



REFLECTIONS

Channelling our Creativity

Sir Ken Robinson in his 2006 TED talk *Do Schools kill Creativity* defines creativity as “original ideas that have value”. He also notes the importance of different disciplines working together to achieve this. Something that universities can do well. However, he also suggests that we grow out of creativity as we progress through formal education. This edition of *Reflections* explores a number of ways in which teaching and learning is enhanced through creative approaches.

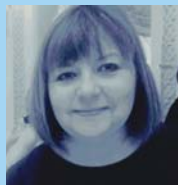
Drawing upon the possibilities created through working across disciplines, Dr Paul Murphy discusses a collaborative initiative that was awarded a Queen's Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Team in 2017. This interdisciplinary project sees drama students creating realistic scenarios for both medical and social work students, with all of those involved being assessed as part of their course work.

Dr Kayla Rush, in her article, reflects on the importance of a creative space in facilitating a writing workshop – a space in which people felt safe to try new things and that facilitated creativity in writing practices. Clare Thomson explores a different sort of creative space and the manner in which an online Masters course creatively used digital approaches to enhance her experiential learning. On the other side of the learning experience Dr Stephen Kelly and Emma McAllister outline a process for identifying opportunities that exist in programmes to develop relevant digital skills, practices and behaviours. As Professor Rhona Sharpe outlines in her piece, digital literacies are defined as “the functional access, skills and practices necessary to become a confident, agile adopter of a range of technologies for personal, academic and professional use”. The work around the digital spine helps us to embed such an approach.

Further creative approaches are explored in this edition including conferences that are used as an assessable part of a module (both organising and presenting); the value to students in exploring their own work in a peer network at a key point in their studies and the development of an innovative widening participation model for young people and the impact that this has on their engagement with the university space. There are other approaches explored as well.

Many of the articles in this edition of *Reflections* demonstrate how creative approaches to pedagogy can support critical thinking and engagement, skills that are often central to our students' experiences in Higher Education. I hope that some of these articles provide some food for thought and will encourage further discussions around how we use creative approaches in enhancing our student experiences.

Dr Claire Dewhirst, Editor



Digital literacy: from a definition to a graduate attribute to a measure of learning gain

Professor Rhona Sharpe, University of Surrey

Professor Sharpe was a keynote speaker at Queen's Learning and Teaching Conference 2018 on Creativity and Innovation in Teaching

Definitions of digital literacy, fluency or capability are now commonplace. Many universities and colleges have adopted or adapted one of these definitions as an aspiration for their staff and students. Sometimes the focus is on digital skills to perform professionally orientated tasks, sometimes the ambition is more broadly defined in terms of the contribution graduates make to a global, networked society. Having agreed on a definition, how can digital literacy be developed within our complex organisations? This article draws on the graduate attributes project at Oxford Brookes University to help us understand how students develop their digital literacies and how this might be encouraged.

Defining digital literacy

At Oxford Brookes University, digital literacy was defined in the Strategy for Enhancing the Student Experience (2010) as, “the functional access, skills and practices necessary to become a confident, agile adopter of a range of technologies for personal, academic and professional use”. Rather than breaking down digital literacy into different elements (such as communication,



Rhona Sharpe

collaboration, e-safety, information management), this holistic definition drew on an understanding of digital literacy as ‘looking beyond functional IT skills to describe a richer set of digital behaviours, practices and identities’ (Jisc, 2014). This allows for what it means to be digitally literate to change over time and across contexts. Essentially, digital literacies were understood as a set of academic and professional situated practices supported by diverse and changing technologies (Sharpe & Beetham, 2010; Gourlay & Oliver, 2018).

Digital literacy as a graduate attribute

Digital literacy was one of five graduate attributes specified in the Strategy, the others being academic

literacy, research literacy, personal literacy and critical self-awareness and global citizenship. Graduate attributes are those abilities, dispositions or qualities that we expect our graduates will have in addition to their discipline knowledge. Indeed, they are the desirable capabilities students will need in order to translate and apply their discipline knowledge to new contexts after graduation (Oxford Brookes 2010; Normand & Anderson, 2017).

Taken together, our understanding of digital literacy as situated practices and of graduate attributes developed through the curriculum, provided a focus on the context in which they are developed and put to use. They expressed our aim that the curriculum would be a space where students developed the confidence and agility with technology that they could translate to professional contexts they would find themselves in after graduation.

Embedding digital literacy in the curriculum

The embedding of graduate attributes within the curriculum was planned as an organisational change project where course teams mapped the development of each of the five attributes across the modules that made up their programmes and committed to make any changes in the learning outcomes, activities and assessments that might be required. Chairs of validation panels were trained to look for the graduate attributes within programme documentation and to ask questions of teams of how they were being developed and assessed.

Alongside this change programme, an internal evaluation project analysed the revised Programme Specification documents and developed a survey tool to ask students to what extent they experienced activities designed to develop digital literacy within their courses. Supported by funding from the Higher Education Academy and from the HEFCE learning gain programme, we were able to pilot and validate this survey tool with confirmatory factor analysis, diaries and logs, and finally a series of interviews with alumni.

The evaluation showed that the graduate attribute project was successful to some extent. Programme teams did contextualise each of the five graduate attributes for their discipline and their variations of what the attributes meant to them were visible in programme documentation. Surveys

distributed in 2014 and 2016, showed increases in the frequency and extent of opportunities students reported they had to, for example, critically evaluate digital sources of information, use technology to collaborate with others, reflect on and record their learning and use technologies in innovative and creative ways. What else did we learn from this experience about how and when students develop their digital literacies?

Diaries completed in 2017 revealed more insights into the technology-enabled activities which students were undertaking as part of the redesigned curricula. Fifty-four log entries were collected from seven students over two weeks. Each day students were asked to log any activities where they used technology to communicate with others or to reflect on record their learning. We found these students were engaged in a wide range of activities which contribute to the development of digital literacy, including:

- discussing essays with friends on Facebook
- browsing forums
- editing a group essay with Google Docs
- participating in group work remotely
- discussing groupwork on WhatsApp
- writing reflective assignments in Word
- audio recording a lecture
- making a presentation in Google Slides
- using Word as a planning tool to draft an essay
- using Pinterest to see how to present work

Students reported using technologies to manage and organise their learning individually and in groups, using both institutionally-supported technologies and external tools to manage groupwork and participate more flexibly, for example,

“Used Google Docs to finish up a conference position paper with the coursework group. I was able to do it from home, which was great because I didn’t have to go and meet the group for it.”

“For our research studies module we have to design a questionnaire on google forms. We made a WhatsApp group to talk about it.”

The survey and log findings were revealing quite low level uses of

technology within the curriculum, for improving organisation and the presentation of work, consistent with other larger scale published survey studies (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2017; Newman & Beetham, 2017). Not quite the transformational development of digital literacy that the graduate attributes project set out to encourage. Perhaps we were looking in the wrong place. The final step in the evaluation was to explore how our learners were able to put these literacies to use in new contexts after graduation.

Digital literacy as learning gain

In the current competitive higher education environment, universities are finding themselves needing to be accountable to their funders and regulators. In the first year of the Teaching Excellence Framework, institutions were asked to demonstrate the ‘acquisition of attributes such as lifelong learning skills and others that allow a graduate to make a strong contribution to society, economy and the environment, progression to further study, acquisition of knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to compete for a graduate level job that requires the high level of skills arising from higher education.’ (TEF Year 2 Specification, 2016, section 4.7). Could digital literacy be one of the attributes that an institution like Oxford Brookes could claim to develop, by providing conditions in which students become more confident, agile adopters of technologies?

Interviews were conducted with current students and alumni as part of the ABC Learning Gain project in collaboration with the Open University and University of Surrey. As part of this project, twelve Oxford Brookes alumni were interviewed and prompted to reflect on the graduate attributes. Across all the interviews with current and previous students at all three partner institutions we noticed that people describe learning gain not as steady, consistent progress, but as pivot moments or turning points using emotional language such as ‘a wake up call’, ‘the biggest game changer’, ‘where it all came into place’ and ‘finding myself’. Frequently there was one course or incident which prompted transformative gains. An example of a turning point from one interviewee who chose to talk about the digital literacy graduate attribute was a business studies module which was assessed by a business plan, presented in any software of the students’ choosing. The effect of this module was transformative, with the (then) student choosing and learning a new tool and

continuing to use and promote this tool in their first job.

“...that was so helpful being able to express my coursework in the way that I want to and the way that I think a real live situation would want to see it. ... And in the end I used a design software programme to create the [plan] and I use that now every single day in my job. I’ve got the whole company using this design tool.”

Perhaps developing digitally literate graduates is less about teaching and assessing specific components of an institutionally adopted definition of digital competency, and more about designing open curricula which give students space to develop personalised uses of technology in innovative and creative ways.

References and resources

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Innovative Training for Advocates

By Fiona Donnelly, Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS)

As a leading advocacy trainer locally, nationally and internationally who has studied the area of vulnerable witnesses in the court system, I have posed the question, “Should it be more difficult to give evidence just because you are a child or have a mental health difficulty or a learning difficulty or have to deal with autism?” adding, “these dimensions can make people vulnerable when entering the legal arena.”

