

Electronic Journal of Learning & Teaching (e-JoLT)

Issue 6: Summer 2006

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Editorial

Enhancing the quality of teaching and learning

This issue of e-JoLT highlights some of the excellent work which has been undertaken by the University in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, starting with examples of good practice identified through the Faculty Annual Reports as well as commendations from the Quality Support Team visits. Although it may be tempting to read the sections which are directly relevant to your particular Field or Faculty, we would encourage you to have a look at the comments for the University as a whole, as this may help you to identify additional examples of effective practice which could be applied to your teaching and learning.

In terms of central and cross-Faculty developments, this issue contains an evaluation of the first year of operation of the Review of Professional Practice Scheme, which aims to enhance student learning by allowing staff to reflect upon particular aspects of their teaching and learning. There is also an update of the restructuring of the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) and the Learning Technology Support (LTS) team, and information relating to a number of e-learning initiatives such as WebCT, PebblePAD, ECDL and the University's e-moderating course.

Over the past six years the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) has assisted the University in developing a number of cross-Faculty teaching and learning developments, including the Professional Development Groups (PDG), Scholarship of Learning & Teaching (SoLT) and the University Teaching Fellowships. The University recently submitted proposals for the next three years of TQEF funding, and these are reproduced in this issue. One of the requirements of the funding was that institutions had to include a focus on issues relating to equality and diversity, which is an area where the University has started to develop a national reputation. The University's recent work relating to disability and race issues is highlighted in a separate section which includes reports relating to two HEFCE-funded disability projects, an update on the University's disability guidelines and information about a new Master's degree in Islamic Education.

The activities highlighted in this issue of e-JoLT are just a few of the teaching and learning initiatives which are currently being undertaken across the University. There are several other relevant initiatives which are not reported here such as the Centre for Active Learning (CeAL), *Learning & Teaching in Higher Education* (LATHE) and projects such as 'Meta: From PDP to CPD' and 'Effective Learning & Teaching Enhancement' (ELATE). The broad range of effective pedagogic practices, from those implemented by individuals and Fields identified in the Annual Reports to the larger institutional and collaborative national projects, highlights the excellent work that is being undertaken by the University to enhance the student learning experience.

Phil Gravestock, Michele Hills, Kristine Mason O'Connor

Developments: UoG

Disseminating good practice

1. Good practice identified through annual review

The following examples of good practice within each of the Faculties were identified and reported in their respective Faculty Annual Reports for academic year 2004-05.

Business School

The Field Review Panel and FASC sub-group identified particular aspects of good practice as follows.

Examples of good practice in relation to teaching, learning and assessment

Adventure Leisure/Leisure Management/Sports Leisure Management (UMS) Leading Change by Action Research (PMS)	Use of external speakers, including those from students' own organisations, to enhance the programme
Adventure Leisure/Leisure Management/Sports Leisure Management (UMS) Tourism Management/International Tourism Management/Sports Tourism Management (UMS)	Industry relevance and innovative nature of assessments as identified by external examiner
Adventure Leisure/Leisure Management/Sports Leisure Management (UMS) Tourism Management/International Tourism Management/Sports Tourism Management (UMS)	Saturday School to re-induct students returning from placement

BT/e-business/e-marketing (UMS) Information Systems/Information Technology (UMS)	Links between Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and module teaching, ensuring curriculum currency
Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development	Use of action learning sets in Learning & Development module
Commercial Computing/e-Business Technology/Multimedia (PMS)	The extent of module information available online and accessible remotely, facilitating access and widening participation
Computing/e-Commerce Systems (UMS)	Experience of continual updating of syllabus via Professional Development Group meetings
Events Management/Hospitality Management/International Hospitality Management	Thoroughness of combined field boards
Modern Languages (UMS)	Use of multimedia teaching and learning materials
Law (UMS)	Continual review of assessment strategy in relation to poor attendance
Multimedia (UMS)	Formalised formative feedback, noted by external examiner
Multimedia (UMS)	Commended for good practice by BSL (British Sign Language Institute)
Tourism Management/International Tourism Management/Sports Tourism Management	Formal mid semester module evaluations

Faculty of Education, Humanities and Sciences, FCH

The FASQC panels identified the following Field-specific examples of good practice within the Faculty.

Examples of good practice in relation to teaching, learning and assessment

- The links with external organisations and practitioners to maintain the currency of the curriculum in Landscape and Garden Design Field cluster (UMS), Environmental courses cluster (PMS) and Landscape Architecture (PMS).
- The establishment of the 'Sociology on-line community' via WebCT as a one-stop shop in Sociology (UMS).
- The introduction of Postgraduate Professional Development Profiles (PDP) in Landscape Architecture (PMS).
- The transparent process for agreeing marks for the dissertation in American Studies (UMS).
- The proposed production of a student magazine in Creative Writing (UMS).
- Student involvement in mentoring projects in English Literature (UMS).
- The effective working of the History PDG, especially the standardisation of WebCT support material for taught modules in History incorporating Politics and Society (UMS).
- The introduction of electronic cover sheet for Distance Learners in OTC (UMS).
- The nature of the feedback to students to enable them to progress further with studies in the MEd.
- The impact study carried out to ascertain the longer-term effects of the PGCHE course on UoG's staff's teaching in the PGCHE and PGCHE with Practice Educator.
- The development of the SEAL guidelines to support the PDP process in PGCE 3 –7 West Mercia SCITT.
- The introduction of blended learning delivery mode, involving the use of WebCT, in MA Global Issues in Contemporary Mission, Redcliffe.

Faculty of Media, Art and Communications, Pittville

Examples of good practice in relation to teaching, learning and assessment

- Foundation Studies in Art and Design: accurate grading.
- History of Art and Visual Culture: forcefully addressed the concerns of students re. the elements of the course needing representation in the reconfigured Fine Art Cluster.
- Film Studies: Professional Development Plan highlighted.
- Broadcast Journalism: students' technical issues responded to in 'Open Fridays' sessions.
- Media Communications: meticulous and transparent marking process.
- DE Cluster: Professional Development Plan tied to professional practice modules.

Faculty of Sport, Health & Social Care, Oxstalls

The FASQC recommended a number of areas as having examples of good practice, based upon the response by the report readers' panel discussions including the view of the external member. Whilst these have been categorised to identify examples in relation to teaching learning and assessment and others in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, in practice FASQC noted that effective good practice often spanned both.

Examples of good practice in relation to quality processes

- The receptiveness of tutors to student needs (Foundation Degree, Health Community and Social Care).
- An ongoing evaluation process (Infection Control - CP).
- Excellent, thorough evaluation process at the level of the session and the course, with feedback from managers (Return to Nursing).
- The identification of staff development needs for new staff and the implementation of a programme to address this (Sports Development).
- Tutor receptivity to changing needs of the students (Foundation degree HCSC).

- Excellent, thorough evaluation at the level of the session (Infection Control).
- The intention to evaluate the impact of a programme on practice outcomes (Infection Control CP).

