic supervises the student and has oversight of the project, whilst the co-ordinator is responsible for facilitating the project at the park and assisting with technical advice relating to the project. There are future plans to incorporate FE academics into the cluster structure to further enhance the collaboration between departments across the college. The staff assigned to research clusters have ownership and accountability for the operation of their cluster, allowing for creativity and flexibility to meet the needs of each individual cluster. Each cluster team meets when needed across the academic year, and has to complete a form which identifies the research themes and priorities for longer-term research, provides a summary of research methodologies and produces a list of research project titles for dissemination to students (Figure 2).

Project Titles	Student Level
How does social hierarchy within cichlid groups impact breeding dynamics and offspring survival?	5/6
What are the genetic factors that contribute to mate selection and pair bonding in cichlids?	5/6
How does the presence of different substrate types affect the breeding success of cichlids?	6
How do environmental factors such as temperature and lighting affect the timing and success of clownfish breeding cycles?	6

Figure 2: An excerpt from the project titles list for the Aquatics research cluster.

Having staff members responsible for research clusters improves communication and management of research on the park by having designated points of contact for students and staff, who can provide updates on research activity when needed. Each research cluster provides a report at the end of the academic cycle, which is reported to UCAB's Research and Development Committee.

Enhancing student experience

Undergraduate research offers invaluable opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning, develop critical thinking skills, and contribute to industry-relevant skill development which enhances the employability of graduates. Effective supervision and management are essential for ensuring the success and quality of these projects, by having the research clusters in place, students can be supported through the research process by staff who know what is feasible to complete using the resources provided, and complete higher quality research or contribute to longer-term studies. Students have the opportunity to pick a project from the list created by the research cluster team, or develop their own project, guided by the research cluster team. It is hoped that as they become established, the research cluster teams will contribute to the learning community at UCAB, with students as co-creators of the research environment within ABWCP.

Conducting higher quality research will lead to more opportunities for research dissemination through conferences and journal articles. Allowing students to be co-owners of these opportunities is an excellent way to enhance the student experience, raises the profile of UCAB and ABWCP externally and improves the activities of ABWCP through enhancing welfare, education and conservation.

Future plans

Currently, the research clusters are in the first academic cycle of operation, and are a collaboration between HE and ABWCP. FE colleagues will be a key part of the initiative moving forward, through assigning an FE staff member to each of the research clusters. The benefits of this are multifaceted, improving collaboration between FE and HE departments

and enhancing professional relationships to ensure FE colleagues can discuss opportunities for HE studies at UCAB with their learners. Including the specialist project module studied at L3 into the research cluster structure will expose FE learners to research which they can then take forward into HE study. It is hoped that the initiative can be developed to include peer-mentoring whereby final year undergraduates and postgraduates are able to play a supervisory role to level 3 students as part of their specialist project module, further enhancing skill development in HE students and providing an aspirational opportunity for FE learners into HE study.

Fostering student engagement and employability

Danny Wright, Barnsley College

This case study examines how Barnsley College University Centre's Creative Digital Media course innovatively integrates employability and assessment strategies to enhance student engagement and retention. The purpose was to identify whether, through industry-aligned assignments, personalised feedback, and a supportive learning environment, the course could be prioritised for practical skill development in a dynamic and everchanging media landscape. This would be initially addressed with learners during induction of the course, bringing their awareness to the level of engagement expected of them over the year. Towards the end of delivery, the students were surveyed to address how they felt the units had reflected industry and if they were more engaged and ready for employment or not. Taking industry insights as inspiration to govern the decisions made for the design of and continuous improvement of our student-centred curriculum design has led to very positive outcomes in learner engagement and their understanding of employability skills.

Designing pathways for employability and assessment

At the beginning of the academic year, we addressed the issue of engagement and retention for our smaller groups on our Higher National Certificate for Digital Industry courses by restructuring our curriculum to better reflect employability and employer skills needs. Our aim was to give learners a sense of ownership by designing unit briefs and scenarios that mirrored the industries they aspired to join after completing their Higher Education. Our method was to, during induction week and at the start of each new unit, emphasise the skills required for employment and exhibit how each scenario reflected real-world industry examples, helping students see the value in their coursework and engagement with the course content.

Each unit covered a different aspect of either Games Development or Digital Media for Film and Television as a pathway, necessitating unique scenarios and real-world situations. We aimed to structure these briefs and their assessment methods/volume around actual job roles, preparing students for their future careers. Practical assessments were central to each unit, focusing on skill development and ensuring that assessment methods appropriately reflected these core practical tasks in each unit. This alignment, coupled with the learning objectives and grading matrix of the awarding body ensured that students were evaluated fairly and effectively in line with our focused outcome aims.

As the academic year progressed this became a method for unit introduction, utilising open class discussions to break down the brief and assessment methods and address where and how this relates to industry. We have used the experience of tutors from their time in

industry and roles outside of education together with partner employers to design the units and scenarios looking for appropriate and relevant skills-based tasks for at least one learning objective in each unit.

Fostering an engaging learning environment through innovative practice

Our delivery and assessment had to emphasise the importance of constructive alignment in curriculum design applying previously explored approaches. Project based learning (PBL) needed to be at the core of this approach, to mirror real world tasks and take the form of the interests of the learners and the industries in which they wished to pursue. PBL already has a long history of proven levels of engagement and retention in education (Thomas, 2000) by designing our unit briefs to reflect industry needs and real-world tasks, the curriculum helped to ensure that students developed relevant skills that are directly applicable to their future careers. This could be seen as new models of authentic learning. Authentic learning as addressed by Gerstein (Gerstein, 2019) is something that should connect what we learn in educational environments with real-world problems and situations, this being to enhance the value and meaning of the educational task at hand for learner to see beyond the classroom environment, which is ultimately where they will be after education.

Impact and outcomes

When surveyed about this curriculum design and approach, students reported positive outcomes in terms of engagement and ownership of their learning, particularly regarding the skills needed for employability and industry readiness. Firstly, all students viewed the industry-reflective design of the briefs positively, recognising the benefits of completing such units. Secondly, all learners agreed that these briefs effectively prepared them for the demands of the industry and recommended that future briefs for new cohorts continue to be designed in this manner.

Question Topic	Response
Our briefs have been centred more around industry and reflect what is expected in employment	87% Agree or Strongly Agree on our briefs designs
What level of engagement do you feel towards the projects completed this year	100% were engaged to extremely engaged
If a brief was not created with industry focus surrounding the core projects, would you engage less	75% Agreed they would engage less
Future briefs for the course should be centred around industry-based scenarios that prepare you for employment	75% Agreed with this statement

How can this be replicated by others

Having seen an increase in retention and engagement, this approach can be replicated by aligning unit briefs and assessment methods with real-world industry scenarios and involving industry professionals as stakeholders in the design process. Educators should incorporate practical, skills-based tasks that prepare students for their future careers, and clearly communicate the industry connections and assessment methods to help learners take ownership. Drawing on Biggs and Tang's (Biggs, 2022) principles of constructive alignment, it is essential to ensure that learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment methods are integrated and reflect industry standards.

Conclusion and next steps

Overall, this approach has been highly successful for the academic year 23-24, we have seen better retention percentages in comparison to previous years, academic year 22-23 at 69% and academic year 23-24 at 91% for our end of year retention. Student engagement has increased, and learners are more aware of the necessity of ownership in their work. Our next step is to integrate employers as stakeholders in our curriculum design for certain units, helping to provide industry relevant content for delivery and assessment of the practical elements within our briefs.

References

Biggs, J. T. C. & K. G., 2022. *Teaching for quality learning at university 5e*. 5 ed. s.l.:McGraw-hill education (UK).

Gerstein, J., 2019. *Learning in the making: How to plan, execute, and assess powerful makerspace lessons*. ASCD: s.n.

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Further details

Academic year	Total Students Enrolled	Total Student Completed	Total Leavers in year
2022 - 2023	13	9	4
2023 - 2024	11	10	1

Integrating artificial intelligence in higher education assessments

Joseph Owen, Grwp Llandrillo Menai

Throughout the 2023/24 academic year, I led a funded project to trial Artificial Intelligence (AI) within formative and summative assessments across a range of courses. We liaised with employers to create bespoke sessions where learners were encouraged to focus their work and research using AI generative software applicable to their vocational areas (for example, using Midjourney for art, or ChatGPT-4 for software programming).

The work was conducted as a research study to learn the expectations of future graduates and the effect AI could have on their roles and industry. It also had the benefit of learning best practices when factoring AI within higher education assessment design. The project will not be completed until May 2024; however, we have already seen a tremendous impact of AI within graduate opportunities. Still, we respect that it is a landscape that is consistently in a transitional state.

Our current learner confidence benchmarks have already been exceeded, and our learners have shown a greater understanding of AI, which has mitigated some of their fears about their future opportunities being lost. The team has been able to redesign assessments to ensure that (where applicable) AI can be utilised by learners, but the integrity of the assessment remains intact. We have also built closer relationships with local employers who, like us, are keen to see the continual impacts of AI in our sectors.

Background

Throughout 2023, most of the education sector recognized the remarkable increase in Artificial Intelligence (AI) regarding both the frequency of use and the quality of the output. Mallik and Gangopadhyay (2023) discuss the recent "concurrent boom" of infrastructure necessary for AI to further enhance the learner and teacher experience. This continued enhancement of AI created new challenges in assessing our learners in a manner that is both fair and applicable to the ever-changing graduate market. As a Higher Education Provider, Grwp Llandrillo Menai wanted to investigate how AI was being used by both learners and employers. Most of the data generated in this study is around the field of Games Development.