In particular I have worked on how the forensic techniques of the advocate (particularly in relation to cross-examination) can be adapted to enable the vulnerable witness to give the best evidence of which they are capable, without diminishing the right to a fair trial. The challenge for the justice system is how best to balance the adaptation for the witness and the robust testing of the case.

I have been retained to train lawyers and judiciary throughout this island, and in England & Wales and Scotland, in relation to handling vulnerable witnesses and clients and to teach these skills to IPLS trainees, and have developed innovative training for advocates in two areas of vulnerability a) Children and b) Autism.

I have worked closely with Registered Intermediaries throughout a pilot in the courts and believe that an interdisciplinary approach means that the lawyers and communication specialists can work together and learn from each other and the result will be, and indeed has been, embedding of advanced communication techniques into advocacy skills.

To that end I have developed specialist training entitled “*Thinking Differently about people who Think Differently.*”

My work as an advocacy specialist has been recognised by the International Society of Barristers and I have recently been awarded an academic fellowship, one of only 11 Academic Fellows worldwide. I have also been invited as faculty for advocacy training hosted by the National Institute for Trial



Fiona Donnelly, solicitor and senior lecturer at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies, QUB is recognised as a leading advocacy trainer.

Advocacy (NITA) and Baker McKenzie in Paris. This training for lawyers and judges interested in strengthening the advocacy for children in courts across the world is a complement to the Global Congress in Juvenile Justice set for the UNESCO heritage site in Paris in this week.

Healthatre: Drama, Medicine and Social Work in Concert

By Dr Paul Murphy, School of Arts, English and Languages

This collaborative initiative, involving diverse academic disciplines, assists students from different professional groupings in grasping the importance of interdisciplinarity at a very early stage in their learning, was awarded the 2017 Queen's Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Team. Each member of this team effort brought different sets of skills and experiences to this collaborative endeavour. An additional aspect to this eclectic team expertise is the focus on communities of learning and practice (Wenger, 1998)¹ which is now an established part of Social Work education. The reforms to Social Work education in Northern Ireland in 2003 introduced service user and carer involvement as a core element of learning and assessment for social work students. This team effort reflects a continuing effort to make the curriculum experiences of our diverse student group enriching, partnership-based and dynamic, thus aligning with the University's current Education Strategy. Linked to the latter, we have also worked with students in an inclusive and partnership-based way to survey their views on the impact of our innovative approaches. For example, we surveyed the views of both Social Work students and Drama students through SurveyMonkey and focus groups respectively, to assist us in evaluating our initiatives.

In addition to the academic requirements for the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree, the 112 BSW students are required to undertake two practice learning (field) placements in social work agencies. In preparation for these, students must complete the 'Social Work Theory and Preparation for Practice Learning Skills' module which includes a series of role-play examinations in order to assess students' interpersonal communication skills. Where service-user involvement has been an established feature of Social Work students' role-play assessments on the BSW, collaboration with the School of Arts, English and

Languages provided an opportunity to utilise and evaluate the BSW student experiences of working with both Drama students and service users. Team members also felt it was important to undertake a comparison of student learning using service users and Drama students as this was recognised as being a gap in current research.

Demonstrating and expressing thoughts and emotions relating to the human condition informs key professional attributes of a practising doctor. Clinical practice includes expressing empathy and understanding key features of humanity, such as mortality and illness. All of these areas are poorly addressed in medical education deploying current resources. Collaboration with the arts and humanities allows expression and understanding of the human condition, flattens hierarchy in healthcare professional teams, and opens up right-sided brain functioning, thus facilitating truly holistic clinical education and practice.² The intersectional focus on empathic interaction and immersive role-play enabled the development of this ground-breaking approach that has the potential to make a significant contribution to the field of medical education.

The team greatly values the development and support of their colleagues involved in our educational endeavours. A collaborative approach underpins our teaching approach, right from course design through to delivery and development. The collaborative nature not only enables staff and students to gain insights on their respective roles but can assist in identifying personal strengths and mechanisms for mutual support. We believe that this collaborative approach in itself acts a strong role-model for students who we encouraged to work in an inter-professional fashion. Students have provided positive comments to this effect, for example:

'It was a fantastic experience to bring our art into real life situations which in

turn assisted the medical students' – CH, drama student.

'It was helpful to deal with people the same age as ourselves, and who offered a fresh take on the roles they were playing. Including more of the same in future events would be a real bonus.' – PF, medical student

The process has also involved new opportunities for teaching across disciplines. For example, Dr Lorna Montgomery (Social Work) and Dr Paul Murphy (Drama) delivered a joint lecture to Social Work students on the key issue of self in role highlighting key aspects of the Stanislavski approach which are immediately relevant and transferable to how they approach interactions with service users and carers. Dr Gavin Davidson (Social Work) has also developed and presented a lecture to Drama students on the use of self in social work, and how self-awareness is central to understanding some of the complex interactions involved in practice. Professor Gerry Gormley (Medicine) developed and presented a lecture to Drama students in which he explained the complexities of simulation-based teaching in light of his own research and professional practice. Dr Ian Walsh (Medicine) delivered a lecture to both Medical and Drama students on the collaborative educational approach. All of the aforementioned staff were intimately involved in the design and delivery of this interdisciplinary module. The collaborative process also involved developing the use of technology across disciplines to record, review and analyse how students apply their learning to practice. The inter-professional cooperation has therefore had direct benefits for all of the students involved as they have had the opportunity to explore different and stimulating perspectives on their learning and had access to expertise and experiences from staff and students from across subjects and faculties.

1 Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2 See Batt-Rawden SAI, Chisolm MS, Antonn B, Flickinger TE. 'Teaching empathy to medical students: an updated, systematic review', *Academic Medicine* 2013; 88(8):1171-7.; Tavakol SI, Dennick R, Tavakol M. 'Medical students' understanding of empathy: a phenomenological study', *Medical Education* 2012; 46(3): 306-16.

A Widening Participation and Outreach Pilot Project

By Dr Joe Quinn & Dr Mary McGahon, Centre for Biomedical Sciences Education

In June 2007, the Department of Education and the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland commissioned a Review of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). It was recognised that young people are increasingly disengaged from STEM which manifests itself in reducing enrolments in courses focused on STEM subjects (1). A subsequent report published in 2009 recommended that there should be engagement between stakeholders, schools, FE colleges, universities and government to 'focus on growing the STEM artery across the education service and the promotion of STEM within our society'. It also concludes that although there is a strong STEM pool at GCSE within the non-selective sector, this is not continuing with these young people through to A-level, and consequently they are leaving the 'STEM artery' post 16 (2).

In Northern Ireland, grammar schools account for one-third of all secondary schools. Evidence suggests that children from higher socio-economic groups have a much greater chance of gaining entry to a grammar school. At Queen's University Belfast as a whole, undergraduate students from the lowest household income category represent 29% of the student population. However, these statistics do not differentiate whether these student attended grammar or non-selective post primary schools or subject studied. In 2017, Queen's gave 200 conditional offers to students from Northern Ireland applying to enter the Human Biology or Biomedical Sciences Undergraduate degree pathways.



Of these 200 offers, 83.5% were to students from grammar schools, whilst 11.5% were to those in FE and only 5% to those attending secondary schools. These figures would seem to suggest that within this STEM based degree pathway, secondary school pupils are substantially under-represented, and that a need exists to increase engagement with the demographic early in their progression through secondary education.

Through our membership and close alliances with The Physiological Society of Great Britain and Ireland, we became aware of their initiative to promote wider awareness of physiology in higher education and decided to host a 'Physiology Friday' event. This event which was scheduled to fall on the last Friday of Biology Week and was promoted by Royal Society of Biology to 'showcase the important and amazing world of the biosciences', aimed to get

everyone from children to professional biologists involved in fun and interesting life science activities' (<https://www.rsb.org.uk/get-involved/biologyweek>).

Based on the research outlined above, and our links to the Physiological Society, we proposed hosting a 'hands-on' day for students and teachers from secondary schools from areas that scored high on the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010. Participants were invited to the Centre for Biomedical Sciences (Education) (CBMSE) to take part in a hands on event designed to spark interest in STEM and dispel some of the myths around academia and the pursuit of 3rd level education.

The project aspired to make pupils aware of biomedical science and human biology related careers and courses before students choose their GCSE subjects, helping them make a more



informed decision about what subjects they may need to choose (GCSE biology and/or chemistry) and to enthuse them to consider a biomedical science/human biology-related degree in the future, thus widening access and participation. It was also hoped to make links with teachers in these schools so that they are in a position to encourage the subjects relevant to biomedical sciences and human biology and to promote these disciplines as potential subjects to pursue in higher education. As students from non-selective secondary schools in Northern Ireland seem to be under-represented in undergraduate Biomedical Sciences and Human Biology courses at Queen's, the goal of this pilot project was to target this demographic to inspire and inform pupils around STEM subjects prior to GSCE selection.