Examples of good practice in relation to teaching, learning and assessment

- Good year-on-year tracking of module assessment results (Sport and Exercise Sciences).
- Proactive responses identifying deficits in curriculum eg statistics, and using QA processes of an emergency field board to rectify the problem (Sport Science).
- The introduction of an active community-based project (Sports Development).
- The variety of assessment methods used (Sports Education).
- The blend of clinical and academic input to programmes valued by students (Applied Health Studies).
- Quality of information and feedback offered to students, commented on by the external examiner (Exercise and Health Sciences).
- A good evaluation with comprehensive field board minutes (Health and Social Care PMS).
- Role of external input in teaching and learning (Sports Development PMS).
- Tracking of action points for teaching and learning issues arising from module evaluations (Sport Science).
- Strong ethic of student discussion and collaboration, and willingness to work with students for assessment support and guidance (Diploma in IASMI).
- Excellent distance learning materials commented on by the external examiner (Playwork).
- The considered response to the External Examiner report, particularly over marking (Sport Education).
- The quality of student work, thorough and constructive feedback and high quality of administration as highlighted by the external examiner (Community Health Studies).

- The thoroughness of addressing widening participation issues (Exercise and Health Sciences).
- Innovative processes used by teaching team for support and guidance to distance learning students (Playwork).

2. Quality Support Team commendations

The following commendations were identified in each of the faculties by the Quality Support Team during Semester II, 2005-06.

Business School

1. The thorough and comprehensive action plans which had been produced in response to the Discipline Audit Trail and the Quality Support Team visit (of December 2004).
2. The course guides provided for the QST, both the online and paper versions, which were clear and well presented.
3. The practice, in some areas, of using module cover sheets to provide the opportunity for students to reflect on the assessment processes, to identify areas for improvement and to indicate where feedback would be helpful.
4. The consideration given to non-attendance of students at lectures; the departments should be encouraged to keep this issue under review.
5. The sense of a Business School community, which had been expressed by both students and staff.

Art and Design, Faculty of Media, Art and Communications

1. FASQC appeared to be working efficiently and now that FASQC was confined to fields/courses located at the Pittville campus, staff felt more involved and responsive to quality assurance issues. It was also noted that staff felt that quality assurance procedures were now more embedded as a result of the inclusion of Field Chairs on the Committee membership.
2. The production of a part-time staff guide was commended; however, some updating was required to bring the document into line with current University practices.

3. Committee minutes in general were of a good standard and the systems and documentation provided for Standing Panels were particularly commended.
4. The staff and students meeting with the Quality Support Team were commended for their openness and willingness to engage in the discussions during the visit.

Natural and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Humanities and Sciences

1. It was acknowledged that the Department had been functioning without a formal Head of Department until recently and despite the difficulties this has caused, the staff were to be congratulated that it did not appear to have impacted on the quality of the student experience.
2. The information provided for students, including Dissertation Guide, Tips for writing practical reports and Style Guide for written assignments were of good quality and students spoke highly of the availability of Sociology-on-Line.
3. The QST viewed the practice of providing an assessment calendar and of including the return date for the work on assignment sheets, as a model of good practice.
4. Campus arrangements for handing in assignments was well organised; however the QST particularly commended the additional arrangement on the campus for handing in assignments at the Learning Centre out of normal daytime hours, and agreed it was a practice which could be considered for adoption across the University.
5. The students commented extremely positively on the accessibility of staff and the support and guidance that was provided by staff in the Department.
6. The QST noted that the National Student Survey response from the Social Science students had been extremely positive, possibly reflecting the high level of support provided by staff.

Sport & Exercise Sciences, Faculty of Sport, Health and Social Care

1. The mid-semester evaluation which had been undertaken with Level I students and the resulting key findings and action plan appeared to have been a beneficial and constructive exercise.
2. The students were extremely positive about the facilities and standard of accommodation available on the campus and the move of Health and Social Care to the campus did not seem to have impacted on the quality of the student experience – no additional strain on resources had been noticed.
3. The Staff Guide seen by the panel was impressive and represented good practice which could with advantage be adopted across the University (this was also a commendation by the QST in November 2004).
4. Staff were complimentary about the apparently seamless transition of administration arrangements in integrating the Health and Social Care area into the Faculty.
5. The improvement in arrangements for the hand in and collection of assignments was welcomed by the students.

Review of Professional Practice: a formative evaluative report

Review of Professional Practice (RPP) is designed to:

- enhance student learning;
- include a wide range of diverse activities not just 'face to face delivery';
- apply to both full- and part-time academic staff;
- be mainly developmental in focus whilst also providing evidence to support the institution's commitment to quality assurance;
- be separate from selection criteria for redundancy or promotion, regrading or incremental progression procedures;
- be appropriately resourced at institutional level via Faculties and the Centre for Learning and Teaching;
- be based on trust and confidence between peers;
- provide the opportunity to acknowledge and disseminate good practice.

Full details of RPP including the guidelines and templates are published on the CLT website: <www.glos.ac.uk/adu/clt/>.

Review of Professional Practice (RPP) is a biennial process introduced this academic year to promote continuing professional development related to teaching and the support of student learning. It replaces the former 'observation of teaching' scheme. Faculties are responsible for managing the 'pairing' of peers and recording that the process had been undertaken.

Given that RPP is a biennial process with another year to run before the cycle is complete, it is planned to conduct a full evaluation around Easter 2007 when it is envisaged that the majority of staff will have undergone the process. The evaluation will be presented to Academic Board in time for any approved amendments to be implemented in 2007-08. The evaluation will include the perspectives of reviewers, reviewees and managers.

Implementation to date

PRR was introduced by letters to all staff and briefings to managers in the autumn term 2005. 77 staff from across each of the four Faculties completed the RPP Reviewer Development Programme. This programme, managed by the CLT, was led by an external consultant Dr David Gosling a leading international researcher and practitioner in pedagogic peer review in higher education. The programme was part-funded through the University Teaching Quality Enhancement Funding strand which promotes professional standards in teaching. In the academic year 2006-07 Dr Gosling will lead 'training the trainer' sessions so that each faculty has a sustainable means of developing new reviewers.

Formative evaluation

In June 2006 reviewers were invited to an evaluative meeting with Dr Gosling and the Dean of Teaching and Learning Development. The twelve who were able to attend came from each Faculty. At the meeting they provided written responses to questions and discussed a range of issues. Reviewers who were unable to attend were invited to submit comments in writing to the meeting.

The key evaluative points from the meeting are presented below:

A. RPP Guidelines

The RPP Guidelines were viewed as being very clear.
Some felt that the timescale to implement them was rather tight:

'next year our Department will follow the guidelines more carefully with more time.'

'really the only difficulties were the timescale, completing before SDRs. This is unlikely to be a problem next year.'

Example of good practice:

The Department of Marketing and Strategy discussed the RPP guidelines as a group before they were implemented; this was considered to be very helpful rather than individuals reading them on their own.

B. Advantages or disadvantages of RPP compared with Observation of Teaching

Whilst all the written responses and the discussion favoured RPP, some disadvantages and challenges were identified.

Advantages

'It allows the reviewer to be supportive, encouraging and developmental and for the reviewee to take responsibility for choices.'

'Much more focused on individual requirements.'

'I much prefer the new scheme. It is much less likely to become "something to be done" with little outcome. It is challenging but does not require too much time or paperwork.'

'The main advantages were the greater depth that the process encourages and the flexibility to review whatever will be most useful.'

'Positives: meeting with a colleague; listening, learning, trust, respect, professional dialogue, focused, feasible, outcomes, action.'

'Non-threatening. A chance to put students' learning environment first.'

'More informal, genuine dialogue; shared learning focus on teaching problem was useful.'

