



REFLECTIONS

Editorial

As Rahm Emanuel said “you never want a serious crisis to go to waste. And what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things that you think you could not do before.” COVID-19 has had a significant impact upon us all: personally, and professionally. It will take some time yet to see what long-term changes this pandemic will bring to us all. As we transition into yet another different blended approach to learning we are redefining, again, what we mean by ‘campus’ - and the importance of noise-cancelling headphones!

In this edition of Reflections, Dr Vilinda Ross from our Centre reflects on how we used the data from our JISC surveys to inform our thinking and actions and Jen McParland, shares with you the principles of teaching and learning that we have developed as a team. We hope to draw upon these as we move forward in our own work supporting student-facing staff. Aaron Crozier, another team member in CED, was heavily involved in moving assessments online during the pandemic and he talks through the processes and decisions that had to be made around this. As a University we managed the assessment process well, but it was not without a few sticky moments!

Pauline Cardwell, Pauline Carson, Trisha Coulter and Lynne Robinson from the School of Nursing and Midwifery consider how to provide authentic experiences to students when they cannot meet face-to-face. They outline the challenges they faced, and how they overcame these in innovative and creative ways. Gary Mitchell, Susan Carlisle, Johanna McMullan, Amy Wong & Patrick Stark, from the same School, look at the co-design of a podcast resource around Parkinsons and Dr Helen Reid from the Centre for Medical Education reflects upon similar experiences whereby she needed to recreate the GP placement experience for a cohort of students in an online space.

Moving Faculties and yet the challenges remain the same. For Dr Dominique Jeannerod, Dr Karol Valderrama-Burgos and Dr Tori Holmes of the School of Arts, English and Languages it was about how to create a virtual year abroad for students who would normally live abroad for a year as part of their degree programme. As with other initiatives in this edition of Reflections students didn't know what to expect but were very pleased with the academic progress that they made and voiced an opinion that many students have done that the experience was way better than they expected.

Of course, this student feedback is important, especially during a pandemic where expectations of teaching and learning may shift. This is the focus of Dr Declan McLaughlin's article, Lecturer (Education) in the Centre for Biomedical Sciences Education.

Whilst these articles represent a snapshot of the innovation and creativity that we experienced during the pandemic it is important to acknowledge that work, such as this, was going on across the University. It was this that ensured that students were able to continue with their studies, albeit in a third space. Thank you.

Dr Claire Dewhirst,
Editor



QUB Connected Teaching and Learning Principles

By Jen McParland, Centre for Educational Development

Queen's University Belfast's new Connected Learning Principles were developed by the Centre for Educational Development. The aim was to establish key guiding principles and areas of focus to support the planning and delivery of teaching, learning and assessment at Queen's.

Connected Learning Teaching & Learning Principles

All of the principles below are connected through reflective practice. Self-reflection is about making informed and intentional decisions about changes in practice based on evidence and by drawing from multiple perspectives and sources. In the first year this can include reflecting upon, in depth, multiple aspects of our practice adopted during the pandemic and to consider the implications for policy and practice.

- 1. Blended by Design**
 Incorporate a blended approach that actively and intentionally fosters collaboration to ensure an equitable learning experience to build a sense of belonging and welcoming community.
 Students will experience a blend of on-site and online learning with a range of approaches taken to learning and teaching as well as assessment.
- 2. Student Voice, Student Choice**
 Ensure student voice is promoted through the co-design of content, curriculum and assessment by including learners as partners. Provide multiple ways for learners to engage in their learning by offering choice in learning and assessment activities.
 Students will experience involvement in the shaping of their learning, through co-design, student voice committees and other fora.
- 3. Communities**
 Encourage learners to learn together in order to achieve more. This not only applies to the formal curriculum but to extra-curricular activities as well.
 Students will experience working in diverse groups and be encouraged to engage in communities to support their wellbeing and celebrate cultural differences.
- 4. Relevant & Global Curriculum**
 Design and develop an inclusive and equitable quality education to ensure that it serves a diverse and global audience and empowers and nurtures global citizens.
 Students will experience an inclusive and accessible curriculum that is future-focused in that it is designed around a world that is interconnected that requires active citizenship and genuine collaboration that goes beyond national borders.
- 5. Authentic Assessment**
 Ensure a diverse range of assessment methods are adopted that are well-aligned with intended learning outcomes, are transparent and clearly communicated in order to develop assessment literacy.
 Students will experience choice in assessment and a range of assessment formats that enable a range of skills and discipline knowledge to be assessed in an authentic and contextual manner.
- 6. Feedback for Learner Progression**
 Provide effective, timely and individualised feedback for learners to identify progression in their learning.
 Students will experience feedback on all of their assessed work that clearly outlines next steps and ensures that they can act upon this before the next similar item of assessment is due for submission.
- 7. Digital Skills**
 Enable the development of essential digital skills and provide a focus on becoming digitally literate to think, communicate, to learn and to engage with the world around them to support their time at university and future graduate opportunities.
 Students will experience the embedding of digital skills and approaches to support their learning and teaching. These skills can be integrated as part of their on-going skills development with a focus on graduate opportunities.

The 7 principles are:

1. Blended by Design
2. Student Voice, Student Choice
3. Communities
4. Relevant & Global Curriculum
5. Authentic Assessment
6. Feedback for Learner Progression
7. Digital Skills

Although the principles are numbered, the sequence is not significant. Each of the principles are inter-connected and they influence and relate to each other on many levels. A further purpose of the principles is to promote reflective practice, particularly following everyone's experience of teaching through the pandemic and considering best ways to move forward

The Teaching and Learning principles are accompanied by a short, online, self-paced Canvas course. The course highlights each of the principles in more detail and provides examples or suggestions of how the principles might be applied in different teaching and learning contexts. Key questions are included which can be used as reflective prompts or moments of pause.