To facilitate this STEM activity, we applied to the Physiological Society's Physiology Friday fund and received £500 for consumables and transport costs and invited pupils and staff from 3 Northern Ireland secondary schools each bringing 10-15 students and a total of 4 members of staff. Twelve members of the CBMSE staff participated 'hands on' (with many others working in the background) and delivered an exciting day of interaction and exploration in which the pupils could explore body structure and function, explore careers in biomedical and human biology related areas, and become aware of the spread of career aspirations, academic background and career paths of CBMSE staff.

The students and accompanying teachers enthusiastically engaged with the range of interactive tasks provided which included:

- Breaking down the barriers to academia – interactive 'Who wants to be a millionaire' style presentation illustrating how the academic staff of CBMSE are made up of many individuals who didn't attend grammar school, pass the transfer test, pass all their GSCEs or know what career they wanted at 13-14 years old.
- Tour of the Centre for Experimental Medicine – a working Medical Research laboratory with discussion of



how medical research being carried out by students in QUB is changing patient lives.

- Determining an unknown blood group – a concept they may be aware of from TV programmes such as CSI but would not be covered in their education thus far.
- Measuring lung function – a test they were able to perform on themselves to assess how large their lungs are and how this varies with subject height and athleticism.
- Measuring nerve conductance with EMG software – pupils were able to administer a small electrical shock to their teachers arm and see the response both in terms of the arm moving and in electrical activity on the computer.
- Examining micrographs, bones, anatomical specimens and x-rays – giving pupils insight into the microscopic and internal worlds of the body.
- Confidence building Question and Answer session.

Feedback from the school staff was very encouraging and appreciative of the efforts made and opportunities given by the open day. All schools involved expressed a wish to be included in any further events while the pupils themselves were also very enthused. Of the 43 attendees, 11 indicated that prior to the visit they hadn't either considered university or weren't interested, and all but 2 were now considering it and

one 'wasn't sure'. Of those who had previously aspired to go university in the future, many said that "If anything it has made me want to go to university even more". Pupils' favourite activities are condensed into the word cloud below and it was clear that they enjoyed the event immensely and gained a 'hands on' experience which is likely to provide much inspiration for their future studies.

Special thanks goes to Dr Eva Sweeney, Ms Alexandra Mawhinney, Dr Etain Tansley, Dr Sean Roe, Dr Laura Montgomery, Dr Declan McLaughlin, Dr Claire Foy, Dr Nuala Tipping, Mrs Patricia McClean and Mrs Agata Socha who facilitated 'hands on' experiences, the CBMSE academics who revealed their career aspirations at age 13 and academic failures along the way to success, and the CBMSE administration and technical teams who ensured everything ran smoothly. Many thanks to the schools involved: Girls Model Belfast, St Mary's Clady & St Paul's Kilrea, and the teachers who allowed themselves to be zapped. Finally, many thanks to the Physiological Society who provided inspiration and financial support.

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- (2) Report of the STEM Review 2009 http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11050/7/report_of_the_stem_2009_review_Redacted.pdf

A Rollercoaster of Creativity: teaching and assessment methods in a distance course

By Clare Thomson, Centre for Medical Education

I have just completed the Diploma in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh. Studying at a distance over the last two years I experienced how it feels to be a student on an online course and also learned as much about innovative, creative teaching and learning methods, as anything technical. All six taught modules were delivered online and there was no need to ever be in Edinburgh, they even have a virtual graduation ceremony if you can't make it to the city. My classmates were from all over the globe; Australia, France, Singapore, America, Canada, Switzerland and everywhere in between. We also came from a wide range of professional backgrounds; higher education, primary and secondary education, businesses and public agencies to name a few. All of us united and connected by technology.

Over the two years, all modules employed experiential learning and discussion based around structured reading and prompts. The three main spaces were the virtual learning environment (Moodle), blogs (WordPress) and Twitter, although Skype, Hangouts and others were used for synchronous meetings. I'm going to outline a very small flavour of the creativity I experienced throughout all of my modules, both with regards to teaching design and myself as a learner.

Blogs

Three out of five of my modules had blogging as a central element. Each of these modules took an entirely different approach to how they used the blog for teaching and learning.

In the introductory module our posts were worth 80% of the overall mark. In order to ensure a safe, constructive space to learn to blog and gain confidence in writing in an academic yet informal way this blog was only visible to the student and their tutor. At least two entries per week were required throughout the twelve week module. Feedback was provided by the tutor throughout, in the form of comments underneath each blog post; this gave it a feeling of a conversation rather than feedback on assessment. Despite the high stakes in terms of assessment weighting, this was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, which allowed me to pace my learning evenly

across the semester. I shared discussions with my tutor about learning, technology, higher education, policies, libraries and more.

Another module used a blog space for all of the learning content and the only thing that the VLE was used for was assignment submission. Here our discussions were added as comments in the open web and each week students were assigned a partner to set up the discussion for the coming week. My partner and I opted to record a Skype conversation based on our weekly reading, which was a technical learning curve on top of the weekly prompt, but trial and error won through. The 2017/2018 iteration of the module can be viewed at: <http://dse16.education.ed.ac.uk/>.

The final blog was an entirely new approach for me in that we had to blog daily over twelve weeks through the If This Then That (IFTTT) system. Essentially this is a method of populating a WordPress site entirely from external apps. For example, I created an instruction in IFTTT, called a recipe, whereby if I tweeted using the hashtag #mscedc it automatically generated a WordPress post embedding the Tweet visually. Another example of an instruction was that if I bookmarked an image in Pinterest with the class hashtag again a post was automatically created. Over the twelve weeks I created recipes for Dropbox, Vimeo, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest and Pocket. All of the individual class blogs and module information for the last iteration can be found on the website: <http://edc17.education.ed.ac.uk/>.

Creating Artefacts

There were opportunities through all the modules I chose to produce digital artefacts, some were directly assessed some were not. As an educational developer I was used to spending time on creating digital objects and using industry standard software, however, to keep pace with my learning on top of my full time job I had to adapt to using quick and accessible software to produce items faster. This resulted in a much better understanding of creativity and that it isn't actually about the artefact itself but about what the final artefact conveys. Creating a digital story with Microsoft PowerPoint, for example, put me on the path to discovering just how much



Home page of the blog fed by IFTTT

BLOGS: PRIVATE, OPEN, AND PARTIALLY OPEN
DIGITAL ARTEFACTS
LEARNING A NEW MOTOR SKILL
IF THIS THEN THAT
DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY
OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCE PRODUCTION
PEER AND SELF ASSESSMENT

can be achieved with a single piece of software that sits largely unused on our devices.

Learning a New Motor Skill

In order to write a reflective piece on learning we were required to learn a new motor skill over six weeks. The only limitations to this was that it had to be something entirely new to us and not something related to an existing skill. For example, if you could play a musical instrument you could not select to learn a different instrument. The reflective piece then had to incorporate your learning journey supported by academic references and theories. We all shared our frustrations and successes in the discussion forum throughout the six weeks which also helped form our structure for the reflective essay. Overall, despite the challenge coming on top of our module content it really did provide an unexpected lens through which to see learning in a different way and enjoyable to boot.

Digital Ethnography

A second instance of learning inside learning was carrying out a digital ethnography of a Massive Open Online

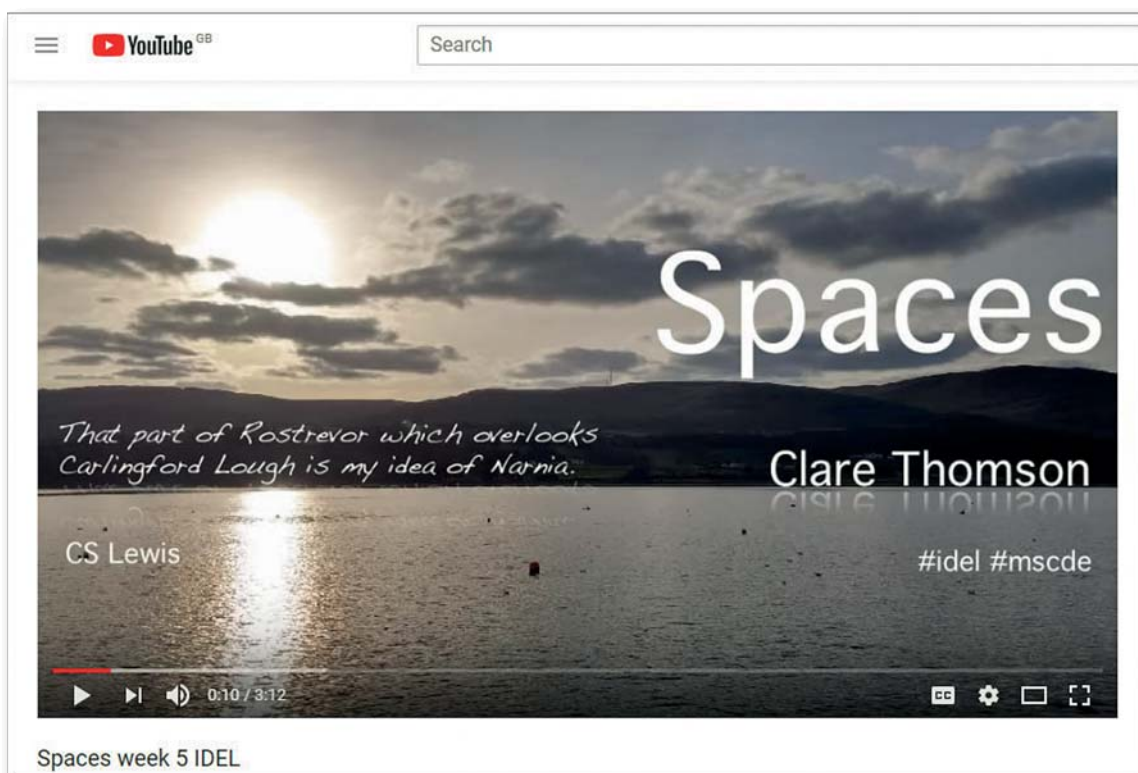
Course (MOOC). To do this we were required to sign up and participate in a MOOC of our choice, which was in addition to our module work, join in for three weeks and then produce a digital ethnography. Again this showed the breadth of our creativity as there was everything ranging from a textual report to videos.