'Advantages include selection of very different aspects of the tutor's professional interests. Excellent, collaborative/stimulating discussion.'

Disadvantages/challenges

'The perceived "elevation" of the reviewer.'

'Information passed to line manager seemed scant (template B).'

'It was initially quite difficult to get folk to specify a focus for the session.'

'The main disadvantage is that it is taking more time.'

'No disadvantages apart from setting aside sufficient time to do it properly.'

'Three meetings are difficult to manage; ended up one meeting and extensive email correspondence.'

'I was allocated. Perhaps colleagues should be allowed to approach a reviewer?'

'Assisting to find solutions requires skills/knowledge, easy to ignore the need to do it.'

'I'm concerned that reviewers are seen as 'experts' so therefore it's necessary to manage the expectations of reviewees.'

'There is inevitably a sense that the reviewer should somehow be able to offer advice and/or solutions and that this has not been fully thought through.'

'Reviews need to be conducted cross-faculty or at least cross-departments to avoid the disadvantages of the previous system if reviews are conducted by close colleagues.'

C. How could RPP be better supported?

The principal areas of support related to managing the process effectively within Faculties, establishing a link with PDGs, ensuring that the process feeds into SDRs and providing opportunities for reviewers to meet and to access pedagogic resources.

Management

'Whose responsibility is it to explain RPP to the Faculty?'

'We need a champion in each department.'

'A mechanism to ensure participation and involvement in the Faculty will need to be put in place.'

'Hopefully 06/07 reviewers who have already been trained will be allocated reviewees earlier in the year. This is not possible this year.'

'We need to know how many hours we've been allocated on the balance of duties so we know how to manage our time.'

'The parties to the review need relatively clear deadlines, otherwise activity can be delayed.'

Integration

'It could be improved by integrating it more with the PDG process, so encouraging experienced staff to take ownership of RPP.'

'Ensure a clear focus on RPP during the SDR.'

Support for Reviewers

'It would be good to have an opportunity to meet with larger groups of reviewers to compare notes and ideas for next time.'

'RPP reviewers could be "overseen", developed, enabled perhaps centrally or at Faculty level.'

'Need refresher sessions for reviewers.'

'it would be good to know who we can contact to ensure that we further develop ourselves as reviewers.'

'RPP reviewers need access to the latest research that informs teaching. How does RPP join up with the Institute of Pedagogic Research?'

'More resources need to be available. Online resources and links would be helpful.'

D. Other comments

'Could students be involved in any way ie request that reviewee gets student feedback?'

'Give the process enough time to get established.'

5. Conclusion

A report based on this paper was submitted to Academic Board in July 2006 and the Board approved the recommendation that the Dean of Teaching and Learning Development meets with appropriate Faculty senior managers to consider this formative evaluation and formulate an action plan for the first meeting of TLAC on 17 November 2006.

Kristine Mason O'Connor, Academic Development Unit

Academic Induction Programme for Newly Appointed Staff

The first event of the Academic Induction Programme for Newly Appointed Staff will take place on Friday 15 September 2006, Room TC006A FCH Campus, 10.15am – 2.15pm.

The programme is an important element of the induction process for new colleagues. Additional events throughout the year will focus on different academic areas within the University, and will discuss academic issues specific to each Faculty.

As well as discussing issues relating to the University's academic processes, staff will have the opportunity to meet with other newly appointed colleagues.

Newly appointed staff are requested to confirm participation by emailing Carol Sherlock, CLT Administrator: csherlock@glos.ac.uk by **Wednesday 6 September 2006**, indicating any special requirements.

Launch of the Pedagogic Research & Scholarship Institute

On 21 June 2006, the University launched the Pedagogic Research and Scholarship Institute. The event was opened by Dame Janet Trotter and commenced with short presentations from the Dean of Teaching and Learning Development, Dr Kristine Mason O'Connor, and the Dean of Research, Professor Peter Childs, who outlined the background to and purposes of the new Institute. Professor Mick Healey's presentation on linking teaching and research provided a context for the Institute.

The University was delighted to welcome the three external contributors of international eminence who gave presentations to the large audience of staff from across the institution. They were Mike Adams of the Disability Rights Commission and Honorary Fellow of the University; Professor Sally Tomlinson who has researched and published on education policy and

practice and on race, ethnicity and equality issues and who is a Member of the University Council; and Professor Lewis Elton, Honorary Doctor of the University and world-renowned for his work on educational development and higher education.

The presentations were followed by round table discussions and a short plenary. Issues raised by the presentations and discussions will inform the development of the Institute's agenda. Details of the Institute will be available on the University website in due course.

National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS)

Congratulations to Carolyn Roberts on being awarded a National Teaching Fellowship. This highly prestigious and competitive award recognises Carolyn's achievements in the leadership of and support for higher education teaching and learning within the institution and internationally. Carolyn will receive her award from the Minister of Higher Education at a gala evening in London in September. The next issue of e-JoLT will include a report on this event.

Carolyn's award brings the University's number of National Teaching Fellows to six: Peter Childs, Phil Gravestock, Mick Healey, Martin Jenkins and Kenny Lynch.

Details of the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme are published on the HE Academy website at <www.heacademy.ac.uk/NTFS.htm>.

Kristine Mason O'Connor, Academic Development Unit

Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) and Learning Technology Support (LTS) news

CLT/LTS restructuring

Over the past year, the Centre for Learning & Teaching has undergone an internal restructuring, following Framework for the Future and the joining with the Learning Technology Support team. A chart showing the revised structure of the CLT and LTS can be found at <www.glos.ac.uk/adu/clt/>.

There have been a number of staff changes during the 2005-06 academic year, particularly in the Learning Technology Support team. As a result of these changes, the main contacts for the specific software systems are as follows:

PebblePad	Pete Ellis (pellis@glos.ac.uk)
QuestionMark Perception	Russ Brookes (rbrookes@glos.ac.uk)
Turnitin	Pete Ellis (pellis@glos.ac.uk)
WebCT	John Hill (jhill@glos.ac.uk)
WebCT Administration	Aimée Connett (aconnett@glos.ac.uk)

WebCT sites for 2006-07

Learning Technology Support will archive all 2005-06 WebCT sites on 31 August 2006. Therefore, if you intend to use WebCT in 2006-07 it will be necessary to submit a WebCT Request Form, available at www.glos.ac.uk/adu/lts/systems/webct/index.cfm, to Aimée Connett (aconnett@glos.ac.uk). A new WebCT site can be created which is based on any current site that you use, thereby saving time and effort in setting up courses for the next academic year.

European Computer Driving Licence audit



The University of Gloucestershire has been awarded a third successive grade 'A' rating for its delivery of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) qualification from the British Computer Society (BCS).

Each year, for three years, an external verifier from the BCS has visited the ECDL Test Centre, now based in the Centre for Learning and Teaching at FCH, and has once again awarded us the highest possible rating as a result of their audit.

The European Computer Driving Licence® (ECDL) is the internationally recognised qualification which enables people to demonstrate their competence in computer skills. The record-breaking ECDL is the fastest growing IT user qualification in over 125 countries.

ECDL is designed specifically for those who wish to gain a benchmark qualification in computing to enable them to develop their IT skills and enhance their career prospects. **No prior knowledge** of IT or computer skills is needed to study ECDL.