Methodology

The aim of the project was to create a transparent AI culture with learners, where staff managed how AI was being used by learners in formative class tasks, as well as how it was being used for summative assessments. To support the contact time with learners, staff were given research time that allowed them to experiment with new AI technologies and to liaise with companies to gain an understanding of how they were using AI, as well as their

expectations of graduates in regard to their skills and knowledge of AI. The key theme of the project is that generative AI was to be supportive for learners but never take the place of fair and ethical assessment. Staff made it clear to learners that all use of AI must be documented, and the Grwp created AI guidelines and policies that the learners were referred to. A clear example of this can be found when creating computer code for Games Development, where having AI write code for the learner was seen as unfair, however using AI to help fault-find code was seen as good practice.

Results and conclusion

Assessment design

For the 2023/24 academic year, we trialed having learners demonstrate their assessments on the day of submission. Staff were then able to ask questions about the work to gauge the understanding of the learners. Learners were aware of this when the (applicable) assignments were issued and were frequently encouraged to update their references to evidence where AI was being used in the work. Although there was some merit to this strategy, it is hard to keep assessment consistent among learners using this method. The success can easily vary depending on the level of work, confidence of the learner, or many other factors.

It was found that learners knowing this may happen on submission day ensured that they worked transparently just in case. For the 2024/25 academic year, new criteria have been included in all project assessments that mandate learners must frequently present work throughout the assignment window and can achieve higher marks if clear linear progress is demonstrated throughout the assignment window. The hope is to further encourage the transparent culture of work where staff can work with learners throughout their assessment journey.

Industry feedback

Although a wide range of feedback was received from employers, the overall content followed a very similar pattern. Employers were keen to discuss how AI supports their administrative tasks but were less keen to discuss how AI was being used in their core business operations. One employer noted how this was down to ethics and public perception, however, most employers are under strict non-disclosure agreements (NDA) that prevented them from discussing how AI was impacting their roles. One key theme that employers reiterated is that the need for core skills still remained. There was still the full expectation that Games Development graduates have a clear knowledge of their discipline regardless of the roles.

Learner use

All HE Games Development learners were given a confidential set of questions to understand their approach to AI and whether they felt their staff had succeeded in creating a transparent culture of AI 2 in their program. The first two questions refereed to their use of AI, either during class work, or during assessment work. The results show a big increase of AI when assessed work was involved. However, this may simply be due to the lack of tutor support when this work is taken place. For class tasks, it is assume learners would be asking the tutor for help more often. The learners were also asked about the culture of AI on their course, and whether staff created an environment where AI could be used. Most learners gave mixed to positive results when asked if staff welcome AI with their learning, however no learner thought they needed to hide use of AI from staff. Full results available in the appendix.

Challenges

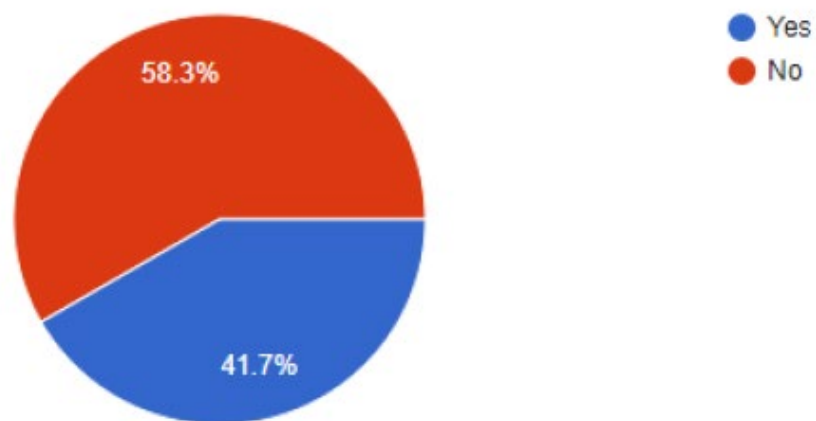
With most new technologies, the landscape is consistently changing which can make results hard to interpret. Even if a transparent AI culture can be achieved, there is always the possibility that fair ethical assessment can be missed. It isn't just learners that are learning about the new technologies, staff are facing a new challenge of understanding AI as it consistently changes. Employers also find themselves in a similar position where they can be planning for situations that are not known yet. More than one employer was aware that they needed to rewrite job adverts and amplitude tests to ensure fair recruitment procedures were followed.

References

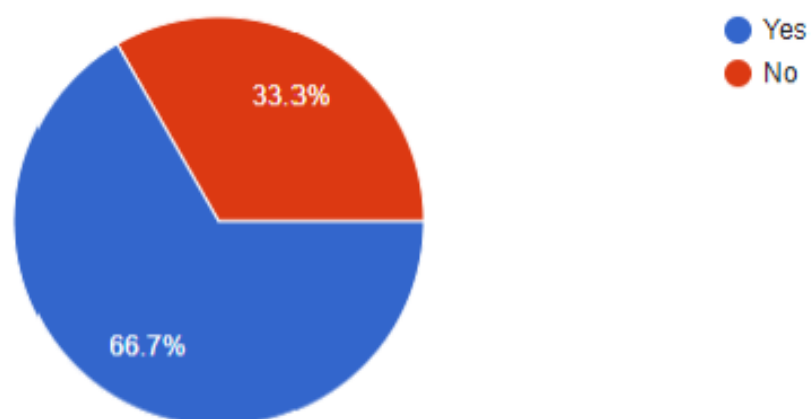
Malik, S. and Gangopadhyay,A., 2023. Proactive and reactive engagement of artificial intelligence method for education: a review. [online] Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frai.2023.1151391/full> Accessed: 25th May 2024.

Appendix

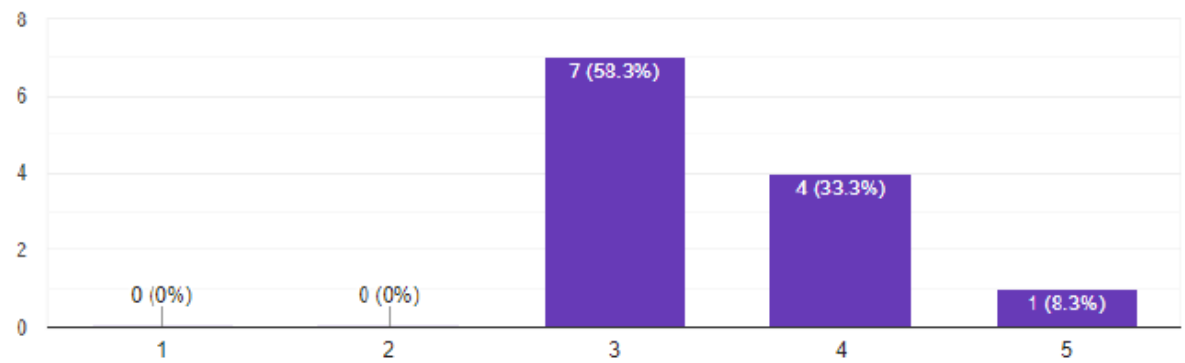
During this academic year, have you used AI during class tasks?



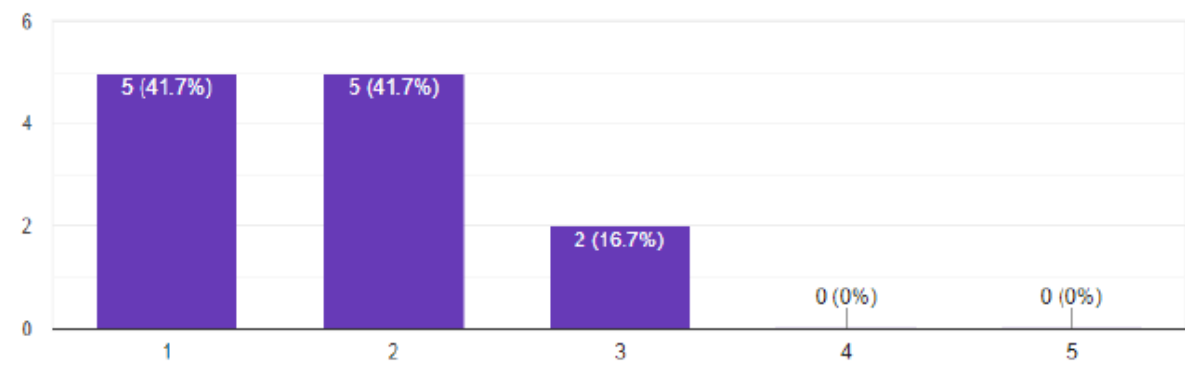
During this academic year, have you used AI during assignment tasks?



Do you believe that staff welcome AI to support your learning?



Do you feel you need to hide use of AI from your tutors?



Hartpury Academic Framework

Kate Wilkinson and Lucy Dumbell, Hartpury University

After the pandemic, in 2021-22, we implemented the Hartpury Academic Framework (HAF), which aimed to ensure that all programmes met the core themes of wellbeing, inclusivity, sustainability, graduate employability, and were both evidence and research informed. A key focus was to ensure that assessment was balanced, authentic, and aligned with our strategic goals to put theory into practice and foster partnerships to produce industry-ready graduates.