Creating an Open Education Resource (OER)

My final module centred on the challenging but timely themes of trust, resistance and mess. The teaching consisted of readings detailed in the VLE and the assignments included a position paper, the creation of an Open Education Resource and peer and self-assessment. Each one lead on from other. We began early in the course to discuss with our tutor a topic that appealed to us from within the module list. Then we had to defend our choice through a position paper which included our practical ideas on creating an OER for our topic underpinned by academic writing. Next up was the design and build of our resource before three other students then reviewed it and provided feedback on it. We then went back to the resource and decided what, if anything, to change before the final submission. The final submission was accompanied with a reflection of what we did based on our peer feedback and also gave our own OER a mark out of ten. Again this all provided a new window to see feedback differently. More can be found at the open version of the module, together with a range of the OERs produced: <https://digitalfutures.de.ed.ac.uk/>.

This was one of the richest and most creative learning experiences I have ever had and not once did I feel disconnected from my classmates. We each found the space that we were most comfortable with, whilst trying out new spaces and pushing our comfort zone limits. A needs-must attitude drove us all to experiment and learn to openly share the fruits of our labours and we all enlarged our knowledge as a result.

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Sample artefact: video made with PowerPoint and uploaded to YouTube

Using Peer Tutoring to Improve Student Reading – A new MOOC at Queen’s

By Dr Vilinda Ross, Centre for Educational Development

Professor Allen Thurston, Professor of Education and Director for Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation is the Lead Educator of a new MOOC at Queen’s, ‘Using Peer Tutoring to Improve Student Reading’.

Working alongside staff within the Centre for Educational Development a short 3 week course on children’s literacy has been developed and hosted on FutureLearn, an online platform that enables partners to design, develop and deliver online courses to learners globally.

Allen, a former primary school teacher, has been researching how to improve literacy in schools for around 20 years. He comments that, *“It is estimated that one-fifth of children living in developed countries now leave school with poor reading skills. This new course introduces the concept of peer tutoring, a form of cooperative learning, as a means to improve reading and promote learning for children. The peer tutoring in reading approach can be established easily in the classroom and is particularly effective for children with high poverty backgrounds.”*

The course launched on 2 April 2018, attracting over 1000 learners from across the world who have contributed to rich discussions about the importance of children’s literacy, and about how this pedagogy could be implemented and used to enhance their practice.

The Using Peer Tutoring to Improve Student Reading course:

- Introduces learners and practitioners to a paired reading technique, including how to establish it, which can be used at primary and post-primary sector level (8-14 year olds)
- Allows learners to explore the evidence that supports the use of this technique and apply it to their own practice
- Demonstrates how to use the peer tutoring method to help develop students’ social and communication skills

- Provides a set of freely available downloadable resources that learners and practitioners can use to set the approach up in a classroom or non-educational setting
- Is an opportunity for practitioners to talk about the importance of children’s literacy, including sharing their own experiences and practice of using peer learning.

A further run of the course is intended in August 2018 (date to be confirmed). For further details please visit <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/peer-tutoring-reading> or please contact Dr Vilinda Ross in the Centre for Educational Development on v.ross@qub.ac.uk, for more information.

Learner comments from the first run of the course have been very positive:

“This course is gold. Very valuable information that I will take into my future endeavours in the classroom” (A Learner from Australia)

“I am happy I took this course...I have to say I learned a lot...It feels good to know there are people who care about techniques, strategies and methods to improve not only literacy of the students, but also the proficiency for their own futures. Besides, it seems difficult to find such a good environment of teachers from everywhere, who respect every idea



Professor Allen Thurston

and thought of every member. Thanks for bringing the underrated reading skill one step closer to any educational system with resources completely at hand for every teacher and educator willing to teach more than what is strictly allowed” (A learner from Chile)

“I’m very glad I upgraded as I was able to fit this in around other commitments and the mayhem of life. I also got so much from it by being able to jump back and forward and make my own connections to support my learning and future practice. It allowed me to practise and think, come back to the course with notes at hand (which is why I have posted so much today!)” (A learner from Belfast)

“Thank you for the wonderful structured resources on this course. Some of the things we learn during teacher training get watered down over the course of our teaching careers. I appreciated the gentle reminders that we can change things and adapt in our rigid structured school lives. I found it a very useful reminder, refreshing and interesting” (A learner from Kuwait).



Embracing Canvas at Queen's: A new era of digital learning and teaching

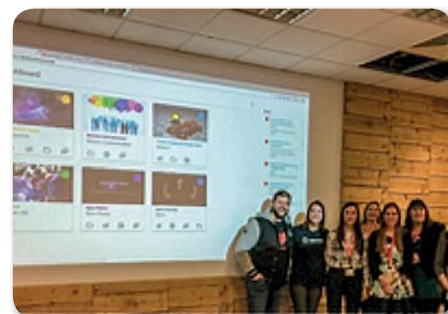
By Aideen Gibson, on behalf of the VLE Pedagogy Support Team, Centre for Educational Development

Queen's University has committed to a new Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Canvas, which provides a modern set of teaching and learning tools designed to enhance the student learning experience via the web. Central to achieving Vision 2020, the VLE will play a pivotal role in helping the institution meet its strategic ambition to deliver a Digital Learning pathway. In adopting the new VLE, Queen's University is joining a growing global Canvas Community which includes many of the top universities in the world.

Canvas, owned and maintained by the US based Instructure Global Ltd., facilitates easy delivery of learning materials to students in a variety of media, with core features to support collaborative learning and communications and tools to enhance assessment and feedback opportunities. It is a cloud-based VLE which is designed to be used online, on tablet and on mobile. The Canvas student and teacher Apps give quick access to learning content and assignments, and the possibility of giving and responding to feedback on the go. With a simple, clean interface, it is intuitive and easy to navigate, which

minimises frustration and ultimately makes teaching and learning easier. It provides a blueprint to support staff as they design and create content for their teaching modules.

Olivia Roberts, Head of Student Services and Systems at Queen's University Belfast, said, *"It is not an exaggeration to say that Canvas has the potential to fundamentally change how we deliver teaching and learning. We will improve how our students access materials, the kinds of assessments available, the types of lesson materials and multimedia we use and really give our students ownership in the process. And, of course, this is instrumental in helping*



deliver on our greater strategic goals as an institution."

To introduce staff to the new VLE, Canvas Roadshows took place in February 2018. The team from Instructure was onsite to demonstrate applications to conventional classroom based teaching and showcase the key features that the new VLE offers. The Digital Learning Solution (VLE) Project Team at Queen's was available to answer questions related to the specific use of Canvas and provide details about the implementation and roll-out of the VLE across the



University. Over 350 staff attended the roadshows and feedback from sessions was very positive. Staff particularly liked the opportunities for enhanced assessment and audio feedback, as well as the management of group-work and collaboration between students. The roadshow video was made available online (go.qub.ac.uk/RoadshowRecording). Staff who were unable to attend can continue to access this video on the Queen's website, to get a flavour for how the new VLE can help with the delivery of their teaching.

In March 2018, Professor David Jones, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), invited all staff who wished to be part of the Early Adopter phase to express an interest via a short online registration form. After expressions of interest had been collated, Deans and Directors of Education then helped shape the schedule for roll-out across the University.

Following a period of consultation with key stakeholders, including students, academic staff, e-learning developers and internal e-learning designers, University branding was applied to the VLE and plans for roll-out were finalised. The Queen's module template was developed in partnership with key stakeholders. The template is associated to the module through the use of Canvas Blueprints and provides a framework for planning the structure of the learner journey and to ensure a consistent user experience for students.

The Digital Learning Solution (Systems) Project Team has worked hard to ensure completion of the technical implementation and testing of the new VLE. Canvas has been setup to allow information to flow through from Queen's Student Information System (Qsis) to the VLE. It has also successfully integrated with key periphery solutions, including Office365 and Turnitin. The team will continue to work to integrate other essential pedagogical tools with Canvas, with early adopters of the VLE informing this work.