The course also foregrounds key elements of QUB's Strategy 2030 and each principle is framed through a lens of inclusive and accessible practice (underpinned by UDL - Universal Design for Learning, where appropriate) and mapped to the UKPSF - UK Professional Standards Framework.

An Extraordinary Year in Education: reflecting on opportunities to innovate and create authentic learning events in the School of Nursing and Midwifery

By Pauline Cardwell, Pauline Carson, Trisha Coulter and Lynne Robinson, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Globally the COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it unprecedented circumstances at all levels of society including that of higher education. The need to suddenly shift from face-to-face teaching to remote online working and learning in a matter of days triggered previously unknown challenges to educators and students alike. As nurse educators, these challenges were compounded by the need for nursing students to continue to learn and develop practice-based skills which would, in normal circumstances, be taught face-to-face in a simulated practice-based skills lab within the University.

Additionally, updated professional standards for pre-registration nursing education (Nursing and Midwifery Council 2018), and the subsequent introduction of a new curriculum commencing in September 2020, added to the challenges of the brave new learning environment brought about by Covid 19. The need to maintain and deliver on these standards and support our students to engage in

meaningful, authentic learning which would support their contribution to healthcare provision was a key priority for those of us whose aim it is to ensure students have opportunities to learn and develop the skills required for their practice. Indeed, nursing students nearing the end of their programme were called upon to contribute to the workforce at the height of the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Blended learning, flexible learning, independent learning and flipped classrooms are not new concepts within education, and the September 2020 curriculum was visioned as, and underpinned with, a blended learning approach. However, the move to a substantive remote, virtual learning model of delivery, within a very limited timeframe was not something that was anticipated when the curriculum was developed, and thus the need to provide impactful learning and engagement to support each student's development from professional, theoretical and practical perspectives has been at the forefront of our work in the last 16 months. The commitment, desire, and professionalism of the staff to deliver meaningful learning experiences and activities has required the acquisition of new skills and ways of working, both individually and collaboratively, to meet these needs



A live-streamed workshop



Students practising essential skills in lab

and to progress with delivering the validated programme of study.

Significantly, the use of technologies and virtual environments to connect both as educationalists and students has impacted the socialisation of staff and students across the academic year. Teaching teams across the School have been mindful of the impact of restricted time in skills labs to develop and practise clinical skills relevant to their field of practice and develop competence in line with professional standards. The challenges of providing Covid-safe learning activities in a face-to-face setting had to be a priority for our School as for all other Schools and Faculties across the University, thus only essential skills could be delivered in a face-to-face environment.

To address this limited time within the skills lab, other learning opportunities

using live streaming technologies and learning platforms were explored to support the delivery, engagement and development of clinical skills. It was felt that delivering a live streamed workshop demonstrating essential skills would complement and supplement the other virtual learning activities the students were engaging with, such as online workshops; self-directed learning and clinical exposure. Several skills-based workshops were then developed and live streamed to students in line with timetabled activities facilitating not only live demonstrations, but connected learning, whereby students were afforded the opportunity to ask questions throughout. Using the live stream to demonstrate essential skills prior to attending the skills lab in small groups for a limited time due to Covid restrictions, enabled students

to maximise the time in the skills lab to practise the skills previously demonstrated.

Initial evaluation by students and the teachers involved was positive and looking to the future and beyond Covid-19 restrictions it is hoped that live streaming skills demonstrations can be developed further as a means of scaffolding students learning. Delivering a new curriculum during the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic has been, and continues to be, a challenge. Nursing students need to develop competency in the skills they practise, so as nurse educators it is imperative that we ensure students are afforded the educational opportunities that prepare them to become knowledgeable practitioners (Morin 2020) not just now during the Covid 19 pandemic, but in the future.

From Panic to Process: How Online Exams Were Made Possible

By Aaron Crozier, Digital Learning Consultant, Centre for Educational Development

Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic there was much discussion amongst university representatives as to the benefits of computer-based-exams. These benefits include gathering valuable data on how the student performed throughout the exam, environmental benefits through less printing, not to mention this form of exam replicating how a student may operate in a workplace where paper and a pen are considered obsolete. However, although entire conferences were dedicated to the topic, none of the attendees suggested we should scrap all paper-based exams immediately and, in addition, have the students sit the replacement in their own homes in a fully online environment.

If this suggestion had been made then, after the initial shock and horror faded, the delegates would have quickly outlined a plethora of reasons as to why this was a terrible idea. We don't have any dedicated exams management software; who would set up all of these exams and wouldn't they need training?; how can we minimise the risk of overloading any system we use?; what about the students - do they have a strong enough internet connection and a device? These and many other potential problems would have meant that a consultation followed by a three-year roll-out would have been the absolute best the proponent of this idea could have expected.

Enter Covid 19. The proposal outlined above was exactly the scenario we faced in May 2020 when it became clear that the examinations period would be conducted online. The problems outlined above were encountered and addressed by a cross-University team made up of representatives from the Exams Office, Centre for Educational Development and the Digital Learning Solution Systems Support Team. In addition, the solutions and proposals put forward by this team were considered by the Faculties and Schools at Academic Support Group and the DE Forum, before progressing into action.

It was decided that the Canvas VLE would be used as the solution to provide online exams for most Schools. Students would be assessed via alternative assessments equating to the original duration of the planned exam plus an

hour for upload; a 24-hour assessment; or a longer take-home piece of work. These would be delivered online via Canvas and would be submitted by the student by the applicable deadline after completing the exam at home. A set of applicable regulations was developed by Academic Affairs and FAQs created to help students navigate this unprecedented situation.