To facilitate the adoption of the framework, the keynote speakers at our 2022 Annual Teaching and Learning Conference spoke about authentic assessment and staff shared case studies showcasing some of the assessment and partnerships that were already established or in development. The HAF implementation resulted in a reduction in average assessment load per programme (UG and PG) by 15%. The type of assessment also changed, showing the shift towards more practical, authentic assessments and a move away from traditional written examinations, positively highlighted by external examiner comments in 2022-23 and 23-24. The conference showcased the varied nature of practical assessments, live briefs, and partnership-based assessments, a small sample of which are described below.

Colleagues from the Sport Business Hub (SBH) presented their 2023 CATE award winning model at the conference, linking industry placements, live project briefs and networking to enhance the student experience and income generation. One Level 5 module uses a real-world assessment model with Gloucestershire Cricket (figure 1). Student groups are invited to pitch their idea for income generation to key personnel within the organisation, with the winning pitch idea adopted and evaluated as part of their final year project. “Our work with Hartpury University grows year on year, and the sports facilities secondary income module is proof that our relationship is always mutually beneficial. Secondary income opportunities at professional sports venues have never been more important, and with a small amount of time and energy invested into the module from our perspective, we have come away with numerous feasible opportunities to explore. To know this is benefitting students with their university course in a more real-life environment can only be positive for the professional sports industry as a whole.” (Pete Lamb, Head of Community).



Figure 1: Students and Staff at Gloucestershire Cricket, 2024

Sustainability is a key theme for the HAF, which is successfully incorporated into a live brief assessment in a postgraduate equine module that exposes students to the sustainability challenges facing the equestrian sector. Students are guided to use a carbon calculator to estimate the environmental impact for a known business and report their outcomes to the stakeholders for their assessment. This approach helps to create new partnerships and increases sector awareness of sustainability, as well as student learning in the topic and theory of change. The carbon calculator, developed jointly with other institutions and White Griffin Consultancy, has since been launched for industry use.

In the Animal department, in Behavioural Ecology, students go on a field trip to Slimbridge Wetlands Centre where staff support students to collect data on wading and captive birds for a small group research project. Students analyse the data and produce a poster to support community education and dissemination to the public. The centre selects some posters (7 in 2024) to display in the visitor centre attracting over 200,000 visitors. 83% of students highlighted the assessment and partnership as a positive in the 2023 module evaluation.

Finally, in Agriculture, where we have our own commercial Farm onsite, the Farm Business Management module integrates live data from the farm into student assessment. Students

are given the farm data and asked to report and present on the financial sustainability and recommendations in the role of a Farm Manager. The assessment team comprises of both academic and farm representation, who will ask questions from both practical and theoretical perspectives.

We have a range of other examples of partnerships and authentic assessment including working with local schools (Figure 2), the poultry industry in Epidemiology, working with our Sports Academy athletes and teams, writing a pump priming grant for the Horse Trust and writing a public engagement leaflet for Nupsala services in Equine Sports Medicine. The CEO of Nupsala then presented the winning leaflet with £100 voucher and their work will be published as part of their owner education information. There are many other examples of positive practice across all our departments, many of which have been fostered as a result of practice sharing above and the HAF embedment.

Industry partnerships are central to authenticity. Students have fed back that the opportunities for “networking”, “developing project management skills” and the “ability to query” experts enhanced their learning. Two students said that “It was a huge opportunity to gain vast experience from their team and develop skills within a professional business environment”. The examples explored above, and other authentic and real-world assessments provide examples for our teams to build on in their own modules, highlighting the need for continued sharing of practice. Partnerships and industry ready curriculum are enhanced by our team of staff, 88% of whom have professional qualifications ensuring currency and the ability to bring their own industry experiences into the classroom. The commitment to partnerships and authentic assessment was highlighted in our TEF triple gold, where the panel recognise “a range of things that support practical, industry-focused and engaging learning experiences” as outstanding.



Figure 2 Our outdoor classroom and Sports students host Forest School activities for a partnership primary school.

Challenging current practices in partnership with students

Daniel Kinne, Morley College London

The long-term vision for the new BA (Hons) Fashion Design course at Morley College London is clear:

Its purpose is to challenge current practices in the fashion industry and propose an alternative way forward. We do this as a partnership between students and staff exploring new and emerging trends. We have been able to successfully implement the plans outlined in our application as part of the delivery of the year 1 module Fabrication.

This specialist module extends over one and a half terms and aims to make students familiar with a variety of materials which can be applied to making clothing outcomes, accessories and trimmings.

The module covers current processes, heritage processes and newest/future biological processes for making materials. It is set up with regular classroom sessions which at intervals are augmented by visits and workshops with biomaterial and other experts in a guest lecturer model.

As this was the first year of switching all year groups to our new BA we had students from our previous spec continuing with us. The workshops were opened to them to afford equal participation in these opportunities and the benefits this valuable experience would bring them. It also gave them the agency to contribute to the discussion and creation of alternative opportunities in a collaborative manner.

As none of the tutors had any previous experience of working in a lab setup or had had the previous opportunity to work with biomaterials, the learning journey and the engagement with this fascinating new subject was truly done together with the student body. This enabled an unexpected new way of approaching learning within the team and the student body.

Another unexpected benefit was the effect that transdisciplinary collaboration with experts from different fields brought into the classroom and the positive effect this had both on visiting lecturers and staff and students.

Bringing together scientists and fashion practitioners created a spark of enthusiasm that is hard to capture on paper. Each of the four structured 3 hour sessions ended up being a continuous brainstorming session alongside the active learning and doing in the Materials Lab. The materials and properties of the organisms which are being used to create these new materials were discussed and ideas for their use and potential uses was passed between the experts in their respective fields of cytology and fashion.

Along with all the excitement and positive benefits of the implementation of these workshops to introduce novel and innovative processes into a level 4 curriculum, there were also some challenges that we faced.

As expected on any module, some students did not fully engage with these sessions. It was interesting to note the resistance to new ideas and practice exhibited by some members of staff. This was not limited to not taking part in workshops, which with sector wide workloads can be understood, but it also manifested in openly critiquing the usefulness of these exploratory and experimental sessions. This feedback is partially valid, as due to the lack of prior knowledge on our part and the lack of a fully equipped laboratory the process was not always successful at first. It, however, also showed bias against biomaterials and some reactionary tendencies coming from professionals on the team who have been part of the old fashion system for a long time.

This feedback and these insights will now be turned into valuable talking points going forward and will inform future delivery.

The impact on the programme is also clear. We are now getting to the point where we will be able to, specifically due to the Innovative Practice Grant, purchase additional equipment and consultation for us to scale the production of biomaterials of a greater variety. These include various types of bioplastics, alginate yarns for knitting, branching out into other recycled paper and lignin-based leather alternatives and the mycelium and SCOBY based materials where fashion is no longer sewn, but grown.

The grant funding will also allow us to democratise this new branch of making fusing fashion and biology even further. For the first time we will be able to include the opportunity to learn these skills in our adult education provision offering. This would be one of the first times in the nation that this would be made available to the public at large. We hope this will help spread knowledge of these processes exponentially.

To conclude this report, I would like to show the impact this has had on the students. I feel this is best captured in some select quotes from an anonymous survey collected in preparation for this report.

‘It has shown me that there are a number of different areas that make up biomaterials, and they form different functions to replace different materials, which demonstrates to me the number of potential applications the field has.’

‘That taking into account the specific properties of each biomaterial and designing with that knowledge in mind, rather than trying to use it as a direct 1:1 replacement for existing materials, creates a more interesting and easier design process.’

‘An awareness of fact-based information and experience surrounding the making of these materials will be useful in offering alternative option including its benefits. These benefits also need to reach a wider audience to gain traction for demands...’

The design, implementation and evaluation of an active feedback process

Ben Anniss, Plymouth Marjon University

Rationale

The traditional feedback approach within higher education typically hinges on information transmission from teacher to student, though this has been criticised for limiting learner engagement (Winstone et al., 2020). Indeed, experiences within the context of Plymouth Marjon University have revealed that students often *'just check the grade'*, and either do not access feedback, or find it difficult to action feedback within future work. However, an emerging paradigm which emphasises learners' agentic role in generating, processing and enacting feedback (Ajjawi et al., 2023; Pitt & Quinlan, 2022), has demonstrated improvements in learner self-regulation and metacognitive knowledge (Nicol & McCallum, 2022). It has been suggested that the effectiveness of this approach relies on educators creating scaffolded, iterative learning opportunities that develop assessment and feedback literacy, judgement skills, emotional management, and actionable steps (Pitt & Winstone, 2023; Nicol, 2022). Therefore, to combat the aforementioned challenges, there is a need to trial assessment and feedback processes which promote active learner engagement.

In light of the above context, the aims of the current case study were:

- 1 To develop learners' assessment and feedback literacy engagement.
- 2 To support learners' agentic role in generating, processing and enacting feedback.
- 3 To evaluate the impact and value of an active feedback process for student learning.

Process Design and Implementation

The assessment and feedback process spanned the length of a semester-long module (Introduction to Performance Analysis in Football; Lab Report assessment; 9 learners) and was built via a series of nested tasks to promote an appreciation of criteria for success, tailor opportunities to make multiple, sequential comparisons, and encourage the application of outcomes (Evans, 2022; Nicol, 2021; Molloy et al., 2020). The implementation of the activity was divided into 5 key stages (Figure 1) with each stage constituting part of individual classroom-based workshops.