ECDL:

- raises your level of competency in IT and computing skills;
- improves your productivity at home and work;
- requires no prior knowledge of IT or computer skills;
- provides you with a worldwide recognised qualification.

If you would like to learn more about training and testing for ECDL at the University of Gloucestershire, please contact Dave Harden, Test Centre Manager, at dharden@glos.ac.uk, or you can view our own ECDL webpage: <www.glos.ac.uk/adu/lts/support/ecdl.cfm> or visit the ECDL website: <www.ecdl.co.uk>.

***Dave Harden, Learning Technology Co-ordinator,
Centre for Learning & Teaching***

E-moderating staff development course

Many congratulations to the following members of staff who completed the three-week online e-moderating staff development course in 2005-06:

Tim Adams	Janet Harvey	Steve Munson
Bernd Behr	Laura Jefferies	Martha Quinn
Nicola Daine	Andrew Kear	Chris Short
Janet Dwyer	Jayne Lewis	Arran Stibbe
Robert Ferguson	Rachel Matthews	David Turner
Russell Goodwin	Anne Miller	Mark Unsworth

Margaret Harrison

Following feedback from participants, the e-moderating course is being redesigned to incorporate links and activities relating to different forms of online learning. The first presentation of the new three week e-moderating course will take place in semester I 2006-07. If you would like to participate in the course, or would like additional information, please contact Phil Gravestock (pgravestock@glos.ac.uk).

Phil Gravestock, Centre for Learning & Teaching

PebblePAD

The University has been piloting the PebblePAD e-portfolio system over the past academic year, and this is to be continued into 2006-07. All staff and students have access to the system, which is available at <pebblepad.glos.ac.uk>. A set of user guides are available at <www.glos.ac.uk/adu/lts/pebblepad.cfm>.

During 2005-06 the e-portfolio has been used with Level I students (XX160), Level III dissertation students, PGCHE participants and staff. For further information about the use of PebblePAD, please contact Phil Gravestock (pgravestock@glos.ac.uk).

Phil Gravestock, Centre for Learning & Teaching

Proposals for the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) 2006-07 – 2008-09

In March 2006, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) announced that it was to continue the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) activities for a further three years (although funding for 2008-09 is subject to the outcomes of the Government's forthcoming spending review). The proposals relating to the strand for 'Institutional Learning and Teaching Strategies and Supporting Professional Standards' which have been agreed by the University's Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee (TLAC) and approved by Academic Board are summarised as follows:

1. Supporting Faculty Teaching, Learning and Assessment Initiatives
 - o Supporting development and implementation of Faculty Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategies;
 - o Supporting Faculty Symposia.
2. University Teaching Fellowships (UTF)
 - o Expansion of the UTF Scheme to award one UTF from each faculty per annum.
3. Equality and Diversity
 - o Promotion of race equality;
 - o Promotion of gender equality;
 - o Promotion of disability equality.
4. Education for Sustainability
5. Flexible and Distributed Learning (FDL) Projects

6. Dissemination of Good Practice
 - University Conference;
 - Publication of e-JoLT.
7. Review of Professional Practice (RPP) Scheme
 - Training, development and support for the University's RPP Scheme.
8. Professional Development Group (PDG) Scheme
 - Academic and support staff engagement with the Higher Education Academy through the PDG Scheme.
9. Addressing the National Standards:

Standard 1

- Develop a flexible module to address Standard 1 which is aimed specifically at support staff involved with learning and teaching and student advice;
- Support research students to participate in the module PHE411: Introduction to Academic Practice in Higher Education.

Standard 2

- Supporting staff to undertake the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE);
- Establish a network for PGCHE graduates;
- Provide workshops for experienced staff to address Standard 2, and to apply for Registered Practitioner status with the Higher Education Academy.

Standard 3

- Develop processes to address Standard 3;
- Recording Staff Continuing Professional Development through the use of e-Portfolios.

10. Training and staff development

- Annual institutional subscription to the Higher Education Academy.

The proposals were submitted in June 2006, and it is anticipated that HEFCE will make an announcement regarding the success of the proposals in August 2006.

Inclusion and diversity

HEFCE funded disability projects

In December 2005, the University completed two projects funded by HEFCE's 'Improving Provision for Disabled Students' initiative. The two projects were:

- DisabilityCPD: continuing professional development for staff involved in the learning and teaching of disabled students
- Inclusive Curriculum Project

Details about the projects can be found in a recent publication '*Embedding Success: enhancing the learning experience for disabled students*' from the Higher Education Academy (available at <www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record§ion=generic&id=594>).

DisabilityCPD: Continuing Professional Development for staff involved in the learning and teaching of disabled students

This was a collaborative project between the University of Gloucestershire and the University of Worcester, led by the Centre for Learning & Teaching. The two main outputs from the project are:

- An online staff development course
- A disability-awareness guide

Three presentations of the online course took place between February 2004 and December 2005. The pilot course involved staff from the University of Gloucestershire and the University of Worcester, whereas the following two courses were open to academic and support staff from national HEFCE-funded institutions. In total, 40 institutions were represented on the course. Demand has been so great that the project still has a waiting list of over 130 applicants, and the course will continue to run from October 2006.

Electronic copies of the guide are available at <www.glos.ac.uk/adu/clt/dcpd/guide.cfm>, and hard copies can be obtained from the Centre for Learning & Teaching.

Phil Gravestock, Centre for Learning & Teaching

Inclusive Curriculum Project (Geography Discipline Network)

The Inclusive Curriculum Project was designed to develop, disseminate and embed resources for supporting disabled students studying geography, earth and environmental sciences in higher education and to transfer the generic lessons widely to subject-based academics, educational developers, learning support staff and disability advisors.

The project team comprised lecturers from geography, earth and environmental sciences, educational developers, disability advisers and staff with research experience of disability issues. The team were all members of the Geography Discipline Network (GDN), a consortium of old and new universities based at the University of Gloucestershire, and included representatives from Lancaster, Liverpool John Moores, Oxford Brookes, Middlesex, Plymouth and the Open University.

The aim of the project team was to give practical, evidence-based advice, support and guidance for staff via four main outputs:

- a student survey and case study database;
- departmental workshops;
- a national conference;
- a series of ten guides. Five guide titles address specific disability areas – hearing; mobility; vision; mental health and Asperger Syndrome; dyslexia and hidden disabilities. Three further titles are targeted at staff groups - lecturers; Heads of Department; support staff. The final two titles include an overview of the issues and a guide specifically written for students.

The guides will shortly be distributed in hard copy to all HEFCE HEIs with GEES departments and to all HEI disability advisory centres in England and Northern Ireland. They will also be downloadable via www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/icp/.

To capture the student voice and inform the project of disabled students' needs, in 2003 the team undertook the first ever survey of barriers faced by GEES students. A report followed in April 2004 which can be accessed at www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/icp/survey.htm. 27 case studies were also published on the web www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/icp/caseintro.htm and used in ICP workshops (15 of which took place in institutions across the UK 2003 – 2005) and incorporated into the ICP Guides.

The workshops were very well received, with 97% of respondents rating their event as 'useful' or better, and of these, 66% rating it as 'highly useful'. Typical comments included 'a refreshing and topical look at how to make a difference', 'detailed exploration of issues', 'real in terms of use

in the classroom and as a personal tutor'. The national conference in April 2005 attracted some 65 delegates from 34 institutions across the UK, with many delegates taking away specific action points for their own institutions – 'develop more workshops for the New Teachers' Programme'; 'ask questions about who supports the support staff'; 'review/debate assessment in teaching'; 'start a discussion with our students about how we can involve them in our curriculum development'.