To create the exams online in a secure way and make them available at the appropriate time the Canvas settings had to be considered carefully. Training was developed by the VLE Pedagogy Support Team and delivered on a School-by-School basis focusing on their specific needs so that academics were confident in the set-up. The Exams Office established a process and communicated this to the School Exams Officers for dissemination. The largest piece of the puzzle however was a system of set-up checks on all 300+ papers to be delivered over the exams period. These checks were carried out three-days in advance of the exam date by the VLE Pedagogy Support Team with a follow up check from Faculty or School E-Learning developers. Problems were reported to academics and resolved prior to commencement

of the exam. In addition, the Exams Office and the Digital Learning Solution Support team established a triage system to prioritise and fix any issues that arose during the exam itself.

Over the course of May 2020, August 2020 and May 2021, over 900 exams or resits took place in this way with over 40,000 successfully submitted papers from students. Problems were identified in advance through the checking process and successfully dealt with. The triage system was able to deal with any issues that came up during the exam itself. As a result, the exams largely ran without any large scale problems being encountered by students. Had this level of success been set as an expectation at the beginning of the process it would have been deemed unrealistic by all involved.

In the light of such success there are many lessons to be learned that can be taken into the post-Covid world. For example, students were very receptive to the idea of 24-hour open-book assessments and suggested that more of these would be beneficial in reducing exam stress and enabling them to produce their best work. The success of most students in managing the technological barriers faced, such as weak internet connection and lack of a device, was a positive, but the fact that some still struggled with these issues demonstrates that more thought will need to go into solutions in the future. Academics found the marking process to be much simpler and quicker when conducted online compared to managing the distribution and marking of physical papers.

There is no doubt that the experiences of running online exams over the Covid



CANVAS

19 affected period was a watershed in the use of digital exams, and it seems unlikely that we will return to the previous iteration. Students now have the expectation that exams will be computer based and academics have the expectation that they can mark papers online. This will serve to increase the demand for more use of digital exams. However, student situational disparity and continued concerns around potential collusion and plagiarism mean that any future digital assessments may well be conducted in an on-campus environment rather than at home. The requirement by

professional accrediting bodies that exams be invigilated may also help ensure that this is the case. It may also be that academics will revisit the format of their current exams with a move to 24 hour, or longer, take-home assessments. Such a change will require significant thought and planning to reconstitute the exam to an open-book assessment suitable to be undertaken at home rather than under supervision in an exam hall.

At the very least, the experiences during 2020 and 2021 have proven that the seemingly impossible is possible with

enough dedicated effort. Fed by this shared experience, and with input from students and academics, there are likely to be significant changes in the future to all aspects of assessment in higher education.

The guidance produced by the VLE Pedagogy Support Team can be found **on the Canvas@Queens blog** along with the **assignment set-up checklist** followed by academics setting up their exams.



Curating not Creating

Reflecting on an educational practice gained through necessity

By Dr Helen Reid, Centre for Medical Education, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences

Innovative and flexible delivery was a priority area in QUB's Education Strategy 2016-21, yet few could have anticipated just how central this would become in 2020 and 2021. The February 2021 Reflections issue shared innovative technological approaches that colleagues across the University implemented to connect with learners. This Reflections issue focuses on shaping a pedagogic future. I reflect here on my recent experiences of 'curating not creating' learning. Lessons I learned through necessity are shaping my educational practice going forwards.

We are all only too aware of the enormous global health, economic and societal changes that hit in those early months of 2020. Closer to home, we of course saw a rapid need for digital transformation, which presented different challenges for all of us. I lead the General Practice (GP) module in Year 4 of the undergraduate medical curriculum, and when COVID hit and all but our final year medical students left clinical learning environments, only two thirds of the year group of 270 students had completed their GP module. In 'normal' circumstances, core GP learning takes place on a three week clinical placement in teaching practices all across the province. Students are embedded in GP practice teams, supported and encouraged to participate as much as possible in authentic patient care.

So, how to support students in clinical learning when they were physically removed from clinical environments? How could students learn from patients, without any direct patient contact? I had neither time nor technical expertise to develop any sophisticated resources. Medical schools across the UK were fortunate in that established collaborations such as the Medical Schools Council supported access to and sharing of some fabulous learning resources. 'Speaking Clinically' (www.speakingclinically.co.uk) was one of the first such resources to be made available through this collaboration. It provides access for students to a video archive of 900 authentic clips where patients talk frankly about their medical conditions in unrehearsed interviews. As well as video content, each case is

accompanied by a synopsis and a link to further reading and theory.

These 900 video clips are brilliant, but they are very much focused around specialised and hospital care settings, and around 'single' diseases; quite different to the often multiple and undifferentiated issues around which people seek help from their GP. A similar archive of people talking about things they might present to their GP with, or some of the many conditions which are almost exclusively dealt with in community settings, didn't exist. After consideration, I had neither time, resources nor production expertise to create sufficient novel content for an entire module. On an incredibly tight timescale, my guiding principle became 'curate not create.' Reflecting back on the juggling of home schooling and the transformed nature of my own clinical practice and inevitable pandemic

pressures, I do wonder if it was more a survival strategy than a carefully considered guiding principle! I quickly realised the potential of the available video resource. The resource has a huge amount of content, and left to explore it in an entirely unstructured way, students could easily risk becoming lost. By curating carefully selected videos from the vast archive, I scaffolded GP-specific guided Virtual Surgeries. In much of my GP module, I strive to move students away from thinking that for each case there is a 'single correct answer'. 'An answer' risks failing to capture relational aspects of care (Cavanagh et al. 2019), and links between psychosocial processes and biological aspects of disease (Evans et al. 2000).