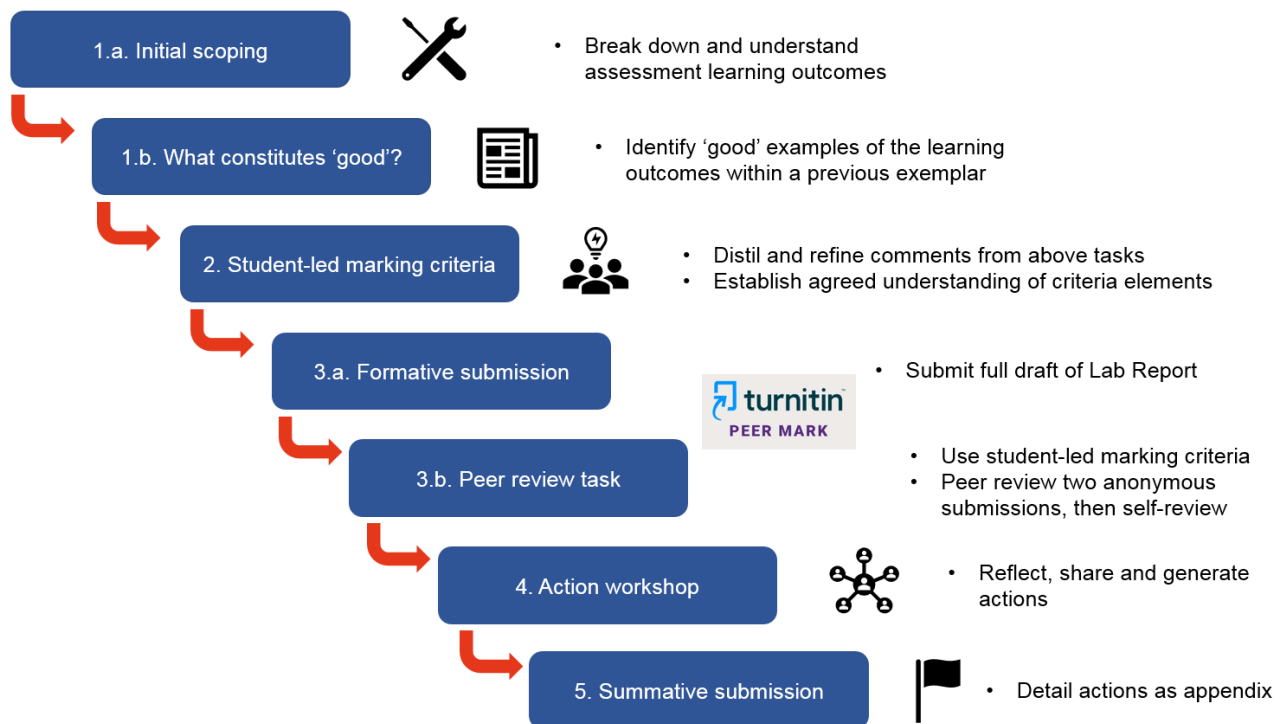


Figure 1: Design and implementation of the assessment and feedback process

Evaluation

Aim 1: To develop learners' assessment and feedback literacy engagement

Through pre and post self-assessments (Likert scale 1-5) using the student-facing Equity Agency Transparency (EAT) framework (Evans, 2022), learners demonstrated improvements in several literacy dimensions, including AL1 [What constitutes good?], AL3 [Student and staff entitlement], AF3 [Have I done the necessary preparation to participate fully in peer dialogue?] and AF4 [Self-evaluation], with increases ranging from 0.29 to 0.37. However, reductions in engagement were observed for AD2 [Meaningful work] (-0.29) and AD3 [Making best use of resources] (-0.21).

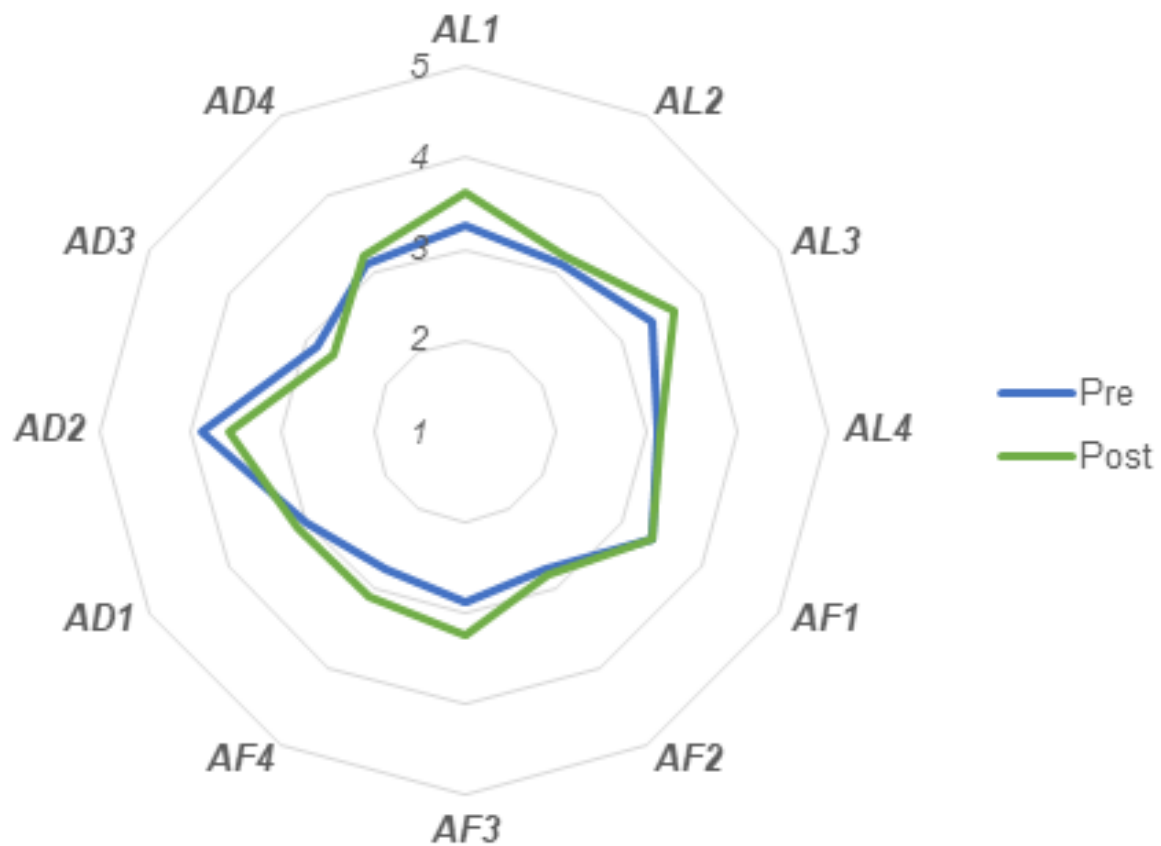


Figure 2: Quantitative pre to post learner self-evaluations of the EAT dimensions

Aim 2: To support learners' agentic role in generating, processing and enacting feedback

In accordance with Nicol and McCallum (2022), the frequency of peer- and self-review comments relating to a) the marking criteria, b) motivational aspects, c) reader perspective, and d) different approaches, were first analysed. Through analysis of comments (i.e. peer-reviews prior to self-review), examples of learner self-regulation were then identified.

Table 1: Quantitative feedback categorisation of peer-review comments

Feedback Category	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Total comments	74	
Criteria related	58	78.4
Motivational	5	6.8
Reader perspective	8	10.8
Different approaches	3	4.1

Table 2: Quantitative feedback categorisation of self-review comments

Feedback Category	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Total comments	32	
Criteria related	22	68.8
Motivational	2	6.3
Reader perspective	3	9.4
Different approaches	5	15.6

Data showed fewer criteria-related comments during self-review than peer review. Motivational and reader perspective categories were similar, but there were more 'different approach' comments during self-reviews. Most learners demonstrated self-regulation through sequential reviews, identifying aspects in peer work and forming action plans. An example of learner self-regulation (and metacognition) is shown below, with red text highlighting peer approaches and prioritisation of future improvements.

Table 3: Textual analysis of one learner demonstrating self-regulation and metacognition

Peer-review 1	
Good aspects: ○ Use of literature to support KPI selection ○ Understanding of how data can be presented differently ○ Understanding of different types of data	Areas for improvement: ○ Clearly state the selected KPIs ○ Use references to support description of performance analysis ○ Don't use 1st person
	
Peer-review 2	
Good aspects: ○ Good understanding of how performance analysis helps overall ○ Good understanding of how data can be limited due to bias ○ Good use of a lot of literature	Areas for improvement: ○ Use more indirect quotation ○ Give direct reasoning for choosing each KPI ○ Give clear definitions for each KPI
	
Self-review	
Good aspects: ○ Literature used to support KPI choices ○ Clear understanding of analysis types ○ Clear definitions of KPIs	Areas for improvement: ○ Describe how bias etc., can change analysis of data ○ Show how findings can help improve performance ○ Use references in KPI definitions ○ Add reference list

Aim 3: To evaluate the impact and value of an active feedback process for student learning.

The impact on student learning was assessed using year-on-year and ipsative (matched assessment from the previous semester) comparisons. In addition to measures within the above sections, the value of the process was evaluated by the extent to which it reduced differential learning outcomes. Year-on-year comparisons showed grade outcomes within 1%, with similar standard deviations (13.4 vs. 13.1) and ranges (40% vs. 38%). Ipsative comparisons, however, revealed an average attainment increase of 7.4pp but a negative impact on learning differential (range = 40% vs. 33%), largely due to a 17pp increase in the highest grade.