Post project, the HE Academy GEES Subject Centre is continuing to carry the ICP torch by providing an advisory service to GEES staff and integrating inclusivity into their programme of departmental workshops.

Michele Hills, Centre for Learning & Teaching

Mick Healey, Department of Natural & Social Sciences

Master's degree in Islamic Education

A new **Master's degree in Islamic Education** is being launched by the University of Gloucestershire in Spring 2007. The degree offers a unique opportunity for teachers, religious leaders, community workers and others to enhance their understanding and awareness of working with Muslim communities, both inside and outside Britain. It aims to attract both practising Muslims and those of other faiths and of none who work with Muslim communities or who simply seek to know and understand the pluralist culture that is now Britain within Europe and the wider world. The degree builds on the University's working relationship with several Muslim education groups over the last fifteen years.

The new Master's degree is being offered by the University's Department of Education, in collaboration with the Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE). Established in Leicestershire since September 2000, MIHE is one of the first academic institutions established in Britain for studying Islamic and Muslim Community Studies, and Islamic Banking and Finance. MIHE offers a faculty comprising internationally acclaimed Islamic scholars and is supported by the Islamic Foundation (renowned for research, publications, training and consultation in Islam since 1973).

The development of this new Master's degree has been led by Dr Alison Scott-Baumann, Alan Bloomfield and Siraj Shaikh (University of Gloucestershire), Dr Mehmet Asutay and Dr Ataulah Siddiqui (MIHE), Ibrahim Hewitt and Akram Khan-Cheema OBE.

The Master's degree in Islamic Education is being offered part-time initially, starting in January 2007, and is designed to offer both breadth and flexibility. The course requires the completion of 180 CATS points and requires the completion of the following modules at each stage:

Postgraduate Certificate in Islamic Education (60 CATS points)

- Islamic Perspectives on Education (compulsory / 30 CATS points);
- Muslim Identities and Communities (compulsory / 30 CATS points).

Postgraduate Diploma in Islamic Education (60 CATS points)

- One or two optional modules chosen from a wide variety of modules offered by the Department of Education, including Leadership in Inclusive Education (30 CATS points), Inclusive Identities (30 CATS points) and Leadership of Faith Communities (30 CATS points), among others.

MEd in Islamic Education (60 CATS points)

- A dissertation (60 CATS points) module focussing on issues in education and awareness of Islamic and Muslim communities.

This initiative demonstrates the University's active engagement with Muslim communities in Britain and worldwide, as part of our commitment to interfaith work, replacing relativism and prejudice with pluralist understanding.

For enquiries, contact:

Dr Alison Scott-Baumann, Course Leader Designate

Principal Lecturer, Department of Education,
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Sciences,

Tel: +44 (0) 1242 724746 Email: asbaumann@glos.ac.uk

Working Towards an Inclusive Educational Experience for Disabled Students - Revised Guidelines

The University publication 'Working Towards an Inclusive Educational Experience for Disabled Students: legal requirements and examples of good practice' was first published in September 2003, and distributed to University staff in October 2003. The publication was developed through the collaborative work of the Student Development Centre (SDC), the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT), NATFHE and UNISON at the University of Gloucestershire.

The second edition of the guide was published in June 2006, and will be distributed to all members of staff in the autumn term. Electronic copies of the guidelines are available at <www.glos.ac.uk/adu/clt/iee/>.

Phil Gravestock, Centre for Learning & Teaching

Reports from the Faculties

New stimuli for teaching and learning at Oxstalls

The development of the new Faculty of Sport, Health and Social Care at Oxstalls Campus has created new stimuli for teaching and learning in 2006.

Firstly, the position of the campus as a community-based facility means that academic staff have been attempting to develop more opportunities for students to engage with the local population. In some cases this has been on an extra-curricula basis, with the success of the SportsCVs volunteering initiative demonstrating how staff and students can make a positive contribution to the local social economy. However, increasingly, staff are experimenting with more experiential learning approaches in attempts to develop sustainable community-based curricula. Placement Officers are now in place to support work in the sport and social care fields, and staff from a range of disciplinary backgrounds are committed to developing reflective learning methodologies. These approaches are in turn being supported by the innovations created by the University's *META* FDTL project.

Secondly, it is anticipated that the development of the physical infrastructure of the campus will stimulate further innovations. The SRIF funded laboratories, with associated gymnasias, dance facility, and racquet-sport space, will facilitate community based interventions and teaching focusing particularly on cardiac rehabilitation. At the other end of the campus, a new teaching and learning block will incorporate spaces for enhanced group working and resource access. Access to wireless technology will further enhance the resource base across the campus, as will the development of a campus based information system.

All of these developments will be underpinned by the Faculty's new Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, which will be published in the Autumn following a period of consultation and reflection.

Andy Pitchford, Faculty of Sport, Health and Social Care

Using multimedia exhibitions to encourage transferable skills

'Transferable Skills are non-job specific skills which can be used in different occupations. You may have developed them through course work, jobs, internships, volunteering, or just plain life experience. By communicating your transferable skills effectively, you can enhance your marketability and open

yourself up to a larger sector of the job market... Carnegie Mellon students organize exhibitions, run job fairs, and orchestrate festivals - employers know leadership experience on campus can translate into the workplace.'

(Carnegie-Mellon Career Center, 2006)

<www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/career/CareerBriefs/transkills.html>

As this passage illustrates, our American colleagues at Carnegie Mellon recognise the importance for their students' future careers of participating in a range of activities in addition to their subject studies. The University of Gloucestershire has also been proactive in encouraging students to be involved in a range of what might be termed 'extra-curricular' activities such as Student Community Action, team sports and drama productions. However, in our experience it is rare for the more technically inclined student to be involved in much of this activity and they gain a reputation for being indoor types, pasty-faced boffins or nerds. On the other hand, in areas such as Art and Design there is a long tradition of the Final Year Show where individuals demonstrate their talents and market their work to a wider audience. The Computing and Multimedia subject areas have favoured group projects as being more relevant to the world of software development and these often involved presentations to staff and clients, but generally on a small, discrete scale. The Multimedia field team felt that this was a missed opportunity in terms of promoting not only the students but also the Field and, by extension, the University. Thus, the idea of the first Multimedia Exhibition MUX04 was born! This article describes the development of the idea over three years with respect to the transferable skills such as Time Management, Presentation Skills, Evaluation Skills, Networking, Budgeting, Risk Analysis and Workplace Legislation Awareness used by the students, and suggests how the principles can be adapted to suit different subject cultures.

The idea was presented to the students in the Autumn of 2003 both in the introductory lecture and on the module website. Presentation practices were scheduled for December and March to concentrate the mind and develop a sense of community – or was it competition? In reality both were present, but in a very positive way this led to a creative buzz of anticipation during the sessions. The presentations were videotaped so that teams could review their performance with a tutor at their next meeting, encouraging peer reflective practice in this transferable skill. The products were submitted a month before the exhibition so that tutors could review the quality and create a promotional website (MUX04, 2004), thus encouraging better time management skills.