I initially developed a six patient GP Virtual Surgery, with some simple accompanying instructions to students as to how to access Speaking Clinically for the video material. The italicised case descriptor such as in the example below enabled students to quickly locate the relevant Speaking Clinically video clip using its search functions.

Alongside other resources, students had a week to work through this Virtual Surgery. Without the need for creating new content, I was afforded

Patient 5

Cancer of unknown primary origin

'the woman with non-specific abdominal discomfort and lethargy'

Imagine this 44-year-old woman is coming back to you as a GP with this story. She came to see a colleague a few weeks ago describing 'indigestion' and was prescribed a 'trial of treatment' with omeprazole. She is now returning with ongoing abdominal symptoms and other features as she describes in the clip.

What specific points in her story might alert you to the possibility of more serious underlying problem?

How might you proceed with further investigation or management in primary care?

Medical Education During COVID



<https://speakingclinically.co.uk/about/>
<https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/mdbs/>
<https://www.med.qub.ac.uk/wp-gp/>
 @DrHelenReid @QUBMedEd
 @QUB_CED @nigelhart

Find us at:

<https://link.medics.academy/virtual-medical-education-2020>



#MEDCOVID



'Curating not Creating': harnessing 'Speaking Clinically' patient voices in Virtual Surgeries

Students meeting patients without clinical placements? Time short for creating new digital content? Speaking Clinically (patient interview video archive) is available to every UK medical student. Our QUB Virtual GP placements curated this existing resource into Virtual Surgeries – a really well received COVID-climate resource for students on GP placements.

- Speaking Clinically is a video archive of 900 patient interviews, (written, filmed and edited in its entirety by Professor Andy Levy, Professor emeritus at the University of Bristol and run via his company Bristol Medical Pro Ltd with support from the university. It was kindly given to the Medical Schools Council in 2020 as a resource to offer to UK medical schools.)
- QUB trains around 270 medical students per year. It's C25 curriculum (launching in 2020) will see medical students spending around 25% overall placement time in GP/community clinical environments.
- 46 students completed a Virtual GP module (with the Speaking Clinically Virtual Surgeries) April/May 2020

Poster presented at Medical Education During Covid conference, June 2020.

the time to facilitate and support my students in synchronous sessions. I had the opportunity to debrief with them some of the more challenging cases. Students could question and challenge one another around how they might approach these patient encounters, and I was able to reinforce by relating to my own ongoing clinical practice. Sharing stories (e.g. "on Tuesday I was consulting with a man in his seventies who...") can stimulate learners to examine their values and attitudes in ways that would be hard to achieve by other methods (Hensel et al. 1992). I aim to be a role model for students; demonstrating that a critical approach to my own practice and reflection around consultations are normal practice for a clinician. Following the debrief session, I provided students with supporting documents and other learning resources around conditions and issues raised in the cases. Again these were curated rather than created, using reputable resources such as the National Institute for Clinical Excellence's Clinical Knowledge Summaries.

I disseminated my approach at the HLA/ASME 'Medical Education During COVID' conference in June 2020.

Student feedback around the initial Virtual Surgery was encouraging:

'Speaking Clinically is a great resource but as an isolated resource it can be hard to maximise its value. The Virtual Surgeries helped me to tap into its value in a meaningful way.'

'I really enjoyed and valued the 'Virtual Surgery' sessions as they provided us with an effective alternative to seeing patients in real life. Although we didn't get to practise our history or examination skills, listening to patients talk about their symptoms provides that opportunity to hear a history from a patient's point of view, in their words, and not through a textbook. Reinforcing this with questions of various depth and difficulty further tested us to think broadly as we would have done on attachment.'

The main criticism was that students wanted more! I responded to this and created further Virtual Surgeries. Academic Year 2020/21 fortunately saw the return of our Year 4 students to GP clinical placements. While of course this is the cornerstone of their learning, I still felt that there was pedagogic value in Virtual Surgeries. They enabled me as module lead to ensure all students had opportunity to cover some core

learning objectives (their experiences across different teaching practices will, inevitably, be incredibly varied). A 'practice gained', I am maintaining, updating and developing further Virtual Surgeries for academic Year 2021/22.

For further information, please contact helen.reid@qub.ac.uk

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Dr Reid received a QUB Teaching Award in 2020 in the Rising Stars category

Co-Design, Implementation and Evaluation of an Audio Podcast about Parkinson's Disease

By Gary Mitchell, Susan Carlisle, Johanna McMullan, Amy Wong & Patrick Stark, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Parkinson's disease (PD) is one of the most prevalent neurologic disorders, leading to progressive disability that can be slowed but not stopped by treatment (Cotterell, 2018.) It is characterized by tremors, slow movements, stiffness in arms and legs, and balance impairment. The number of people diagnosed with PD in the UK is about 145,000, and more than 1 million people in the UK are affected as a friend, colleague or family member of someone living with the condition (Parkinson's UK, 2021). Like other chronic and progressive disabling diseases, PD patients experience stigma arising from symptoms that are impossible to hide, and they experience relational and communication problems (Maffoni et al. 2017). Recent evidence has highlighted that Parkinson's education for nursing students is often limited. Therefore, this partnership aimed to improve nursing students' knowledge and attitudes to PD through co-design and delivery of an audio podcast.

Our partnership work used co-design methodology and our team consisted of more than twenty people that included people living with PD, people who cared for those with PD, volunteers who provided support to people with PD, PD nurse specialists, nursing students, charity representations from Parkinson's Disease UK and nurse lecturers from Queen's University Belfast (QUB). We co-designed a 75-minute audio podcast. The audio podcast was

comprised of three main segments that took the form of different nursing students hosting interviews with a person living with PD, a carer of someone with PD and a PD nurse specialist. These interviews were scripted (by the co-design team) to ensure that each speaker covered different learning outcomes.