Table 4: Year-on-year and ipsative attainment comparisons

	Current Attainment (%)	Year-on-year Comparison (%)	Ipsative Comparison (%)
Mean	55.9	56.8	48.4
SD	13.4	13.1	13.1
Range	40	38	33

Impact

The implemented ‘active’ feedback process enabled encouraging outcomes regarding the development of learner assessment and feedback literacy, and the promotion of self-regulatory ‘internal feedback’. The observed improvements in literacy dimensions (AL1, AL3, AF3, AF4) could be attributed to the agency afforded to the learners in identifying and co-constructing ‘standards’ (Pitt & Carless, 2022), as well as the completion of peer- and self-reviews to emphasise their own role in feedback to guide personal improvement (Evans, 2022). Areas of reduced engagement (AD2, AD3), however, could be improved by incorporating more comparisons (e.g., disciplinary research or teacher discussions) (Nicol, 2021) and extending the process to better connect modules of study.

In accordance with the outcomes of Nicol and McCallum (2022), the implementation of sequential peer- and self-reviews yielded learner-generated comments that extended beyond the marking criteria and in turn, evidenced self-regulation for the majority of learners. Therefore, the increased learner agency promoted within an ‘active’ feedback approach may attenuate the dominance of teacher ‘feedback transmission’, tackle the issue of limited learner engagement with feedback, and in turn promote awareness of strategies to

implement actions (Ajjawi & Regehr, 2019). The implemented process likely had a positive impact on ipsative attainment comparisons, especially evident from the highest attaining learner's improvement (+17pp), which aligned with clear self-regulation and metacognition (Table 3).

Building upon the positive outcomes within this case study, in addition to external examiner praise, the adopted process has recently been implemented more broadly across the programme of study (BSc Football Science) and recognised across the department as a model of good practice. Reflecting the proposed improvements, the process has subsequently been refined to encompass literacy workshops to enhance understanding of the EAT framework, inclusion of further comparisons (range of academic resources and varied exemplars), and more apparent connection between modules of study to enable the pooling of feedback themes and action plans.

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Sensitive themes in opera programming: research, industry, and best practice

Michelle Phillips, Royal Northern College of Music

Context

The Royal Northern College of Music is a specialist music conservatoire which trains 950 undergraduate and postgraduate students each year, from 60 countries. Our two flagship professional operas each year are a key part of how our vocal students are trained and prepared for the music industry (our students go on to leading roles in opera companies around the world).



Images 1 and 2: RNCM productions of Mansfield Park by Dove in 2023 (left) and Die Fledermaus by J. Strauss in 2022 (right).



Image 3: RNCM 2017 production of Cinderella (Cendrillon) by Massenet.

This case study concerns the programming of operas which contain sensitive themes, for example, misogyny, sexism, rape, bullying, or discrimination on the grounds of skin colour, religion, or disability. Many of the most performed and popular operas today include one or more of these themes. How do we balance preparing our students for this opera industry,

with training in representation, whilst keeping them and our audiences from being harmed? Our work so far has included internal meetings, a working group (including an undergraduate opera composer and a PhD opera singer), and discussions with opera companies and other conservatoires.

The purpose of this case study is to inform and design the package of preparation and care which we may need to put in place to make sure that training may be provided in a 'space of acceptable risk'.

Overview of current case study

This innovative practice report consists of 3 parts:

- 1 An overview of our research on what the music industry (e.g., opera companies) are doing in this area (gathered by searching relevant information in the public domain).
- 2 An overview of the main themes emerging from scholarly research (gathered using standard scholarly research techniques searching published peer-reviewed materials).
- 3 A statement regarding how we at the RNCM, as one of the world's leading music conservatoires, is using this current knowledge to ensure that we are at the forefront of best practice in how we train the future music industry leaders, especially those who will go on to undertake leading operatic roles internationally.

This report covers two angles: the experience from industry and the public reaction, and the scholarly research, and relates this to how we teach and prepare student singers.

Knowledge from practice and the music industry

- + What counts as a sensitive theme is clearly complex and depends upon context.
- + The mass media picks up on attempts to address the staging of sensitive themes in opera - these can be categorised in terms of three main strategies:
 - cancellation of productions
 - issuing of trigger warnings
 - the reimagining of operas to militate against harm/offence, or departing from traditional staging.
- + Media articles are frequently critical of these three strategies.
- There is evidence of online communities developing knowledge archives of trigger warnings (though more for musical theatre rather than opera).

Knowledge from scholarship

- + There is a gap in the literature about the extent to which the concept of a 'sensitive theme' is discursively produced (i.e. who gets to determine what does and doesn't count as a sensitive theme? How are these articulated?).

- + The scholarly literature about sensitive themes in opera is growing, particularly in relation to rape and sexual violence, racism, and (very recently) disability discrimination.
- + The scholarly perspective is often similar to that of media and journalism, and also seems to address the three strategies of sensitive themes in opera (cancelling productions, trigger warnings, and reimagining).
- + Notably, the scholarly perspective highlights the limitations of trigger warnings, is critical of cancel-culture, and has a more ambivalent perspective on departing from traditional staging, e.g., Harford, K. (2016) "Beyond the trigger warning: teaching operas that depict sexual violence", *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, 7(1), pp. 19-34:

"In confining the way we speak about sexual violence in classrooms to survivors, we can easily overlook the ways that such scenes affect the remainder of our students. In essence, that is, we risk failing to reckon with the broader problem of rape culture when we simply issue a trigger warning—which is why I propose here that we must think beyond the trigger warning [...] Outside of opera, in the performing arts more broadly, the use of intimacy coordinators has been seen a significant and positive move, both in the scholarly literature and has been welcomed in the mass media too." (p. 21).

- + Consent-based practice was happening prior to advent of intimacy coordinators, e.g., Villarreal, A. (2022) "The Evolution of Consent-Based Performance: Literature Review", in *The Journal of Consent-Based Performance*, Vol. 1(1), pp. 5-25:

"While some voices have become very prominent as they advocate for consent-based practices, other artists, who have been using consent-based approaches for generations prior to the emergence of "intimacy coordinator" or "intimacy choreographer" titles, may have gone unnamed. Many of those whose work has gone unnamed are artists of color, women, disabled individuals, trans and nonbinary individuals whose own experiences of disempowerment in society and in the performance industry forced them to forge practices to protect themselves. These people are the pioneers of consent-based practice" (p. 6-7).

- + The practice of consent-based performance ought to be intersectional and acknowledge that experiences of racism/ableism are embodied experiences thus dealing with issues of racism and other forms of discrimination ought to be very closely related to the work of intimacy coordinators.

Learning from industry practice and research to implement best practice in training

At the RNCM we are using this and other knowledge and expertise to inform many aspects of our practice, including exploring the following:

- + specialist intimacy training for all RNCM opera students
- + consent-based practice
- + prioritisation of student safety
- + clear standards of practice in our professional opera productions
- + safe practice guidelines for all involved in our opera productions
- + PhD and postdoctoral researchers conducting research in this area
- + all opera productions selected with extensive consultation with staff, students and music industry professionals
- + where relevant and appropriate, trigger warnings and adaptations.

Using adapted reflecting in teams to teach and assess reflective practice

Mathavi Uthayanan, St George's University of London

Introduction

Reflective practice teaching has always been challenging due to its nature of being particular to students' own experiences. Therefore, it is intricate to teach and assess. Reflective essays can be seen as a 'job to tick off' the checklist³ rather than being the intended deep reflections with genuine benefits to the student reflector.

At St George's University of London (SGUL), in the master's in physician associate studies (MPAS), there had been a shift from traditional essays, which examine reflective practice, to using Balint group discussions, to teach reflective practice, until the introduction of the adapted reflecting in teams' model in 2021. Table 1 demonstrates the advantages of the reflecting in teams' model compared with other commonly used reflective models such as Balint groups and Schwartz rounds.

Table 1: Comparison of the Balint group, Schwartz rounds and reflecting in teams', to demonstrate their similarities and differences

	Balint groups	Schwartz Rounds ¹	Adapted reflecting in teams'
does not focus on the clinical aspects of patient care; instead, learning is focused on understanding student/staff experience from a social and emotional point of view.	✓	✓	✓
open to all staff members including non-clinical staff.		✓	Has the potential to be adapted to include all staff/student members including non-clinical staff.
three or four stories/cases are told at each session, which are used as a springboard for a wider discussion beyond the case itself.		✓	Often opens into a wider discussion during deep reflection.
allows peers to reflect in depth on behalf of the case presenter.			
provides case presenter an opportunity to pose a question to their peers.			
provides case presenter an opportunity to observe their case being discussed by peers.			

Findings

The adapted Andersens^{2,5} reflecting in teams' model was used to help empower students and introduce them to different models of reflective practice.

Sessions

There are a total of 5 sessions, which allows for an introductory lecture, introduction of commonly used reflective models and a session which helps to close the cycle of reflection.