To promote the exhibition, the students designed promotional materials such as a poster and leaflet. These were mailed to about 300 local businesses thought to be potential employers, local media

representatives, careers officers and members of the University staff. An email list was developed from the list of clients and alumni already employed in the multimedia industry and this was used to send three emails before the event at appropriate intervals and with appropriate, different content. The website provided information on location and timings as well as being a repository for images and video of the event (MUX04, 2004). Students taking MU308 *Multimedia Marketing* were required to evaluate this promotional activity and, from the literature, make further suggestions as to multimedia promotional methods which could be used in the future – again allowing them to demonstrate reflective practice.

In the main, the students and staff funded the exhibition themselves using quantities of cheap white banqueting roll, crepe paper and colour prints of screenshots of their products in addition to, in some cases, material provided by the team's client. The 14 teams all used computers to demonstrate their products and some used projectors and disco lights or other props to draw visitors to their stand. The timetable of the event included brief presentations in the afternoon which were attended by the Dean and faculty management of the Business School who also supported the event by providing lunches for VIP guests. The transferable skill of budgeting is crucial to the successful outcome for the teams and the exhibition as a whole, and has been identified as an area meriting further consideration in the future.

The evaluation of the event was carried out with students, staff, industry contacts and other visitors and was overwhelmingly positive while recognising that the event involved both students and staff in many hours of work both in the planning, execution and clear-up to a very tight timescale. Suggestions were made for the tightening up of the presentations in terms of content and timescale and in MUX05 the assessment was adjusted to include the production of a short 2 minute trailer video advertising the team's product. These were required well in advance so that they could be included on the promotional website (MUX05, 2005).

Other developments in MUX05 arose as a result of further support from the Business School in that the very large space in the Hall was used to incorporate long banners of sheer fabric in the theme colour (red) (MUX05, 2005b) and support from the Faculty Marketing staff allowed the signage and refreshments to be much improved. As there were only 10 teams, it was decided to devote one area of the Hall to promoting the new Interactive Games Design field and groups of school pupils attended and tried out a selection of games available. The team's presentation of the trailer videos in the afternoon was choreographed to be a more professional event and this was well received by the audience. One student took a more proactive role in promoting the event by inviting the Mayor of Cheltenham and a contact via a member of staff led to

Gloucestershire Media sponsoring a prize for the best stand. This illustrates that the event gave some students the opportunity to demonstrate 'networking' skills which are not commonly covered in transferable skills teaching materials but which are becoming an essential part of working life.

This incremental approach to development continued for MUX06 (MUX06, 2006b) which included stands provided by the Computing (CO) Group Project teams. Psychologically, this was an interesting experience as initially the CO teams were diffident about participating, voicing fears that their work 'isn't visual like the multimedia students' work, so we'll stick out' as one student put it succinctly. Multimedia staff gave a session on 'Participating in Exhibitions' for the CO groups on their own and then insisted that at least one member from each team attend a full session with the MU teams to cover Health and Safety issues *inter alia*. As part of the latter, a more formal method of booking laptops and other equipment was introduced which all teams appreciated as it forced them to plan in advance. The CO teams seemed reassured by this approach and certainly produced stands of a similar visual quality to the MU Teams (MUX06, 2006c). Inevitably, some teams were still cutting out cardboard figures at the last minute but the responsibility for the stands was entirely the student teams' and therefore hopefully this was a learning experience of the stress of leaving things to the last minute. The Business School's newly acquired blue tablecloths and noticeboards lent a more formal, professional look to the stands when compared with MUX04 (see images on MUX06, 2006a; MUX04, 2004). The CO teams' feedback after the event was that they thought it was a very valuable and enjoyable experience and they could see the relevance for their future careers. They even suggested that it would have been beneficial to give a short presentation as the MU teams had, which illustrated to staff that one shouldn't always listen to the initial negative reservations voiced by students! *Force majeure* seems to work as a motivator in some instances! The inclusion of health and safety issues is another example of a transferable skill, identifying relevant legislation in the workplace, which is rarely covered within conventional transferable skills materials.

The inclusion of the CO teams has suggested a further development which is to rename the Exhibition as COMEX to indicate Computing and Multimedia projects and make use of the more generic understanding of Computing as a discipline. There are, of course, promotional marketing issues with this proposal, but these will form part of the MU308 Multimedia Marketing module's discussion assignment which illustrates a further advantage of the use of exhibitions; they provide a relevant, up-to-date case study environment in which to situate learning experiences in other modules. The teams' feeling is that the promotional opportunities for the students, the courses, the Faculty and the University would merit further exploration.

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<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux05/gallery/pages/IMG_12m7.htm>

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<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/DSCF00412.htm>

MUX06 (2006c) *MU^{X06} Multimedia Exhibition website – Test Technologies Ltd team stand*. Last accessed online 7/7/2006
<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/IMG_0234.htm>

Extra useful images

stush

<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/IMG_0225.htm>

hall audience

<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/DSCF00572.htm>

Hush

mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/DSCF00612.htm>

Orange theme 2 hall stage and display

<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/DSCF0068.htm>

theatre booking accessibility

<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/DSCF0071.htm>

nightclub tables

<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/IMG_0243.htm>

tables2

<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux06/Gallery/pages/IMG_0293.htm>

MUx05 cafe tables alumni

<mmedia.glos.ac.uk/mux05/gallery/pages/IMG_1439.htm>

Nina Reeves; Mike Brooks; Paul O'Brien, Business School

Experiences of a Disciplinary Commons

'...until we find ways of publicly displaying, examining, archiving and referencing teaching as a form of scholarship and investigation, our pedagogical knowledge and know-how will never serve us as scholars in the ways our research does.'

Lee Shulman (1998)

Lee Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, argues that a course portfolio is a way of making public the act of teaching. In this way, it becomes available to one's peers and susceptible to critical review and evaluation.

To explore this approach further, Sally Fincher from the University of Kent used money from a Teaching Fellowship Award to instigate a Disciplinary Commons. She assembled a collection of like-minded people from the same discipline (computing) who undertook to meet monthly from October 2005 until June 2006, with a common purpose – to each produce an individual course portfolio. Eighteen of us enrolled on this venture, with varying teaching experience, from old and new universities in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, but all committed to teaching computer programming to undergraduate students and all recognising the associated difficulties and wanting to improve their practice. Two dropped out along the way and some of us found it difficult to attend every meeting, but given the demands of our jobs and the distances involved, the commitment was remarkable.

The journey to South Bank University became increasingly familiar, where Sally was waiting to guide us through the process of producing a course portfolio. Initially this was a hazy concept. Each month, we looked at a different aspect of our teaching.

- **The context in which we taught:** What sort of university was it? What were the students like? What were the teaching facilities like? What was our teaching philosophy and how did this influence our teaching?
- **The content of what we taught:** What were the stated learning outcomes? Were there any implicit outcomes? Did we write our module description or had we inherited it?
- **The instructional design of our course:** What language had we chosen (or been told to use) to teach introductory programming? If it was object-oriented, did we teach objects early or later (a topic of intense interest to computer programming teachers)? How did we structure the learning? Did students manage their own learning or were they led? What role did visualisation play? What role did the development environment play?