The team were keen to evaluate the outcomes of this innovative form of education. Using mixed methods

we provided 332 student nurses with pre- and post-questionnaires about their knowledge related to Parkinson's Disease (Alwaleed et al. 2018; Bhidayasiri et al. 2014). Before listening to the audio podcast, students scored an average of 52.74% and after listening this rose to 80.07%. Using paired T-Tests, we determined statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). In addition, we were also able to use sub-scale data to show specific improvements in student knowledge about diagnosis, treatments and the trajectory of illness after listening to the podcast.

Following on from these questionnaires, the team co-designed an interview guide which sought to explore how the audio podcast had influenced student practice in the six months after listening. Four focus groups comprised of a total of 35 nursing students took place. Using thematic analysis, three main themes emerged. The first theme was that the audio podcast helped students to empathise and better understand the lived experiences of people living with PD. In this theme, students noted their surprise around the fluctuation



Members of the Parkinson's Disease podcast co-design team

of PD symptoms (e.g. tremor could be worse at certain times of the day), their disappointment that people with PD experienced significant social stigma (e.g. members of the public perceiving people with PD to be intoxicated) and their perceived improved ability to support people with PD to live fulfilling lives in both a clinical setting and within their local community. The second theme that emerged was around the optimisation of nursing student practice and how knowledge about 'getting medication on time' helped students prioritise the pharmacological care of their patients with PD, how they were now aware of the role of PD nurse specialists (and how to contact or refer patients to these services) and how best to support carers of people with PD. The third theme that emerged was in relation to podcasting as a tool for education and students noted how they found this impactful and something that could be revisited in the future. Nursing students also expressed strong satisfaction with regards to the format and enjoyed hearing their colleagues leading interviews during the podcast.

In the past twelve months, the audio podcast has been listened to by more than 800 nursing students and it has now been embedded in both undergraduate and postgraduate nursing curricula at QUB. In addition, the audio podcasts were freely launched to the wider public during Parkinson's Awareness Week in April 2021. The online event attracted more than 350 delegates from across the UK representing higher education, nursing education, healthcare professionals and the public. The audio podcast is now freely available to other universities, the public and healthcare professionals via Parkinson's UK main website. Following feedback from the students, the podcast has also been made available as three distinct shorter interviews. This provides listeners with the opportunity to listen to the podcast in one go, or in



shorter bite-size parts: <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/professionals/events-and-learning/podcast-learn-about-parkinsons>

This partnership work has demonstrated how student nurses, service users, family carers, volunteers, nurses and nurse lecturers have come together to create an innovative and sustainable resource for everyone interested in helping people with Parkinson's Disease to live well, both in their community and in practice.

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The Virtual Year Abroad: Facilitating Online Linguistic and Cultural Immersion of Modern Languages Students in a Global Pandemic

By Dr Dominique Jeannerod, Dr Karol Valderrama-Burgos and Dr Tori Holmes, School of Arts, English and Languages

The Year Abroad is a compulsory element of a degree in Modern Languages (French, Spanish and Portuguese), which develops independence and adaptability, intercultural awareness and employability skills, among others, and with the global pandemic prohibiting travel abroad, we faced an urgent need to provide an online equivalent to the Year Abroad: the Virtual Year Abroad (VYA).

In 2020-2021, the team pioneered an innovative modality to enable our students to experience the benefits of the Year Abroad from home. Our tutors worked creatively to provide an array of activities and digital resources, weekly live oral and grammar classes, and self-study materials focusing on writing/reading skills and cultural topics which produced a powerful learning dynamic.

From the beginning we managed to embed both linguistic and cultural immersion in our virtual programme, echoing the dual aims of the conventional Year Abroad by exploring the language and cultures of French, Portuguese and Spanish-speaking countries at different levels.

The VYA modality represented a positive and successful strategy in exceptional circumstances and there was a high level of student engagement. The impact on the students was high and positive on different levels, as these comments from several of our students demonstrate:

'Thanks to the Spanish VYA, I was able to vastly improve my knowledge and understanding of Latin American cultures, which I would not have had the chance to had I gone to Spain.'

(Nasreen – French and Spanish)

'The VYA has far exceeded my expectations. Whilst this year has taken an unanticipated format, this

has simulated spending a period of time abroad in a way that I thought wouldn't be achievable and has therefore effectively prepared me as I anticipate beginning my final year of study at Queen's.'

(Adam – Spanish and Portuguese)

'The three oral classes a week with native speakers in small groups were great exposure to the language. We also had an excellent grammar class and tutors to help us to prepare for the DELF exam, which is a great French language certification to add to your CV.'

(Ana – French and Portuguese)

We are confident that despite the atypical year this has been for our cohorts, the Virtual Abroad journey proved to be highly enriching and rewarding. It gave our students the tools to meet the core learning outcomes of the Year Abroad, developing a set of skills that they always bring to their learning after residence abroad.



When the Student Becomes the Teacher: adapting to student feedback on the fly



By Dr Declan McLaughlin, Lecturer (Education), Centre for Biomedical Sciences Education

“To survive and even thrive in a changing world, nature offers another great lesson: the survivors are those who at the least adapt to change, or even better learn to benefit from change and grow intellectually and personally. That means careful listening and constant learning.” Frances Arnold, Nobel Laureate

Over recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on students as partners in teaching, learning and assessment. We are quickly recognising that by increasing student participation in their own learning and assessment experience, they can become more successful with their outcomes, in part due to their agency and investment in the process.