The University has invested in Canvas tier 1 support, which means that both students and staff can get help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

CANVAS TIER 1

 <p>24x7x365 STUDENTS & STAFF</p>	 <p>MULTI CHANNELS OF CONTACT</p>	 <p>EXPERT SUPPORT @ LAUNCH</p>	 <p>QUICK RESPONSE & UPDATES</p>
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The VLE Pedagogy Support team is based in the Centre for Educational Development. Dedicated pedagogical advice and support is available to staff in the form of training workshops, drop-in Canvas Clinics, bookable 1-1 sessions and an online self-paced Canvas course, *Getting Started with Canvas at Queen's*.

Canvas training for early adopters began in May 2018 to support the initial rollout and preparation for go-live in September 2018. A dedicated online course, *Getting Started with Canvas at Queen's* was launched for staff to follow at their own pace. Three core workshops will be delivered weekly throughout the summer months, with a focus on delivering the digital curriculum and supporting new approaches to teaching and learning with Canvas.

Of particular interest to the Early Adopters of the VLE, are a number of *Canvas Clinics* scheduled from June to August to support staff with module development and offer advice and training to use the tools and technologies to enhance the learning experience for students. By the end of August, it is expected that all of the early adoption modules will be ready for delivery in Canvas beginning in September 2018.

These are exciting times for teaching at Queen's and in the words of Professor Mark Lawler, Dean of Education, Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, teaching staff are encouraged to "*Be brave – don't be shackled by traditional expectations*".

Dr Claire Dewhirst, Head of the Centre for Educational Development in Queen's, is enthusiastic about the application of the new VLE to learning and teaching in the University, "*Queen's has always valued good teaching and learning and the impact that this has on our students. Canvas will allow this good teaching and learning to continue in a manner that embraces digital life, inclusion and diversity.*"

So, be inquisitive, try out novel ways to do what you've always done and really get the best out of the new VLE!

Teaching and Learning With Students

By Dr Victoria Durrer, School of Arts, English and Languages

This article focuses on the application of group work in the Introduction to Arts Management module, which is open to second year students in the School of Arts, English and Languages. In March 2018, through support from the Queen's Annual Fund, and a partnership with the Naughton Gallery, students had the opportunity to design, plan and deliver a live, public-facing event for Queen's students. This piece reflects on an approach, in which I attempted to position myself as a member of the group. By doing so, I tried to more directly acknowledge that teaching itself is a process of learning. The piece will reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of this approach from my own perspective as well as based on student feedback.

Arts management and the relevance of group work

The learning facilitated by group work is critical to developing skills in arts management (Varbanova, 2013). As an interdisciplinary field, arts management requires openness and ability to work among the differing disciplines of cultural studies, business and financial management, marketing, public policy and the arts. It is not enough to have knowledge of one of these areas, but critical to grasp their 'integration' (Paquette and Redaelli 2015, p. 13). This integration plays out in practice through a need to work with marketers, artists, and fundraisers, as well as engage with audiences. Work requires the skills to speak, and be empathetic to, different and sometimes conflicting languages, methods and structures.

Group work also allows both technical and social learning (Mello and Less, 2013; Johnson et al., 1998). Like much management work, arts management is social. Arts managers' actions and practices not only impact 'the lives and livelihoods of employees' but also those audiences engaging with the art and cultural work they help produce (Reynolds, 1999, p. 538). Group work not only based on 'real-world' scenarios, but also embedded within actual organisations, can enhance students' understanding of professional practice as well as build collaborative learning between educator, students and associated stakeholders (Fearon et al., 2012; Kunkel, 2002).

The module

The 21 students attending the arts management module were introduced to arts management through the practical planning and delivery of an art programme for a public audience. By taking students through steps for planning an event that complemented the Naughton Gallery's *Speculative Skins* exhibition, the module aimed to help them understand the context of arts organisations, the aims and objectives of public programmes and issues regarding how to approach and understand audiences, the relationship of programming to organisational missions / visions and the capacity of an organisation (e.g. staffing, budgeting) to develop activities, as well as scheduling. Teaching and learning approaches were interactive, involving a mixture of lectures, group work and discussion as well as analysis of case studies.

In addition to class participation, there were three assessments aligned to the module learning objectives. First, students were asked to apply initial learning to an independently written review of an arts event or activity of their choosing in order to gain greater awareness of events, think more critically about the experience of them, and consider the ways they relate to a wider arts organisational context. Students were also assigned to a group, which worked together to devise the concept and plan for an event or activity in response to the mission, vision and context of the Naughton Gallery, linking thematically to the exhibition,



Speculative Skins, on display during this time. On March 1st, the Naughton's Curator and Collections Manager, Ben Crothers, and I reviewed the pitches, which were assessed based on the response to the brief and application of concepts thus far learned in the module. As each pitch showed different strengths, we selected a mash-up of all five as the final event we would realise as a class.

We then had the remainder of the semester - only 3 weeks - to make final arrangements for 22nd March. Entitled *Digital Teleportation*, the event incorporated activities involving virtual reality, photography and social media. Students were assigned different groups with specific tasks: concept realisation, marketing, artist liaison, hospitality, venue coordination and evaluation. Afterwards, students were required to individually complete a series of reflective questions, adapted from the work of Goldfinch (1994) and Lejk and Wyvill (2001), aimed at facilitating self, peer (group) and whole-class reflection on the process of realising the event. Students received marks based on the content of their written critical reflection, specifically the links it made to concepts learned on the module, wider reading, and personal development.

The sheets also served as a basis from which we could all discuss our perception of the event. The students, Ben Crothers and I, collectively took part in rotating discussion groups. We considered what we liked most and

least about the experience, what we felt we were effective at, what we found challenging, what enabled and / or hindered our activities, and what we would do differently, as well as the skills we felt we developed and how we would apply the learning gained in future.

Reflections

Autonomy / Vulnerability. Overall, students were positive about the experience. They perceived a strong link between the module's learning objectives and the outcomes achieved as a result of the activities in which they engaged. Students gained greater awareness of the field of arts management, but also a number of transferrable skills related to group work. They particularly highlighted the opportunity to realise an event with a level of autonomy, bolstered by the support of the QUB Annual Fund. Being able to work towards a 'real' event with deadlines and involving students' own creative ideas was a particularly enjoyable aspect for all of us involved. For most, this was the first time in which students had taken part in group work. The practical, applied nature of the module was quite new for the specific students attending and provided them with a different 'sense of achievement' than other modules they attend. I, too, enjoyed this way of working with students as well as with the Naughton. The staff were especially proactive collaborators in the process.

At the same time, the level of autonomy felt by the students gave me a sense of vulnerability. I was constantly negotiating a desire to support student-ownership of the process with the pressure of a public display of their learning through the form of the event, which was in receipt of funding. Though there was absolutely no pressure applied, I felt a desire for the students to at least meet, if not exceed, the expectations of the partner organisation. As a result, while we all had a shared stake in the 'success' of the event, balancing the terms and conditions for ownership and cooperation was a challenge.

Quality. This tension was, in part, due to our differing perceptions of the possibilities and potential 'quality' of the event. None of the students had previously been aware of the Naughton Gallery. The experience of attending arts events was also varied, thus impacting their starting framework for module activities. Charged with the task of developing an event targeted at Queen's students, they developed ideas aimed at building student awareness

of the organisation in the way they felt would be most attractive to that audience. A large focus as a result was the provision of food at the event as an incentive for students to attend.

This tactic was perceived to be an 'unimaginative' use of the event budget. As a result, I overrode the decision, which was shared by all students, to have food at the event. Students raised this point at the whole-class reflection. The problem was not so much that I disagreed with the approach, but that we did not discuss it as a group at the time. For me, it particularly highlighted how my knowledge of arts management practice neglected a recognition of the students' own frame of reference, thus hindering the very goal of collaborative learning I was attempting to facilitate. Nevertheless, the fact that it was discussed at the final reflection shows that the activity did provide some level of a shared and safe space in which to challenge and learn from one another in a meaningful way.

Collaboration / Institutional settings. The opportunity for students to make, take, and enact decisions was additionally limited to some extent by the timeframe and structure of the module. The challenges of the strike notwithstanding, the framework of rules, structures and roles I instituted for the event's delivery was, for students, equally reassuring and confining. While on the one hand, my assignment of students into particular roles was felt to encourage them out of their comfort zone and to learn new skills, they simultaneously wished to have had greater choice in how they engaged in the process. This approach hampered the type of 'partnership' we may have been able to develop through the course of the module.

For me, this issue was more about the amount of time we had. I found it difficult to balance the realities of the timetable with the desire to provide a framework for shared decision-making. While this difficulty could be addressed by a change in module structure, it did make evident to me that the power differential traditionally set between student and teacher is a difficult one to rebalance towards collaboration. It is something that typically builds over time and may not necessarily be addressed through adding seminars to lectures or making the module a year-long option, for instance.