An example of one of these sessions:

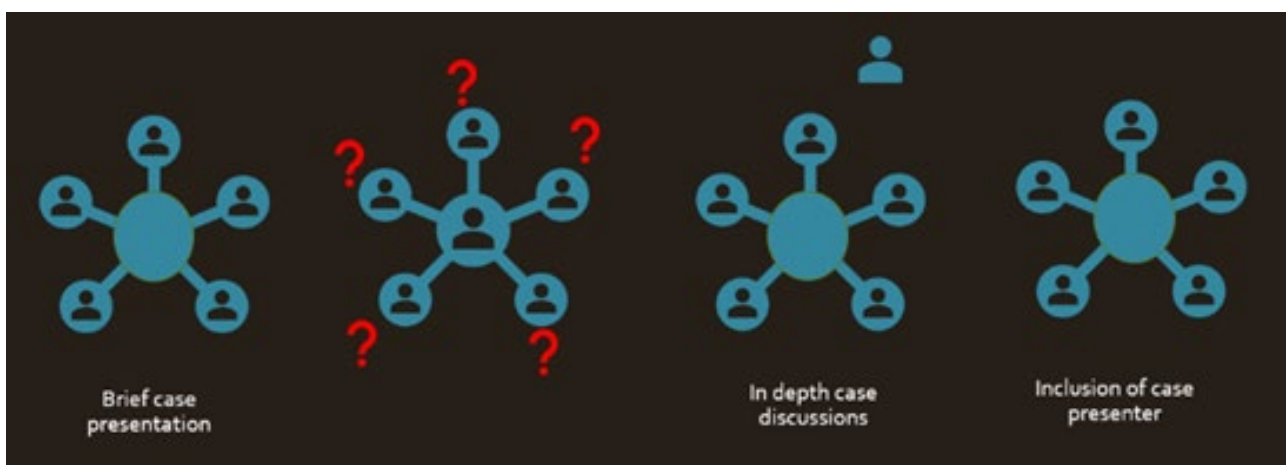


Figure 1: Adapted version of reflecting in team^{2,5}.

Step 1

A small group of students (ideally 7 or 8) and a facilitator sit in a circle and one student volunteers to be the case presenter. The case presenter provides a summary of the case that they have reflected on. The case presenter can propose a question they would like the group to answer for them.

Step 2

The rest of the group ask questions to fully understand what the case presenter has presented, being careful not to suggest or re-assure the case presenter at this stage.

Step 3

The case presenter physically moves their chair outside the circle and listens to the group discussion. The group can choose any model of reflection and deeply reflect on the case presented to the best of their knowledge +/- the group will attempt to answer the case presenters' question.

Step 4

The case presenter re-joins the circle and feeds back to the group about their experience of sitting out of the circle and observing the deep reflection.

A survey⁴ developed to measure the level of reflective thinking was adapted. SGUL ethical approval was granted, and an early and a late survey were completed by year 1 students during the academic year, 2022 to 2023. Of a total of 32 matched surveys, the overall frequency of reflection amongst students had increased across all four types of reflective practice: habitual action, understanding, reflection and critical reflection, with critical reflection demonstrating the highest positive change.

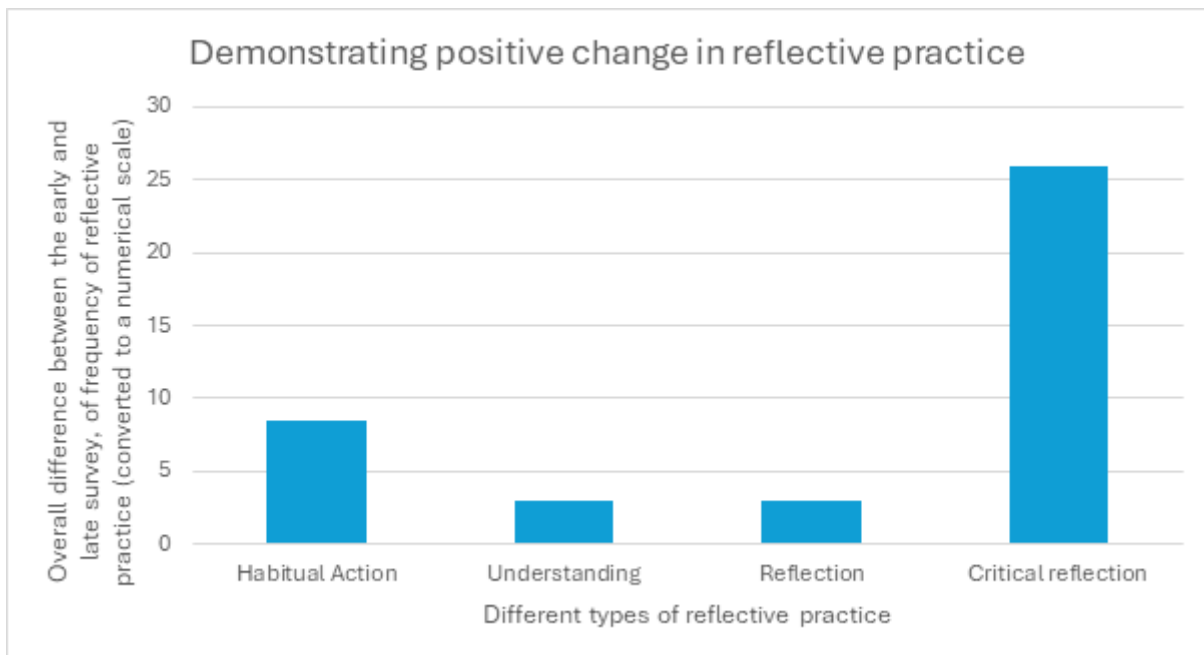


Figure 2: The increase in frequency of the different types of reflective practice by year 1 MPAS students at SGUL 2022 to 2023, after their reflecting in teams' sessions.

Conclusion

As a result, this model is used to run and assess the reflective practice sub-module, as a permanent component of MPAS at SGUL.

Discussion and future work

The student survey captures our students' perspective, however, other factors may have augmented the increase in reflective practice, such as learning from errors/good practice, in both university and clinical setting, etc.

This reflecting in teams' model has been developed particularly for students, however it can be used in the workplace, to enhance teamwork and support wellbeing, in multidisciplinary teams in both primary and secondary care. It also has potential to be used outside of the medical profession. It has been used in one of the MPAS faculty training days at SGUL where it triggered interesting discussions and initiated productive conversations.

This work has been presented as an oral presentation and two workshops over the last three years, at the annual national physician associate education conference (PAEC). The

last conference in Sheffield in May 2024 has resulted in four other HEIs being interested in collaborating with SGUL. Further details of these findings and these collaboration outcomes will hopefully be published in the future.

This adapted reflecting in teams' model has now been copyrighted and packaged and is also available for any institution to purchase from SGUL.

Acknowledgement

Dr Lisa Saldanha

For providing me with creative freedom to adapt and develop the reflecting in teams' model and working with me to adapt the survey.

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Co-creating a sustainability-focused curriculum

Mahruf Shohel, Bedford College Group

Introduction

In response to the urgent need for comprehensive sustainability education, the Bedford College Group initiated a transformative curriculum investigation project aimed at empowering students and staff as curriculum co-creators (Shohel, 2023). Conducted between September 2022 and August 2023, this initiative engaged participants in student-centred and impactful educational experiences (Shohel et al., 2023). The project, which focused on climate change, social justice, and sustainability, led to the development of a Level 4 undergraduate module (Shohel, 2024a). In addition to engaging students and staff as active partners in curriculum development, the project aimed to promote informed decision-making and sustainable behaviours (Shohel, 2024b). The transformative journey and profound impact of this project are discussed below.

Project background

Governments and local authorities have declared climate emergencies, highlighting the critical need for comprehensive educational initiatives that address the sustainability challenges. The Bedford College Group, located in the south-east Midlands (Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire), is a leader in the UK further education sector. In recognition of the growing urgency of sustainability issues, the Group launched this project as part of its co-creation initiative to integrate sustainability education into its curriculum by focusing on student-centred and impactful educational experiences. The research-based co-creation project aimed to develop a Level 4 undergraduate module focusing on climate change, social justice, and sustainability.

Objectives of the project

The primary objectives of the BERA BCF Curriculum Investigation project were threefold:

- + **Engage Students and Staff as Active Partners:** to establish and promote a sense of ownership and collaboration.
- + **Foster Understanding of Key Issues:** to deepen participants' understanding of sustainability, climate change, and social justice, and enable them to make informed decisions and adopt sustainable behaviours.
- + **Promote Innovation and Adaptability:** to cultivate a culture of innovation and adaptability within the institution, and to encourage continuous dialogue about teaching, learning, and assessment strategies.

Methodology

The project adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The methodology included:

- + **Design and Workshops:** A series of module development workshops was conducted to facilitate collaborative curriculum design. These workshops provided a platform for diverse voices and perspectives to ensure that the curriculum was inclusive and reflective of real-world challenges.
- + **Participant Recruitment:** Students and staff from various backgrounds were invited to participate to enrich the inclusivity of the curriculum. Staff members were also engaged to provide their expertise and facilitate the co-creation process.
- + **Ethical Considerations:** Ethical concerns were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring confidentiality. The project adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by the institution and relevant educational bodies.
- + **Impact Measures:** The impact of the project was measured through pre- and post-project surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. These measures were used to assess changes in participants' understanding of sustainability, climate change, and social justice, in addition to their engagement in sustainable behaviours.

Project outcomes

The collaborative efforts between staff and students resulted in the development of an interdisciplinary curriculum that encompassed sustainability, climate change, and social justice. Key outcomes included:

- + **Enhanced Curriculum Development:** The collaborative efforts resulted in the creation of an introductory interdisciplinary module on climate change, social justice, and sustainability. This module was designed to equip students with the knowledge and skills to make informed choices and adopt sustainable practices. It reflected a comprehensive approach to sustainability education, integrating theoretical and practical aspects to foster informed choices and impactful behaviours within the community.
- + **Empowerment and Innovation:** The project empowered participants by giving them a voice in curriculum development. The resultant culture of partnership, innovation and adaptability fostered within the institution highlights the potential of collaborative curriculum design in addressing contemporary issues.
- + **Inclusive Education:** The involvement of students and staff from diverse backgrounds enriched the curriculum to make it inclusive and representative of real-world challenges. This inclusivity was crucial in addressing the varied perspectives and experiences of students, thereby enhancing the relevance and applicability of the curriculum.