As part of the continuous assessment for one of the undergraduate modules on the Human Biology pathway, students are required to complete a Histology Peer Teaching Project (HPTP). This piece of continuous assessment accounts for 20% of the module. As such, the work required is a little bit more than perhaps the students are used to. Students are expected to write and deliver a 1-hour lecture (with supporting materials), a 40-minute practical class and a group log-book. Additionally, students must attend the lectures and practical sessions of their peers and take part in the peer marking element.

Peer assessment can have benefits for both students and staff. When implemented effectively, students develop and reflect on their own work, learn to provide constructive feedback to their peers, and gain appreciation for the feedback process. Staff can get oversight of any issues in terms of student misconceptions on module content, streamline time dedicated to marking, while peer feedback can supplement that given by academic staff. Despite the benefits, there are several challenges that still persist. One important factor is that students may lack skills in providing constructive and meaningful feedback to their peers unless they have proper guidance. Additionally, properly implementing a peer assessment element can be time-consuming for staff members. To try and alleviate potential pitfalls, students received two sessions on peer assessment. They were given the opportunity to award marks to example assessments and discuss how feedback

should be given. Following this, students reported a better understanding of what was expected of them, and staff felt more confident that students were better prepared for the HPTP. However, what we have all found out over the last year is that it's not uncommon for our meticulously planned sessions to deviate wildly from what was originally intended.

It was clear from the beginning of the semester that students were entering into a year of learning with a justified uneasiness; the sense of the unknown and worries about their friends, family and own health and well-being were apparent. In Week 7 of the first semester, the student class representative got in touch with the module coordinators. They relayed that students were *'struggling a great deal with the workload this year,'* finding it *'hugely different to what was experienced in first year.'* It should be noted that this appears to have been a common occurrence, not just with one module, but across modules and disciplines. In particular, students noted that with smaller group numbers of 3 (compared to 6 in previous years) they were finding it difficult to create cohesive pieces of work for the HPTP assessment. There are of course many other factors that contribute to issues with workload, for example, managing expectations, independent study and time management, all of which were noted in the student feedback.

Following this feedback from students, module coordinators discussed their response and used video feedback to address concerns. It was decided that

there should be a few modifications to both the lecture and the practical sessions that students were to deliver. The essence of the HPTP project remained the same, but by listening, adapting and acting on student feedback, a compromise was reached and staff-student relationships were strengthened.

The lecture was reduced to 35-45 minutes, reflecting the fewer group members than in previous years, as well as making sessions similar to what was asked of academic staff during the pandemic climate. This worked out at approximately 10-15 minutes of presenting for everyone, similar to what would be expected in final year presentations. Furthermore, most changes took place with regard to the practical sessions. Logistically, it was not possible to be on campus to get into our Histology Lab. Therefore, as a work-around, it was suggested that each group design a resource pack for new lecturers. The idea was that this pack would include all the tools that a lecturer would need to enable them to deliver a practical session that should last 30-40 minutes. The resource pack would include:

- a summary breakdown of the session (approximately 1 page)
- a description of each task/station and why it is being used (i.e. the relevance of the task to the topic)
- a How-to' guide for each task/station
- any associated materials (handouts, diagrams, presentations, quiz questions, colouring-in sheets, etc.)

To facilitate the 'delivery' requirement of the module, one of these tasks would have to be able to be carried out online. All other aspects of the HPTP project remained the same. The aim was to ensure that the changes would, in fact, help students to better structure and plan their teaching sessions. It is

important to note that any flexibility or adaptation of the module should not be without structure. A framework is still important so that students, and indeed staff, can maintain some aspect or 'normality' and keep track of learning outcomes, student attainment and overall satisfaction.

Within hours, the students responded again and iterated that student "fears had been alleviated" and that the expectations for the relevant continuous assessment were 'much clearer' and left students feeling 'less pressured.' Through simple measures, acknowledging the climate that both staff and students found themselves in and by responding to, and acting on, student feedback, staff were able to address concerns. Students appreciated that their comments were taken on board.

Students responded positively to the changes. Any issues that remained were due in part to the remote way of working that we all found ourselves in over the past academic year. Students notably expressed their appreciation for how much effort goes into creating a lecture and practical class. If nothing else, perhaps now they have a better understanding of what goes on in the life of a staff member! Anecdotally, this appears to have been a common positive occurrence around the University.

Although many of the elements in the resource pack were still 'safe' options in terms of creativity, and these 'non-delivered' tasks not always the most refined in terms of detail, it was clear that the students enjoyed making them; it's reasonable to assume that this was because they had ownership of it. Of course, the overarching delivery of a practical class was what was being assessed, but the actual design, creation, running and content of it was up to them. This is perhaps not surprising. It is likely that this was one of the first opportunities where students have been given any degree of freedom in relation to developing

their own assessment. When given freedom students produced all manner of resources and suggested elements such as the gamification of tasks (think 'Snap' or 'Pairs', but for body organs), Escape Room/Crystal Maze-type online activities, mini-lectures, quizzes and the resulting final HPTP lectures and on-line practical tasks were extremely successful. This agency is crucial to promoting high levels of student engagement and staff should be empowering students to become more involved in assessment processes.

We are increasingly finding that many of our students often do not remain strictly within the immediate discipline of their chosen degree. Indeed, it is the transferable skills they develop throughout their university programmes that they bring to allied, or sometimes distant, career paths. This is certainly one of the benefits of not only group work, but of students as partners in teaching, learning and assessment. Ultimately, the HPTP project is not entirely about the science (although it does play a significant role in the marks), but more about promoting teamwork, presentation skills, individual thoughts and ideas, time management, planning, delivery etc; all things that we know our students will be able to use as they progress in their studies and into whatever job they end up in.

Having a new cohort of students each year helps to keep the content fresh. For staff, we can deliver the same things year in, year out, and things may often never change. However, for every new cohort of students coming in, they are exposed to new material, new concepts, new ideas and new suggestions. Therefore, as staff, we have a duty to try and reflect on what we have learned in the previous years' cohorts, listen to the student voice of the current cohort, and make changes, however small, to improve the student experience and share these ideas with our colleagues.