Conclusion

Participation in the module assisted students in gaining understanding of the field of arts management as well as transferrable skills. My engagement

gave me greater awareness of the complexity involved in trying to work more collaboratively with students. Doing so requires not just a balance of the realities of timetable structures, but also a more explicit acknowledgement *with* students of the teaching and learning ethos on which the module was based. This module gave personal insight into providing a more robust framework for multi-directional learning between teacher and students. Self-reflection of assumptions is critical. I also believe much could be learned from colleagues in Drama and other areas of study at Queen's where collaborative teaching and learning initiatives are embedded in the delivery process. Much also could be gained from a mechanism for exchange and support amongst those of us working, and wanting to work, in this way.

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Identifying the 'Digital Spine' in the Curriculum

By Emma McAllister, CED and Dr Stephen Kelly, School of Arts, English and Languages

Our students will graduate into a world where confident, informed use of digital tools, technologies, media and information, will be essential. We have a responsibility to help our students develop the digital capabilities that will help them succeed in their studies and give them the best possible start to their careers.

In its Education Strategy, Queen's University has outlined how it will support students in our digital society by embedding digital learning, assessment, support and training across all taught programmes by 2021.

The 'Digital Spine' approach has been developed by several academics working in the Digital Literacies Working Group to help staff and students understand where opportunities exist within their programmes to develop relevant digital skills, practices and behaviours.



Student Digital Awareness

A recent survey by Jisc (Newman & Beetham, 2017), which surveyed over 22,000 students in 74 UK FE and HE institutions, found that while 81% of HE students believed that digital skills were important for their career, only 50% believed that their course was preparing them for a digital workplace. When asked if they had been made aware of digital skills they needed to improve, only 40% of HE students responded positively.

The findings show that there is either a shortfall in the provision of opportunities to develop relevant digital skills in higher education

institutions or a failure to signpost services that will help students develop the digital capabilities they need.

The Digital Spine approach allows academics to clearly signpost for students where these opportunities to develop relevant digital capabilities occur in their programmes. It also helps academics identify additional opportunities to develop digital capabilities within their curricula.

Highlighting the Digital Spine

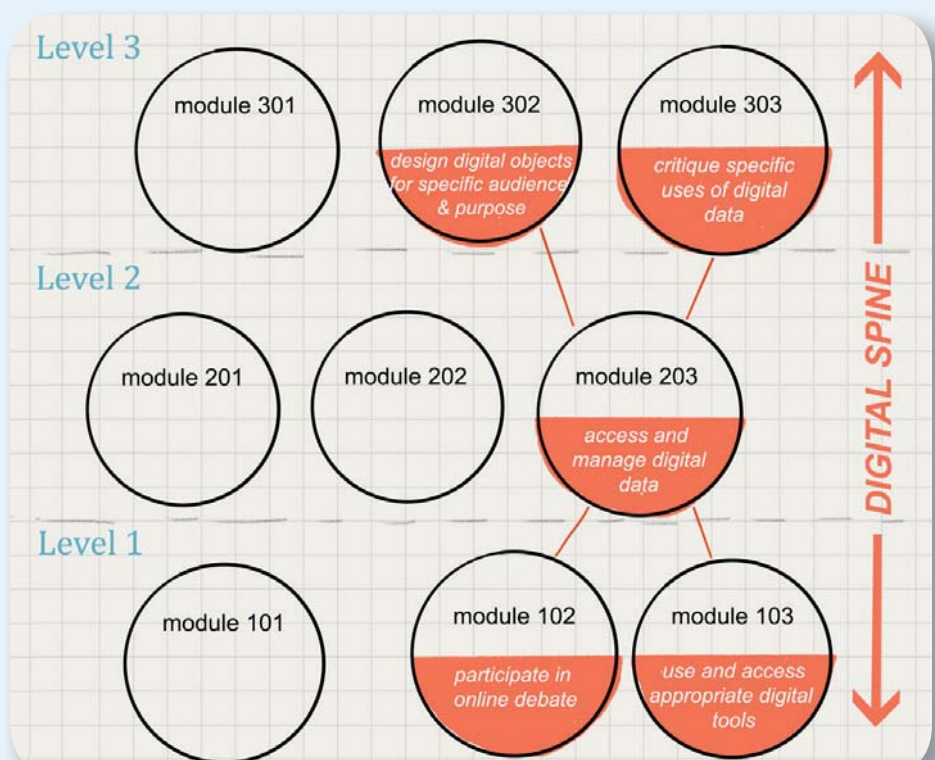
Most academics across the University will be aware of the kinds of digital capabilities which their students develop throughout their programme. Programmes involved in the Digital

Spine review and audit these opportunities, to ensure that students are provided with chances to acquire and develop the digital capabilities they will need for their study and future career.

A minimum requirement is that programmes using the Digital Spine approach will identify at least one module per year of study where relevant digital capabilities development is taking place, (although many programmes will identify multiple modules per year). The importance and relevance of the digital capabilities developed through these modules is shown in the module literature, learning outcomes, learning activities and perhaps even the assessment activities.

Recognising and building on existing practice

The proposed approach builds upon established digital practice within the disciplines, recognising and





strengthening digital opportunities which have already been made available to the students. It follows the principle of a positive approach to change, which already proved successful in the University's Jisc-funded e-AFFECT project. The approach is designed to complement and supplement both curriculum design and review and skills development design and review activities within programmes.

Next steps

Six programmes from across the University are now involved in piloting the Digital Spine approach. A blog, detailing the outcomes of the pilot will be launched in September, to share the experiences of the academics and students involved in this project. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Emma McAllister in the Centre for Educational Development on e.mcallister@qub.ac.uk

Example: BA English

Dr Stephen Kelly was one of the academics who developed the Digital Spine approach. As the programme director for Undergraduate English he knew that there was already a lot of valuable digital capabilities development opportunities for students. However, these digital learning opportunities were not signposted clearly for students in module literature. Therefore, Dr Kelly reviewed and revised the module descriptors for the programme. Examples of these changes are shown opposite:

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Newman, T., & Beetham, H. (2017, June). *Student digital experience tracker 2017: the voice of 22,000 UK learners*. Retrieved from Jisc Digital Student: <http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6662/1/Jiscdigitalstudenttracker2017.pdf>

Level Two: Introduction to Medieval Literature

Before:

The module is intended to develop students' understanding of a vital and dynamic period of English literature, often neglected at A-level and at Stage 1. In the process, students will encounter a range of themes, genres, and narrative techniques which prove highly influential in later periods. Thus their understanding of English literature will be significantly broadened.

After:

The module is intended to develop students' understanding of a vital and dynamic period of English literature, often neglected at A-level and at Stage 1. In the process, students will encounter a range of themes, genres, and narrative techniques which prove highly influential in later periods. Thus their understanding of English literature will be significantly broadened. The relationship between textual meaning and material circumstances of texts will be explored by means of digitised facsimiles. **The interrelations between literary and material culture in general will be explored through exploration of modern museum collections holding medieval material remains.**

Digital Capability: students interact with a range of digital repositories and reflect critically on the differences and similarities between traditional modes of knowledge-making – critical reading, historical contextualisation – and the digital reproduction of historical artefacts.

Level One: ENG 1006: Sounds of the City: Belfast and Beyond [a module on urban literature]

Before:

To build upon and enhance students' skills in reading and interpreting texts with particular theoretical and social constructs in mind; to ask students to reflect upon the changing concept and meaning of the city, and to relate its representation and construction in cultural texts to wider social and historical processes; to engage critically with familiar urban environments; to develop points of contrast and comparison between Belfast and other cities, past and present; to provide students with skills and knowledge that will be valuable for modules at Stages 2 and 3, including presentation, written, and oral skills.

After:

To build upon and enhance students' skills in reading and interpreting texts with particular theoretical and social constructs in mind; to ask students to reflect upon the changing concept and meaning of the city, and to relate its representation and construction in cultural texts to wider social and historical processes; to engage critically with familiar urban environments; to develop points of contrast and comparison between Belfast and other cities, past and present, **using a range of digital tools to both research and provide interpretations of the texts studied on the module;** to provide students with skills and knowledge that will be valuable for modules at Stages 2 and 3, including presentation, written, and oral skills.

Digital Capability: digital capabilities, skills, practices will now be embedded as a component of assessment:

Students will create digital objects for assessment

Maps: Students collaborate on the production of periodised digital maps relating texts to contexts, assessed at 30% (Google Maps, via VLE)

- This would enhance the methodology deployed on the module of examining texts in synchronic contexts;

OR

Itineraries: students produce multimedia digital narratives

- Students track relevant texts across particular cities (Carson's Belfast; Woolf's London); focus here is on the diachronic, contrasting contemporary with specific textual representations

Conferencing as Learning Opportunity: reflections on the undergraduate anthropology conference

Love, Hate and Beyond: Affect and Emotions

By Dr Maruška Svašek, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics

The atmosphere in the room suddenly changed as the audience became visibly moved. The trigger was Dutch photography student Carlinda Boom. She was showing us pictures of herself, her body wrapped in a sheet, explaining that she had taken them a few weeks after her mum had passed away after a long illness. Finding it very hard to express her grief verbally, taking the pictures had helped her to engage with her feelings, even allowing her, she said, 'to have some fun' (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Death of Mother's Womb

It was a beautiful day in April and we had gathered in 18 College Garden for the undergraduate anthropology conference *Love, Hate and Beyond: Affect and Emotions*. 'We' consisted of thirty-four second and third year students from QUB who had taken my *Love, Hate and Beyond* module and five first year photography students from the Willem de Kooning Academy of Arts in Rotterdam, who had come over from the Netherlands to participate in the conference. Also present were keynote speaker Dr Kayla Rush, a few MA students from the anthropology programme, and some undergraduates from various disciplines. During the day, we were also joined by several lecturers and research fellows. As module convenor, I purposely took on the role of facilitator, empowering the students to run the show and only offering some final comments at the end of the day.