- **The way we taught it:** Did we give lectures? Did we have tutorials or seminars? How did we use the laboratories? How much time did we have to teach?
- **The way we assessed the students:** Was it formative or summative? What sort of coursework? Did we have exams? If so, were they written or practical?
- **The ways in which we evaluated our teaching:** Did we use questionnaires? If so, were these managed by the lecturer, or centrally? Did we have peer reviews? What other aspects were deemed significant when we evaluated our teaching?

We were instructed to think about these topics beforehand, and then we discussed them in small groups over lunch, in plenary sessions and often on the underground on the way home. By the end of the year, we knew the details of each others' courses and approaches to teaching intimately. Mark from Aberystwyth had thrown away his lecture slides after spending time teaching in the States. He gets to know every one of his 140 first year students through team-building Outward Bound weekends at the beginning of the year. Quintin from Glasgow uses game-show style handsets in his lectures. Students are asked to vote on the correct answers to various questions throughout his lectures. Jim from Dundee uses an animation of Daisy the cow's stomach to illustrate the concept of data storage. David from Kent uses analogies from his hobby, climbing, to motivate his students. Carole from Teesside uses effective tutorials and others in the group have been inspired to introduce them into their teaching.

Each Friday was exhausting but stimulating. Even on the train there was no respite, as we were presented with a 'Train Reading' paper on a relevant topic, such as an extract from *What's the Use of Lectures* by Donald Bligh (1998). In addition to these Fridays, we each visited another member of the Commons and peer reviewed their teaching. I went to Swansea and watched Chris give a lecture in a completely semi-circular, tiered lecture theatre. Though the academic level was higher than here, the approaches to teaching and responses from students were very familiar. I learned a lot from visiting Swansea and also gained from Stephan travelling from Durham to watch me teach. He commented on how friendly and articulate our students are.

In parallel with our group, a similar group was convened in the States. Some of us had the opportunity to review the course portfolios of our American counterparts and have our portfolios reviewed by them. Again, I was struck by the similarity of our experiences and also picked up some new ideas for interesting programming exercises.

The purpose of the meetings was to produce a course portfolio. When we started, we did not have a clear idea of what a course portfolio was or what it should contain. Sally encouraged us think about artefacts that we could use as evidence for our portfolios – samples of student work, photographs, videos of lectures and relevant documents. I found this difficult to plan for, as it was only in hindsight I realised why I could have used a particular artefact. I would be more prepared next time. Meanwhile, coinciding with the stress of final assignments and marking, we (more or less) produced our portfolios. Mine is available at <<http://cmedia.glos.ac.uk/gbs/vb/CoursePortfolioGlos/>>. I cannot say that I am completely happy with it – those artefacts need improving - but it gives a flavour of how I teach introductory programming that might be useful for anyone joining the teaching team or taking over from me. It has also caused me to question some of my teaching practices and think about what innovations I might introduce. It is the teaching equivalent of a paper describing some research. Though a lot of work, I found the whole experience valuable and inspiring, and I am grateful to Sally for giving me the opportunity to participate and leading us through the process so well.

References

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Vicky Bush, Department of Computing

Developments: National

Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning

In February 2006 the national Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education was launched by Universities UK (UUK), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and the Higher Education Academy. The Standards are owned by the sector and were developed by the Academy on behalf of UUK, SCOP and the four UK higher education funding councils.

The Professional Standards Framework is published on the Higher Education Academy website:

<[www.heacademy.ac.uk/regandaccr/StandardsFramework\(1\).pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/regandaccr/StandardsFramework(1).pdf)>

'The Professional Standards Framework has been developed for institutions to apply to their professional development programmes and activities and thus demonstrate that professional standards for teaching and supporting learning are being met'.

(HE Academy March 2006)

In March the University was represented at a seminar organised by the Higher Education Academy to support implementation of the Professional Standards Framework. A theme permeating the seminar was the importance of linking quality enhancement and standards to achieve a balance between an enabling developmental process and an element of challenge and benchmarking. This approach aligns well with the University's principles of quality assurance.

How will the University implement the Standards Framework?

In June the University submitted proposals to the HEFCE Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund to promote and support the implementation of the Standards Framework. These proposals included developing a new module within the University's Academy accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) to enable administrative and other support staff who contribute to student learning to reach Standard One of the Professional Standards Framework. Another module in the PGCHE will be available to research students to enable them to reach Standard One.

Next year the PGCHE Course Team will map the course against Standard Two of the Framework. This process will be supported by a panel of peer accreditors from the HE Academy and a successful outcome will enable the PGCHE to continue to be accredited by the HE Academy and to be aligned to the Professional Standards Framework. The University will continue to require newly appointed academic staff with fewer than three years' experience in HE to undertake the PGCHE.

National developments

At its meeting on 7 July, the HE Academy Board agreed a new model to replace the current Register of Practitioners with three categories of recognition of achievement: Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. The Board recommended that the new model should be implemented as soon as possible and envisages that all current Registered Practitioners will automatically be transferred to Fellowship status. See: <www.heacademy.ac.uk/news/20_4642.htm>.

The Academy will establish a working group whose remit will include 'alignment of the three categories with the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching in higher education'.

Colleagues are encouraged to consult the HE Academy website to keep abreast of developments.

Kristine Mason O'Connor, Academic Development Unit

Conference Reports

The 11th Annual Conference on Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Education

University of Bologna, 26th-28th June 2006

<www.iticse06.cs.unibo.it>

Overview

About 200 delegates from all over the world gathered in Bologna to share experiences in teaching computer science. There was a great deal of interest in techniques to encourage student participation such as quizzes and automatically marked formative assessment.

The GoJava contribution

The conference included a session for demonstrations of software used for teaching and I had the opportunity to show the software called GoJava that has been developed and used within the university here for four years. It is used as part of the initial teaching of the Java programming language with the aim of helping student during practical sessions to concentrate on the Java language with minimum distraction from the software with which they edit and test their programs.

Random thoughts from the papers

Details of the conference can be found at the URL above but some ideas that were considered interesting are listed briefly below.

Participation

For one course, all students were required to attend with a laptop and could respond to class questions by answering multiple-choice questions or uploading text/diagrams for discussion.

Anonymous students

The problem of students not knowing their fellow students was addressed by forming groups, dividing responsibilities within the group, then getting the specialists to talk together and finally the groups reformed to present their ideas.

Pass rates

An early paper from Greece quoted, in passing, a failure rate of 40% in their assessment and there was no response from other delegates. Later presenters referred to 25-30% failure in examinations and it appeared to be normal to have these high failure rates.

Automatic marking

Several papers discussed methods for automated marking. For programming courses, the simple approach was to apply a secret set of test cases to the code submitted. There was also reference to pattern matching to check code contains appropriate snippets of code. An ambitious project for database design was attempting to mark hand-drawn entity-relationship diagrams.

Group work

One presenter indicated that they try avoid unequal contribution to group work by matching students on earlier individual marks.

Message boards

An analysis of responses to questions about why students used an electronic message board indicated that many students would not want to show their ignorance in front of a class but would do so anonymously via the message board. It was not clear from the discussion how much time the tutor spent monitoring the board and answering questions.

Attendance

A meticulously planned experiment gathered data relating the level of student interaction in a lab exercise and their depth of knowledge in the subsequent examination question. The presenters were brave enough to show that there was no correlation between passive observation and interaction. There was, however, a strong correlation between the examination results and attendance at the preceding lectures.

More details ...