For further information, please contact declan.mclaughlin@qub.ac.uk

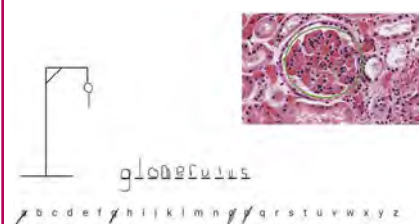
A Gastrointestinal pursuit!



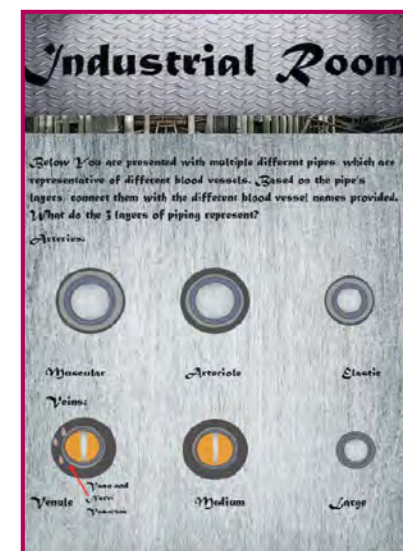
You will need ... (for one group)

4 players, 1 dice, 1 game board (size 42.73x42.73cm), 4 'tokens' (size 3x3cm), 4 question sheets for the demonstrator to ask from (contained below), 1 set of prizes (Lollipop, paper crown and bragging rights)

B Name the outlined structure



C



Examples of gamification of practical tasks.

A, 'Gastrointestinal Pursuit'. The group created an abridged version of the traditional 'Trivial Pursuit' games, based on organs from the gastrointestinal system. **B, 'Histology Hangman'.** Using Google Jamboard, students created a digital version of the old school favourite. **C, 'The Ruby Labyrinth'.** A screengrab from the 'Industrial Zone' in a Crystal Maze-style escape room activity for the cardiovascular system.

The Digital Experience at Queen's

By Dr Vilinda Ross, Educational Developer, Centre for Educational Development

The Digital Experience Insights Survey for teaching staff is part of a national survey to find out about how staff use digital technologies and how this affects their experience of teaching. It is a Jisc service, managed and run by staff within CED, and it complements the student survey that is also run annually at Queen's. The survey helps us to understand how teaching staff experience the digital environment provided by the institution. It provides insights into what access teaching staff have to digital tools and technologies, how they use technology in their teaching and how they are developing their professional practice in relation to digital skills. This helps to inform changes and shape the digital environment. With the onset of Covid-19 and the pivot to teaching online it was more important than ever to gather feedback on digital issues for staff at the University.

2020/21 Jisc Survey Questions

This is the second year that the teaching staff survey has ran at Queen's University. Each year question sets are tailored to adapt what is happening in the sector. Not surprisingly, the 2020/21 question set was radically modified from last year and a further change was made that asked staff to focus on the previous two-week period when considering their survey responses.

The 2020/21 Jisc survey consisted of 22 questions organised under 4 main themes. This set of questions asked teaching staff to rate the online environment from a range of perspectives and to indicate support that is provided such as access to essential services and systems, support to use digital devices and help around effective communication and collaboration in the digital environment. The survey asked staff to share details about where and how they had been teaching online. Questions were included about class size experience, problems encountered, and what assistive devices or tools that they had used to support their teaching.

Staff also had to reflect on their experiences of teaching online and

to detail the type of remote teaching activities that they were providing to students at Queen's. They were asked to identify both positive and negative aspects of this experience and to indicate what improvements could be made to improve the quality of digital learning for students.

Teaching staff had to indicate what digital skills guidance that they received from the University and to judge the quality of support provided. They were asked to identify who mostly supported their digital skills for online teaching and to comment on what would help them to teach more effectively online.

Every year the Universities and FE colleges participating in the Digital Experience Insights service also have the opportunity to ask teaching staff some additional questions. This year questions were included around digital tools that staff were using during the pandemic and what training that they would like most to benefit from. Some pertinent questions were also asked around digital accessibility.¹

Survey Response

In March and April 2021, over 200 responses to the survey were gathered from teaching staff across the University. The greatest participation was found from teaching staff in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (41%) and the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (34%). The lowest return was from the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, with just over a fifth participating (23%). A very similar percentage of male and female teaching staff participated in the survey (49%) and exactly three quarters of teaching staff who responded worked at Queen's on a full-time basis. While the majority of teaching staff who responded were in academic positions, this year a fifth of responses was also gathered from teaching assistants.



¹ An overview of this data is found in the main survey report.

'At a glance' findings from the teaching staff survey

The full report of findings is found at the end of this article but here is a 'at a glance' summary of what teaching staff said about their digital experience across the four survey themes.

Theme 1: You and your technology



- **Access**

70% of teaching staff agreed that they had access to online systems and services from anywhere. However, this still meant that 3 in 10 staff had some difficulty when teaching remotely.

- **Reliable WiFi**

This was the biggest issue for remote teaching with 51% of teaching staff reporting that they did not have access to reliable WiFi whenever they needed it.

- **Specialist software**

While a low percentage of teaching staff (20%) indicated that they needed specialist software to teach their course online, this also meant that students were not being taught with the required technology.

- **Class size**

Some teaching staff had manageable numbers of students to teach online. Others had to cope with larger cohorts, sometimes up to 100 students and more. These classes would have been difficult to run without support or a suitable technology set up.

- **Assistive technology**

Not many teaching staff use assistive tech and, if anything it has shown a decline in use since last year.