The conference was an assessed part of the module. The second year students were responsible for the organisation, which allowed them to gain a set of valuable, transferable skills. Early on in the semester, they had identified and divided tasks amongst themselves, such as overall conference management, creating a programme and a book of abstracts, organising catering and room booking, designing a poster and a conference Facebook page, being the contact person for

the Dutch guests, and so on. In the feedback forms handed out at the end of the day, they all showed strong appreciation for the learning opportunity. One of them noted, for example, that it had been a

particularly interesting and useful assessment method in terms of presenting and organising the conference. It allows for the creation of new skills which can be implemented in the workplace.

Another student wrote that,

the conference provided a new experience, one that we should be more familiar with, especially when entering the working world.

These positive reactions confirmed what I had learnt myself. In the two months spent on the assignment, the students had, for example, become very aware of the importance of time management skills. They had to initiate, check and double-check all organisational aspects of the conference and deal with unexpected changes. A few days before the conference, for example, a new Keynote speaker had to be found, which called for quick action and decision making.

It was the task of the third year students to present at the conference. Even though they had all given numerous presentations throughout their time at Queen's, learning to do so in a conference setting taught them new skills. First of all, they had to come up with the overall conference theme and write abstracts. Secondly, they had to perfectly time their presentations, making sure that they would not be cut off by the Chair of the session. The latter role was taken on by various students who also led the session discussions.

The programme consisted of six sessions, namely 'Music and Art', 'Religion, Politics and Symbolism', 'Emotion and Feeling', 'Conflict and Displacement', 'Language and Space', and 'Emotions, Ethics and Experience'. Designing the programme required intense interaction between paper presenters, conference managers and those responsible for the programme booklet, which offered an excellent opportunity to practise skills needed in organisations.

I had also aimed to stimulate creative, personal engagement with the conference theme, and as a result, presentation titles reflected the interests of the students, from 'emotions in heavy metal music' (Gary Hollyoak), through 'death rituals amongst Mormons' (Toni Whitten), to 'political manipulation through emotions' (Rory Hughes and William Mallen) and 'tone policing' (Cliff Carter). As the day progressed, certain overlapping themes emerged, for example the conceptualisation of affect and emotions as analytical tools, the emotional dynamics of ethnographic fieldwork, and the power of emotional rhetoric. Keynote speaker Kayla Rush, herself a recent anthropology PhD graduate from QUB, introduced some of the intersecting topics as she discussed questions around personal/societal transformation in her

talk 'Emotions and Transformation in Community Arts'. The undergraduate students were well-prepared to engage with all the emerging themes as we had discussed them at length throughout the semester during lectures and tutorials.

I believe that the clear embeddedness of the conference within the wider module helped to make the event a success. The lack of restrictions to the individual papers also contributed. Most students referred to theories they had been familiarised with, but many also exposed each other to new ideas. Harry Smith, for example, drew on philosopher Jan Slaby's theory of relational affect, applying it to musical experience. The resulting diversity of perspectives was well received, as reflected in the following two comments.

Great experience with a diverse range of topics. The fact that each student was able to choose their topic made each presentation and presenter passionate, interested and well researched.

I believe this conference was one of the most interesting, engaging, and therefore effective mediums that I have used during my time at Queens to present my thoughts as well as learn from others. Very good!

Some of the speakers took the opportunity to rethink their third year dissertation work through the perspective of affect and emotions. Daniel Cherene, for example, reflected on his research in Spain into El Camino de Santiago, specifically focusing on experiences of transformation amongst the pilgrims (**Figure 2**). Anna Bailie, who had conducted



Figure 2. Daniel Cherene

dissertation research amongst UK-based Polish migrants, zoomed in on feelings of fear in the wake of Brexit (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3. Anna Bailie

Sarah Singleton explored the emotions of people facing displacement and homelessness in the San Francisco Bay Area as a result of gentrification, the major theme of her dissertation. Niamh Small asked questions about the emotional

dimensions of the reintegration of Japanese return migrants, having written her thesis on an international school in Japan. Samuel Agar also based his talk on his dissertation, which had looked at ethical trading from the perspective of producers. His conference paper explored the significance of guilt and pride amongst the consumers of ethical products. The conference thus offered an opportunity to share research findings with a wider audience, as one student noted,

the conference gave me the opportunity to expand on my thesis in an open setting with immediate feedback and discussion.

Various students spoke specifically about the emotional dynamics of ethnographic fieldwork. Alexandra Carmichael elaborated on the experience of culture shock amongst the volunteers she had interviewed during her research in Uganda and compared it to being a Scottish student in Belfast, and Aimee Putt talked about being a theft victim in Cuba during her fieldwork. These insights into the reality of fieldwork were welcomed by the second year students in the audience who were preparing to conduct their own dissertation fieldwork. As one audience member wrote,

I found it beneficial for third year students to share their fieldwork experiences with second year students as it voiced personal experience. Overall, a very good experience and a life lesson for the future.

Personal experience was also central to papers by Mhairi Duncan, who analysed an art project that involved several generations in her family, and Lara Sunday, who spoke with passion about Irish language revival in East Belfast. Being a poet, she ended with her own evocative poem, entitled 'Bruach na teanga' (On the brink/banks of the language).



Ba mhaith liom na foclaí a ól siar ionam

Chun go gcuirfead le chéile iad i mo chluais agus go scaolfaí iad ar mo theanga.

Ba mhaith liom seas in abhainn na teanga

I bhfad idir bhruacha an tsaoil atá thart agus an saol atá romham

Cé gur iníon bastaird mé,

Ar lorg mhaithiúnas na bhfocal le mo chroí a chneasú atáim.

I want to drink the words into me

For the sounds of the language to merge in my ears and part on my tongue.

I want to stand in the river of the language

Far between the shores of what is behind and what is before me

Bastard daughter that I am,

I seek the absolution of words to seal my heart.

Her reading of the poem reflected the willingness of the students to use the occasion of the conference to share very personal thoughts. This was enhanced by the presence of the five photography students from Rotterdam, who had managed to get funding from their Academy to come over. Their presence turned the event into an interdisciplinary gathering with much scope for discussion, especially since the Dutch students had been placed in different sessions. Alice Lucchinelli, for example, explored how technological changes and the introduction of virtual reality offered new

opportunities for artists to express emotions. This offered a fresh perspective on anthropological research into the digital world. One student wrote that ‘I liked the artist & anthropologist mix’ and another noted that ‘during this conference I’ve seen how art can be used as a tool for anthropology and vice versa. Personally it was an enriching experience.’

Esther Kanters wondered if art could exist without emotions, and suggested that emotion is needed ‘to set energy in motion’. Her photographs illustrated how she tried to represent this idea. Milah van Zuilen explored the relationship between human beings and ecology, and showed through her work how she searched for nature in the urban environment. The work by Izzy Ramos was directly inspired by her childhood experiences and her medical condition, narcolepsy. She had developed a visual method to deal with difficult memories and explained how it could potentially help others to deal with trauma. Her paper was well programmed after two anthropology papers on physicality and trauma (Nicole McMongle and Nial McAteet). Numerous students commented on the usefulness of the interdisciplinary nature of the conference, for example ‘Having the Dutch students present gave us the insight of photography and art, and how

emotion can sometimes be expressed better in pictures rather than words.’

A final word needs to be said about the positive atmosphere at the conference, the willingness of participants to listen to each other’s viewpoints, and empathise when needed. Their sensitive reactions to each other’s feelings were heart-warming, and demonstrated a skill that all anthropology students develop during their time at Queen’s: to show understanding for the viewpoints and feelings of others. This clearly reflects in one of the students’ comments:

I especially like how certain students had an emotional story to share with the class. Carlinda Boom, for example, gave a very moving presentation which not only presented emotion but also brought emotion to the classroom atmosphere.

To conclude, in my view we should take the overall positive experience of the participants seriously. In the post-conference discussion all anthropology students agreed that conferencing was a highly valuable learning experience that should be standard in the curriculum. Not only because it obviously strengthened their CV, but also because it had proven to be a personally rewarding experience.