If any of the notes above spark an interest then please contact me (jwise@glos.ac.uk) and I will try to recall more of the discussion and I have a CD of the proceedings.

Jon Wise, Department of Computing

Higher Education Academy Forum Engaging with Student Cultural Diversity in the Curriculum: What works?

London Metropolitan University, 26th October 2005

The purpose of the day was to discuss and reflect on issues related to cultural diversity within the higher education curriculum.

The day started with a presentation by Val Butcher, Senior Adviser for the HEA, which gave an update on the working of the Higher Education Academy (handout on PowerPoint presentation available from PE).

The remainder of the morning was taken up with brief presentations by a panel of four HE practitioners who work with international students. The focus on working with 'international' students, rather than recognising the cultural diversity of our UK student population, was a point of criticism in follow-up discussions, as was the fact that all the presenters were 'white and middle-class'. Some useful points were made, however, which might usefully help arouse HE teachers' awareness regarding pedagogical issues associated with cultural diversity within the student population.

Helen Peters (London Metropolitan University) highlighted the following issues in relation to her experience of working with international students:

- a) students do not expect their cultural backgrounds to disappear in the classroom;
- b) international students are expected to reflect upon, and within, belief systems other than their own;
- c) many of the issues raised in the text books are not applicable/appropriate to their own culture;
- d) many students lack the historical knowledge/background which may be referred to in discussion;
- e) examples provided cited in lectures are from a UK or US context.

Helen asked:

'What is our role as educators in the future global economy and how do we prepare students to participate in this?'

'Should institutions in the UK continue to recruit international students when they are not making pedagogical adjustments?'

Joanne Smailes (Northumbria University) talked about a small-scale survey conducted in the Business School of her institution. The survey explored international and UK students' perceptions of their educational experience, with a major focus on assessment. The main issues arising from the research were:

- a) international students were more likely to engage in preparatory reading for lectures;
- b) both groups of students felt that they learnt more from non-examination types of assessments;
- c) international students preferred more regularly paced hand-in dates for coursework;
- d) international students were more likely to express difficulty in writing essays;
- e) international students were more likely to feel uncomfortable about rewriting important authors' words, because they believe them to be experts and they cannot possibly alter what they have written (particularly those influenced by Confucian tradition);
- f) international students perceived the UK student body as unapproachable and unfriendly – can affect confidence in the classroom.

Recommendations:

- a) provide short exemplars of how academic writing can be paraphrased and referenced appropriately;
- b) introduce exercises on intercultural awareness into the seminar programme;
- c) make use of the more "friendly" and "open" students, possibly involving them in peer-assisted-learning-type schemes.

Elizabeth Grant (University of Leicester) used a tape recording (with screen-projected sub-titles) of an Indian student talking about his educational experiences in the UK. He was studying Art and Design, a subject area which students are not encouraged to engage with in India. His main points were:

- a) a lot of complicated terms and jargon is used in lectures, which adds to difficulty in understanding the subject;
- b) he often cannot find the right words to express meanings;

- c) he has to engage in reflective assessment of his work – not done in India;
- d) most international students stick together by nationality, as home students do not include them;
- e) briefs are set within a British way of life or the future of Britain;
- f) good support is needed for international students.

Elizabeth went on to highlight some of the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act. She stressed the need to make sure we align our teaching and assessment for these students, but at the same time taking account of ALL students.

Helen Purdey (City University) talked about her work with international postgraduate students on an MA course in International Journalism. She has to manage a huge diversity of cultural backgrounds. Journalism is culturally specific and students need to learn what will be meaningful to them in their jobs when they return home. Some of the strategies she employs are:

- a) deliberately mixing international and home students in groups;
- b) using carefully chosen news bulletins from their own countries for analysis;
- c) giving students news-reading practice in their own language.

Workshop

The afternoon session consisted of four workshops, of which delegates could choose to attend one.

Promoting race and cultural awareness through the curriculum - led by Deeba Parmar (Middlesex University)

Deeba outlined the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act with regard to duties of higher education institutions to be pro-active in promoting racial equality. She stressed that the responsibility lies not only at institutional level, but includes all members of staff. Research carried out at Middlesex University showed that the majority of staff did not have an understanding of cultural diversity. It was decided that a 'toolkit' should be developed, and some exercises from this were used as activities in the workshop in order to give staff an idea of the likely contents. The toolkit will aim to raise awareness and explain the amended legislation. It will promote culture-embedded thinking, supporting holistic ways of working within the curriculum, rather than just providing 'add-on' activities.

In the plenary discussion, many of the issues raised throughout the day were reiterated:

the need to raise awareness amongst staff and students;

the need to be aware of, and call upon, students' own experience;

the fact that different cultures have different understandings of what counts as being 'knowledgeable'; for example, a West African delegate indicated that to be considered knowledgeable in his home country, you have to be able to recite the work of experts in the field.

Post forum update

Delegates who took part in the 'toolkit' workshop were asked to write, on a postcard, brief details of activities they use to promote equity in their classrooms. Those who provided these details were then circulated with all the contributions. Some of these are given below:

- a) students, throughout their course, work in small groups of 10 which change twice a year. We try to ensure each group has a mix across its ethnic diversity of the student population. There is some evidence students become culturally aware through each other but have difficulties in socialising outside of work as a group. This example is taken from within a medical based setting;
- b) teaching about social structures: use examples from each of the ethnic groups represented in the class, draw on their experiences;
- c) students, often those less confident, ask questions via email, outside of the classroom setting. I type up all of the questions and answers and display them on the VLE notice board so that all the students can benefit;
- d) we have dedicated English language support that is linked to modules. The better the language, the greater the participation from the students;
- e) encourage academics to assess the breadth of prior knowledge held by their incoming students, and fine tune the terminology and curriculum content accordingly;
- f) teaching communication skills to nurses – when discussing eye contact as a way of showing interest, I bring in cultural differences in eye contact and get the students to discuss this and share experiences. They are all encouraged to share experiences and look at similarities, differences, etc which is a way of improving cultural competence with patients;

- g) tell jokes about my own personal experiences to encourage greater assertiveness among timid non-UK students;
- h) assessment – students are required to conduct a strategic analysis of a company representing their countries of origin, drawing/reflecting on their cultural values and traditions.

Some implications and considerations for practice

- a) Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the University has a duty to promote racial equality, including raising awareness with regard to racial issues;
- b) Different cultures have different systems of belief and may adopt different learning styles;
- c) Some students may enjoy taking part in active learning, but others (eg from South East Asia) might find this mode of learning unacceptable – the teacher should be the ‘fount of knowledge’;
- d) Students from some cultural backgrounds may experience difficulty in making critical comment, as this would mean challenging ‘expert knowledge’;
- e) Some may find difficulty with paraphrasing, as they accept that the author is the expert and they cannot, and should not, rewrite what s/he has written in their own words;
- f) We work to a Christian calendar. It may be necessary to accept absence and adjust coursework submission dates for some students at times of certain religious festivals (UCL provides a calendar of religious festivals, available at: www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/religious_calendar.php);
- g) Some racial and ethnic groups have strong, extended family networks, such that submission of coursework etc might be affected by family duties;
- h) Can the curriculum reflect multicultural values in a holistic way, rather than just as an ‘add-on’?
- i) We need to consider the extent of any cultural differences between international students and minority ethnic group students who have been brought up and educated in the UK.

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