Theme 2: Technology at your organisation



- **Online learning environment**

Queen's teaching staff were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a range of aspects about the online learning environment. This was inclusive of all digital platforms, i.e., Canvas, MS Teams, QOL and QGIS. A moderate but satisfactory percentage of staff indicate that the online learning environment is reliable (62%). The figures around the design and navigation of the digital environment were also disappointing (51-52%).

- **Level of support**

On a positive note, 66% of teaching staff agreed that they were supported to access online systems and services from anywhere. A similar percentage (64%) indicate that they were provided with effective communication in the digital environment.

- **Use of digital devices**

Exactly half of teaching staff (50%) felt supported to use their own digital devices.

- **Communication and collaboration**

64% of teaching staff think that we communicate effectively online. Less however think that we provide a good online environment for collaboration (43%).

- **Decision making about digital**

Low agreement from teaching staff was found when they were asked if they are given a chance to get involved about decisions about online teaching (27%).

Theme 3: Technology in your teaching



- **Overall quality of online and digital learning**

89% of staff rate the quality of online and digital learning on their courses as 'good' or above (28% rated the course provision as 'excellent' and 3% as 'best imaginable').

- **Online teaching challenges**

Teaching online presented some challenges for staff. These included technical difficulties (77%) and a significant added stress to workload (72%). A high proportion of teaching staff (74%) also commented how this experience had even 'changed their role as a teacher'.

- **Teaching online**

Staff had both positive and negative things to say about online teaching. They liked the flexibility of teaching online, the upgrade in teaching materials and the much better access to students. They liked not having to travel to campus for classes and not having the burden of room bookings. They did not like teaching with outdated hardware and having too many platforms and technologies to learn and use.

- **Student engagement**

Teaching staff were keen that students engage more in online classes, that they actively participate and turn their cameras on. They mentioned the lack of classroom atmosphere, loss of community, not being able to get to know students and the real challenge in the digital environment of how to monitor student progress or those students at risk.

- **Expectations**

Teaching staff were undecided whether expectations had been reasonable during the pandemic, and only around a quarter of them felt that their concerns were being heard (26%).

- **Recorded lectures**

While some teaching staff see the benefits of recorded lectures, others do not see it as a necessary requirement. This is a problem as lecture recordings are inclusive practice and students expect this as part of their learning experience.

Theme 4: Developing your digital skills



- **Quality of support**

Teaching staff were generally happy with the quality of the support that they had received to teach online (67%). They were not as happy with the guidance provided about the digital skills needed to fulfil their role and around assessment of their digital skills and training needs (54% and 17% respectively).

- **Methods of online teaching support**

Teaching staff mainly sought help from other teaching colleagues when they had difficulties to teach online (75%). Online videos/resources (67%) and IT/eLearning staff (55%) were also popular methods of support. This year, around a fifth of staff even asked family and friends (22%) for help.

- **Digital skills training**

Not surprisingly, teaching online was the most supported digital skills training (over 80%) during the pandemic. More training is needed around basic IT skills, keeping student data safe, protecting privacy in online spaces, digital copyright and licensing, and in subject specialist software. These are all key training offerings that teaching staff need to be able to have to confidently do their role.

- **Teaching guidance support**

Staff want additional training provision and more teaching guidance support. They would like more opportunities for one-to-one or tailored training, more practical demonstrations, drop-in sessions and, for convenience, even training offered outside of teaching weeks. Staff see this investment in teaching and technology as essential moving forward.

- **Digital skills enhancement**

Some teaching staff appreciate that the move to online learning had enhanced their digital skills and had added to their professional development such as being an online tutor.

- **Training and Support**

Some teaching staff would like to have more training and support opportunities in the digital creation of videos – they want to be able to create professional videos for online use and would like the relevant tech to do so.

Tech playing its part

In 2020/21 the shift to use technology and digital platforms to teach online worked well for the education sector. Technology played a crucial part in how we lived, learned and worked. Covid-19 transformed how teaching and learning was done, mainly fully online and away from campus.

Staff had many challenges to face: they had to adapt quickly to remote teaching, to review and create subject content to suit the digital space, learn new tools and technologies and had to resolve technical challenges even in live teaching sessions. While staff had these pressures, they were resilient and rose to the challenge. They were happy with the quality of the teaching being offered and this was borne out in the 2020/21 student survey digital experience data with 71% of students rating the quality of online and digital learning on their course as ‘good’ or above. While some staff admit to not liking this mode of learning, others thrived, were innovative and enjoyed the experience.

This survey has yielded a rich source of information on the digital experience of Queen’s teaching staff during Covid times. It has been a year where engagement in digital teaching practices has increased, with more staff developing and discussing their digital skills, and a general greater appreciation of digital learning environments.

The full report of findings for the **Digital Experience Insights 2020/21 for Teaching Staff** is available.

Further Information

The teaching staff survey complements the Digital Experience Insights Survey for students. For those interested, please find the **2020/21 student survey report of findings** here.

This teaching staff survey will run again in February 2020. If you are a member of teaching staff at Queen’s please

share your thoughts when the survey is live and help us to continue to shape the digital environment. Your digital experience is important to us and to the digital landscape at Queen’s.

For further information about the Digital Experience Insights Teaching Staff Survey or Digital Experience Insights Student Survey, please contact Vilinda Ross (v.ross@qub.ac.uk) or Andrew Gray (ar.gray@qub.ac.uk), Centre for Educational Development.

In today’s fast-changing higher education landscape, universities are facing unprecedented challenges – but also opportunities, where technology can play a central role in our students’ experiences. Our staff have responded rapidly to the changing environment and expectations in these exceptional circumstances”

Quote from JISC CEO, Paul Feldman, 2020.