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Creative Ethnographic Writing: reflections on a Development Weeks course

By Kayla Rush, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics

When the information for ‘Creative Ethnographic Writing’ finally went up on the Development Weeks website, I was certain no one would register for the course. After all, a week-long, eight-hours-per-day course on writing is hardly how anyone wants to spend their time at the end of a busy spring semester. I had vivid visions of staring into an empty room on the first day of the course, consoling myself with the thought that timing had been the main factor – “it’s summer, people are busy, a week is a long time,” I would tell myself – rather than the merits of the project (or so I hoped).

Imagine my surprise, then, as I watched the course fill up, booked to capacity several weeks before its start date. Imagine my surprise as I continued to receive emails from interested students, and postdocs, and lecturers, asking how they could register. I had decided early on that I would consider the course very successful if six people turned up and attended regularly. Instead I had a class of thirteen – thirteen people who devoted a week of their busy academic lives to sitting in a seminar room, trying their hands at creative ethnography, an area of practice that is often cast as

superfluous or indulgent, or opposed to the ‘serious’ work of more traditional academic writing.

This was a diverse interdisciplinary group. The participants comprised nine PhD students, two MA students, one postdoctoral Fellow and one lecturer, from backgrounds in anthropology, languages, architecture, and medical education. Perhaps most interestingly, and certainly most surprisingly for me, more than half of the participants spoke a language other than English as their first language.

The ten sessions scheduled over the five days unfolded in a gentle rhythm: to begin, I would provide a small amount of instruction – a mini-lecture of sorts – after which we would read selected examples of creative ethnography and discuss their merits, their strengths and weaknesses. Following that, participants would be given time – usually between forty-five and ninety minutes – to try their hands at the writing genres, styles, or techniques modelled in the examples. Each session would close with an opportunity to share work with one another – in pairs or small groups or with the entire class, depending on the topic and the length of works produced.

Participant evaluations demonstrated the effectiveness of this format, with a number of the participants mentioning the format as one of the specific aspects that ‘worked well’ for them. One evaluator, for example, wrote, ‘*The format of the workshop allowed for personal writing time as well as*

collaboration between the participants’, while another added, ‘The structure of the course was excellent. We had plenty of time to dedicate to our own writing and received constructive feedback on it.’

I was fortunate to have been able to book, with the help of the School of HAPP, the new Irish Studies Seminar Room in 27 University Square for this course. The openness and versatility of this space, which includes stackable chairs and small moveable tables whose tops can be folded down, allowed participants to set up individual work stations that best suited their needs.

Each day I brought along two yoga mats for writers who wished to sit or lay on the floor; they were often in use.

When the weather turned exceptionally nice midway through the week, we began spending the late morning feedback sessions outside in the Botanic Gardens (Figure 1).



Figure 1

The amount of time given over to writing, as opposed to lecturing or reading examples, gradually increased over the course of the week. The final two days had been planned primarily as writing time, to facilitate an opportunity for participants to work on a lengthier creative project. In the course evaluation, one participant stated that they had initially been uncertain about the periods of individual writing, but they had ultimately found the approach useful and successful: ‘A very good balance of discussion time and writing time. Writing periods not too long which I was apprehensive about before the workshop.’

Key to the effectiveness of this course was the creation and maintenance of a distinctly creative space. Both during the course, and in their evaluations, many of the participants spoke of a ‘positive energy’ that pervaded the room. There was a definite sense that this was a unique space, one in which we were all safe to try new things, to explore the outer limits of ethnography – whether writing poetry for the first time or working to craft fieldnotes into a drama. As the course facilitator, the creativity that sprung from this space was exciting, and truly amazing: students who had not previously considered themselves skillful or creative writers rapidly began to produce extraordinarily creative works that remained deeply grounded in, and effectively communicated knowledge about, their ethnographic research.

Even more importantly, many of the participants reported increased confidence in their own skills as researchers and writers. One participant wrote in their evaluation,

‘The workshop was great as I got to develop my writing skills in various ways and try new perspectives, as well as get some very useful feedback on what I was working with. It was great to have people from different disciplines and backgrounds.’

Another noted that the course had led them to,

‘develop my confidence and skills in writing. Furthermore, I have started establishing habit for writing, rewriting and revising my own work. Overall, I learnt a lot from this workshop.’

The unexpectedly high level of interest in this course, and the overwhelmingly positive responses from participants, speaks, I feel, to an area of teaching that has perhaps been lacking in academia. My ventures into writing pedagogy began midway through my own PhD, when I realized that our discussions of writing are limited: we are all expected to write, and we receive feedback on the finished products from lecturers, examiners, supervisors, and reviewers, but we never discuss what happens in between: the process, the method, the craft of writing, all of which are so essential to the work we attempt to produce.

This course also provided an opportunity to move beyond traditional or narrow ideas of what ‘academic writing’ ought to look like. Cultivating creativity in writing practice, and opening up the idea of what ethnographic writing can be, has the potential to spark creative thinking and problem solving in research and academic practice. This is evidenced by the fact that nearly all of the course participants are incorporating pieces written during this course into their more traditional academic outputs, including portions of their dissertations, conference papers, and journal articles. Furthermore, the evident value for international students and speakers of English as another language should not be ignored. Clearly, this creative approach adds something that has been missing from more traditional approaches to teaching academic writing.

In the first session of the course, I asked each participant to write on an index card two words or phrases that they felt best described their writing. I had them repeat this exercise on the final day, in order to reflect on the changes they saw in themselves and their work. The responses they gave make a strong argument for the value of an increased focus in teaching on creativity and writing practice: the reported changes included a movement from ‘formulaic and distant’ to ‘structured and detailed’ writing; from ‘painful and joyful’ to ‘challenging and imaginative’; from ‘vague and valuable (for me)’ to ‘better clarity and sounds valuable for readers’; and from ‘aspirational and annoyed’ to ‘aspirational and empowered’ (Figure 2).

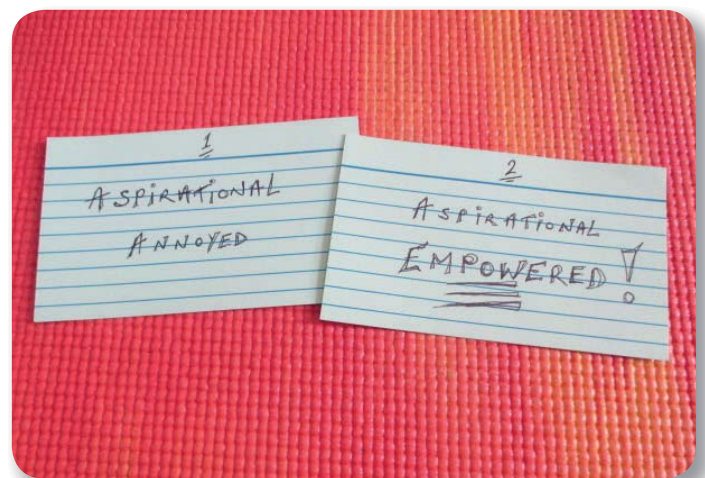


Figure 2

I would like to thank the Development Weeks team for providing institutional support for this project, and the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics for providing financial support.

Involving Students in Real-Life Global Health Policy Making

By Dr Monica Burns, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences

In April this year, the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued for consultation a draft declaration which is proposed to be issued in October 2018 on the 40th anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration. Alma Ata was the keynote global health policy of the 20th century, with the aspiration of achieving health for all.

The aspiration has not yet been met, but with renewed emphasis through the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is hoped that the 880 million people – or 12% of the world's population - who do not currently have access to comprehensive primary care will soon be covered. The issuing of the draft Declaration for consultation offered a unique, possibly once in a lifetime, opportunity for a group of Masters in Public Health (Global) students to get directly involved in global health policy making by reviewing the draft, analysing strengths and weaknesses in the document, negotiating between themselves about priorities for global health, sequencing the priorities in the document for maximum impact and devising clearer and more concise ways of getting important policy messages across. After two intense days in the seminar rooms of Mullhouse and the Centre for Public Health, debating and negotiating among themselves, collating and cross-checking their comments and proposals, and synthesising these into a cohesive submission, the results of their deliberations and their proposals for changes were submitted to WHO. The MPH (Global) group comprises ten students (and one additional enthusiastic student from the 'mainstream MPH programme), from eight different nationalities, representing people from the full spectrum of developed and less developed nations. Working together they gained first-hand experience of the complexities of policy-making 'in committee', writing text which would be clearly understandable to a wide range of nations and cultures, and they learned to understand the frustrations and compromise which are an inevitable part of any policy making negotiations. Their joint submission as QUB MPH (Global) students to WHO was one of

300+ which came from individuals, Ministries of Health and professional organisations around the world. Having considered the submissions, WHO is now in the process of radically rewriting the draft Declaration. The students look forward to seeing how much of their proposals might appear in the final draft.

The students were fully and enthusiastically engaged in the process and were very excited to be part of the process for developing a new global health policy. The process offered practical hands-on experience of contributing to global health policy development – and also helped them to realise that perhaps being involved in policy-making at the highest level wasn't as glamorous as might first appear! Their involvement in the development of such a momentous global health policy will certainly be something they'll be proud to take credit for in their future careers, wherever they end up working!

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