- + **Educational Impact:** The new module provided students with a holistic understanding of sustainability and its intersection with social justice and climate change. It also emphasised the importance of active participation and informed decision-making, preparing students to contribute positively to their communities and the broader society.
- + **Behavioural Impact:** Initial findings are indicative of a lasting impact on participants' behaviour, with increased environmental awareness and a commitment to sustainable practices observed among students and staff. Participants reported a deeper understanding of sustainability issues and a greater willingness to engage in sustainable behaviours post-project.
- + **Institutional Change:** The project served as a test bed for exploring new ways of engaging students and staff in curriculum development. It demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of collaborative approaches, paving the way for future initiatives aimed at enhancing teaching, learning, and assessment strategies.

Discussion

The project highlights the importance of collaboration in curriculum development. By engaging students and staff as the co-creators, the initiative fostered a sense of ownership and empowerment among participants. Regular meetings and interactive sessions helped to build a sense of ownership and commitment among participants. In addition to enhancing the quality and inclusivity of the curriculum, this collaborative approach also promoted a culture of innovation and adaptability within the institution. Collaboration was therefore central to the project's success. Students and staff worked together to identify key themes and content areas for the module. The inclusive nature of the process ensured that the curriculum was relevant and reflective of the community's needs and values. Several challenges were encountered, however. These included technical issues during virtual sessions and varying levels of engagement among participants. Through continuous learning and adaptation, it was possible to overcome these challenges. The project was successfully concluded and demonstrated meaningful impact.

Implications

The project's outcomes suggest several implications for future curriculum development initiatives:

- + **Sustainability Education:** Institutions should prioritise sustainability education and integrate it into their curricula to address the urgent global challenges of climate change, inequalities, and social justice to ensure sustainable development.

- + **Student Engagement:** The relevance and inclusivity of educational programmes can be enhanced by engaging students as co-creators in curriculum development, resulting in a deeper connection between students and their educational aspirations and learning experiences.
- + **Collaborative Approach:** Collaboration between students and staff should be encouraged to promote a culture of partnership, innovation, and adaptability to ensure continuous improvement within educational institutions.

Conclusion

The co-creation project at The Bedford College Group demonstrated the profound impact of collaborative curriculum development on sustainability education. By involving students and staff as active partners, the project produced an introductory interdisciplinary module entitled '*Introduction to Climate Change, Social Justice and Sustainability*'. This initiative not only empowered participants, but also fostered a culture of partnership, innovation and adaptability within the institution. The project's success highlights the potential of collaborative efforts to give voice to students and make education relevant and empowering in an ever-evolving educational landscape to support future generations in their choices and educational aspiration. By building on the success of this project, the Group can continue to lead in sustainability education and serve as a model for other institutions. This case study highlights the potential of co-creation in transforming education by showcasing how an educational institution can adapt to, and address, pressing societal and global challenges through inclusive and innovative approaches.

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Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Programme

Daniel Biggs, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Perth

In 2023-2024, UHI Perth's Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation (Hons) degree programme launched the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) Programme. This allowed final-year students to teach and support first-year students under academic staff supervision in the Anatomy and Physiology unit.

Key Benefits:

- + UTAs: Improved communication skills, deeper knowledge, and teaching experience.
- + First-Year Students: Increased support and higher engagement levels.
- + Academic Staff: Greater teaching flexibility and additional support.
- + Application Process: Final-year students applied with a CV, a statement of interest, and a high-scoring piece of work. Two students were selected and progressively took on more teaching responsibilities.
- + Programme Evaluation: Evaluations showed increased student engagement, with notable improvement by year-end.
- + Conclusion: The UTA Programme's first year was highly successful. It is recommended to continue and expand the programme to include practical-based units.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Programme report

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation (Hons) degree programme at UHI Perth launched the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant (UTA) Programme. This initiative allowed final-year students to teach and support first-year students under academic staff supervision. The UTA Programme, implemented in the Anatomy and Physiology unit across both semesters, aimed to benefit all participants: final-year students, first-year students, and academic staff.

Literature highlights numerous benefits for all stakeholders: UTAs enhance their communication skills, deepen their knowledge, and gain teaching insights. First-year students receive additional support, both in and out of class, while academic staff enjoy more teaching flexibility and extra assistance for students (Goff and Lahme, 2016). Consequently, the department benefits from having capable tutors dedicated to quality education.

This report details the UTA Programme within the Anatomy and Physiology (A&P) unit of the Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation degree at UHI Perth. The A&P unit is a fundamental first-year component as it provides foundational knowledge essential for future studies and industry practice. The unit involved a weekly two-hour class from week 1 of semester 1 to week 17 of semester 2, encompassing five learning outcomes. The UTA Programme was led by the A&P unit's delivering lecturer who operates overall as the programme leader of the Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation (Hons) degree.

Fourth-year students interested in the UTA Programme submitted their CV, a statement of interest, and a piece of work scoring over 65% to the UTA Programme Lead. The submission process helped assess the academic abilities of potential UTAs. Before acceptance, an informal face-to-face discussion clarified the workload, expectations, and goals. Successful applicants received a Letter of Offer and, upon acceptance, a Letter of Acceptance. Both documents were available in physical and digital formats for departmental and student records. Two fourth-year students were admitted to the programme.

Programme evaluation

The OECD (2019) evaluation framework is suitable for assessing the UTA Programme, which aims to enhance the academic abilities of both Undergraduate Teaching Assistants and their students. This framework is used for educational and community projects (e.g., Ninson 2018; Scheerens et al. 2012), and thus is suitable for this project too.



Figure 1: The six dimensions of evaluation.

Relevance and coherence

The UTA Programme aims to provide teaching and planning opportunities for Undergraduate Teaching Assistants, enhancing the academic abilities of both UTAs and first-year students. It also aids in CV enhancement for UTAs and offers multiple teaching options for academic staff. UTAs engaged in tasks such as PowerPoint editing, creating learning materials like handouts and online quizzes, which were reviewed by the programme lead before class. Weekly emails from the lead to the UTAs outlined the class schedule, in-class activities including PowerPoint presentations, group tasks, and discussions to reinforce learning outcomes.

Sustainability

Entering its second year (2024-2025), the UTA Programme will again be offered to new fourth-year students, interest has already been expressed by current third year students about the programme. There is potential to admit more than two students and involve additional academic staff, pending discussions. The successful outcomes from the first year (see figure 2) and early interest in the second year suggest the programme has strong potential for sustainability.

Effectiveness, efficiency, and impact

Throughout the year, the UTA programme lead progressively assigned teaching tasks to the two UTAs. Initially, UTAs managed small group tasks with their assigned students, creating three small groups in total (programme lead also took a small group of students too), the groups remained the same students the majority of the year. Towards the year's end, UTAs delivered PowerPoint slides to the whole class, gradually increasing their teaching responsibilities. The programme lead was always present to assist if required.

Evaluation

The programme was evaluated twice: mid-year and at the end. The evaluation focused on first-year student perceived engagement, essential for understanding unit topics and overall success. Given the heavy workload in the A&P unit, engagement and support are vital. Figure 2 presents the evaluation results, with perceived engagement measured through self-report categorisation, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Table to show the measure used for perceived engagement in the UTA class compared to non-UTA classes.

Highly Decreased	Decreased	Partially Decreased	Stays the Same	Partially Increased	Increased	Highly Increased
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

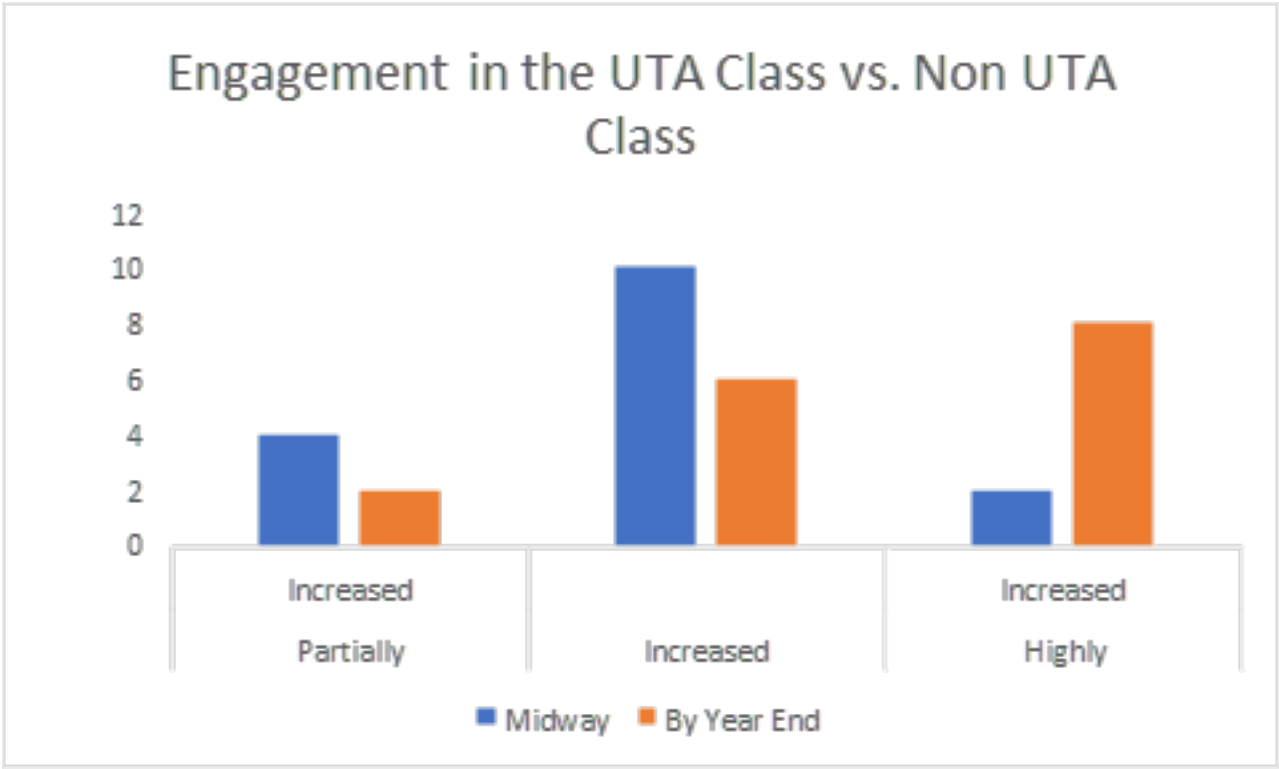


Figure 2. Results of the 18 first year students’ perceived engagement

It can be observed that midway, the majority of students felt an “increased” level in engagement. However, by the end of the academic year, the majority of students felt their levels of engagement had “highly increased”. Anecdotally, this correlated with the sparse requirements of resits in the five closed book exams for the unit.

Conclusion and recommendations

The UTA programme's inaugural year was a resounding success. UTAs enhanced their communication skills, deepened their content knowledge, and gained invaluable teaching experience. First-year students received increased support both in and out of class, while academic staff benefited from greater teaching flexibility and the ability to provide more targeted assistance. Engagement levels were notably higher in UTA-led classes compared to non-UTA classes. Given these compelling results, it is strongly recommended to continue and expand the programme to include practical- based units in future years.

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Pedagogical development in Audiovisual Technology education

Jack Laidlaw, University Centre Middlesbrough

This report details pedagogical development on the Foundation Degree in Audiovisual Technology delivered by University Centre Middlesbrough (UCM). The course, validated as a Higher Technical Qualification for delivery from September 2025, is used as the training programme for apprentices on [the Level 5 Audiovisual Technician apprenticeship standard](#). The programme team worked with over 30 employers to develop the standard, a project led by Jack Laidlaw: HE Quality, Data, and Policy Manager at UCM. The first cohort began their studies in October 2022, with further cohorts joining since.

Sessions are delivered online using Microsoft Teams, utilising a blend of synchronous 'real-time' and asynchronous pre-prepared approaches. As the programme has progressed the team have developed their practice in delivering immersive sessions on practical content. Their efforts have enabled apprentices to enjoy a high-quality learning experience remotely, affording them the opportunity to study while they work in various locations. All modules have developed due to ongoing review. The modules On-site Event Production, Video Technology, and Audio Capture have progressed significantly.

On-Site event production

At first, the module leader felt like delivering this content online was 'mission impossible'. Their concerns were understandable. The module learning outcomes include practical content such as the installation and testing of audiovisual hardware for large scale on-site events. Early sessions were challenging, with a smartphone camera feed to a Teams call proving too unstable to show apprentices the complexities of certain equipment. Challenges were addressed via various methods. Creation of pre-recorded video content enables apprentices to study asynchronously, and the addition of a multi-camera setup and vision mixer allow for higher quality synchronous sessions (Figure 1). The vision mixer enables the tutor to seamlessly switch between visual feeds, displaying various hardware equipment and software applications along with pedagogical tools such as presentation slides (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Part of a multi-camera setup feeding the vision mixer

Apprentices explained that using this approach they ‘can see all they need to see’. Interestingly, they also favourably compared studying a practical subject online to a more ‘theoretical’ subject in their prior experience. According to them, pedagogical practice on the Fd Audiovisual Technology programme is more effective due to ongoing module development. They are afforded a slick, multi-media experience as opposed to standard ‘talking head’ approaches they have experienced in the past.



Figure 2: Multiple visual feeds to select in the vision mixer

Video technology

On this module the tutor intended to give apprentices a similar experience to those who study on-site at the College by providing real-time moving images of equipment and software via Teams. And, like the On-Site Event Production module, early sessions required improvement. After beginning by using PowerPoint presentations and 'holding hardware equipment up to a webcam', the sessions were significantly developed. A blend of pre-recorded sessions, curated online content, and a more technically adept synchronous setup is utilised. The setup includes use of broadcast-quality cameras, the like of which apprentices are required to operate to satisfy the module learning outcomes. In this way, the module is being delivered using equipment about which the apprentices are learning. One technique employed is the inclusion of camera settings in the visual feed to the Teams call, shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Visual feed to Teams call including camera settings

The tutor alters camera settings in real-time so that apprentices can see the effect on the image. Problem-solving skills, vitally important on the programme, are developed using this method. The tutor makes intentional errors and invites the apprentices to fix issues by identifying specific settings.

The module tutor explained that delivering practical content online has avoided any complacency ‘creeping in’ to their practice, and ‘forced the entire programme team to be innovative’. To give the apprentices the best experience possible, the tutor has broadened their pedagogy in various ways. Initially, sessions progressed at a similar pace to in-person sessions, however, it became apparent that a slower approach is required online. Extra time is needed to give apprentices the opportunity to respond to what they see on their screens, and extra checking via ‘Socratic questioning’ is a useful tool to maintain engagement (Hickmett, 2014). Specific milestones within sessions also prove useful for measuring progress. Bespoke, personal milestones are used for individual apprentices, which are agreed and checked during 12-weekly apprenticeship progress reviews.

Audio capture

As with those previously discussed, this module developed significantly over the early weeks of delivery. Initial sessions were delivered synchronously, however, the challenge of assisting apprentices with software-specific issues whilst simultaneously delivering module content to a group was a barrier to learning. Instead, sessions became primarily asynchronous, delivered using the Teams 'Classwork' function (Figure 4).

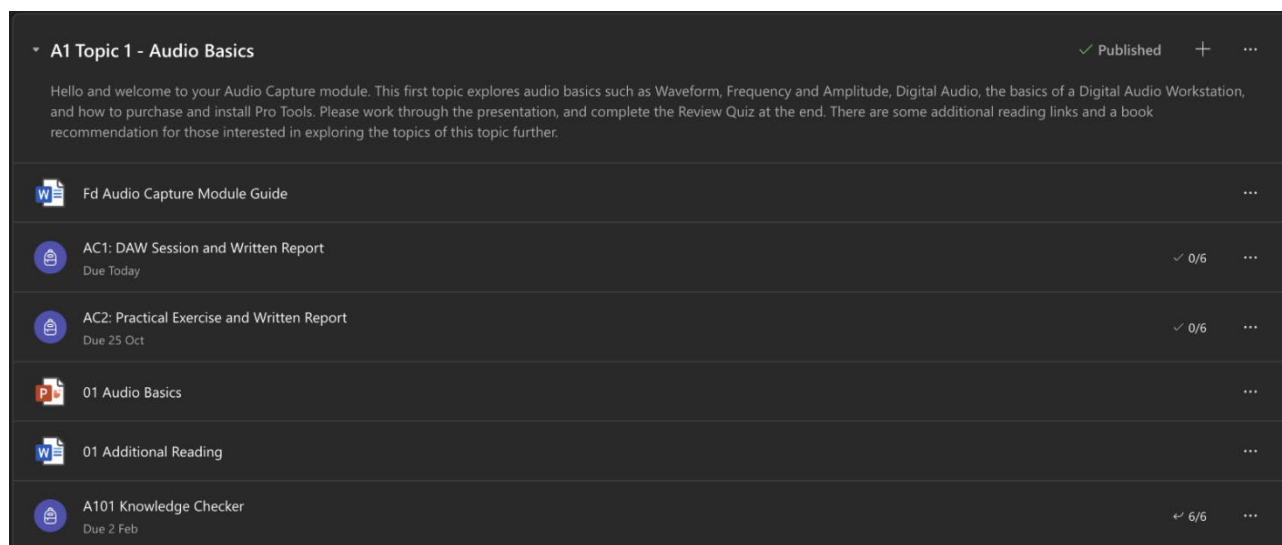


Figure 4: Using the Teams classwork function to organise learning activity

Classwork enables tutors to organise various types of content 'in one place' rather than using various apps (Fisher, 2023). In the Audio Capture module, learning resources are based around a weekly theme, with apprentices required to upload responses to practical tasks. Apprentices can call the tutor directly during session time for a one-to-one discussion and/or practical demonstration using screen-sharing. The tutor also uses scheduled one-to-one discussions to check apprentice task submissions and broaden their teaching and learning approach. These one-to-one online calls recreate the workshop feedback/stretch and challenge cycle of an in-person session, and are based on input gathered from apprentices every week in response to the following questions:

- + What has been your most significant learning experience in this topic?
- + What else would you like to know about this topic?
- + How could you learn more about this topic?

Using this mechanism the module tutor guides each apprentice through a bespoke learning journey and fills gaps in knowledge. The tutor also uses responses to the above questions to develop the module, identifying themes in reported knowledge gaps and adding additional learning content for future delivery.

When the programme was first conceptualised as an innovative online training programme for apprentice audiovisual technicians, the team knew that delivery would be a challenge and development would be continuous. Apprentice feedback has been vital in this respect, and the team were encouraged when one apprentice reported that, despite their initial skepticism about studying practical skills online, ‘the course *does* work’.

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