



Centre for Learning and Teaching

# Connections: sharing the learning space

Articles from the Learning and Teaching Conference 2007



**University of Brighton**





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Articles from the Learning and Teaching Conference 2007

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# Contents

## Editorial introduction

Joyce Barlow, Chair of Conference Organising Committee.....4

## Keynote

### Making spaces for learning

Professor Clive Holtham, Cass Business School, City University.....6

## Articles

### A learning space for creativity: early findings

Dr Paul Martin and Richard Morris, Creativity Centre; Dr Tim Katz and Steve Kilgallon  
School of Environment and Technology.....13

### Blended learning to increase flexibility in initial police training and development

Dr Vivien Martin, Brighton Business School.....18

### Supervising postgraduates: internationally, and at a distance

Professor Gina Wisker, Head, Centre for Learning and Teaching.....23

### UK and US criminology students communicate online: enhancing current learning and teaching practices

Dr Paula Wilcox, School of Applied Social Sciences; Dr Helen Jones and Dr Eileen Berrington  
Department of Sociology, Manchester Metropolitan University; Maggie Summer, Department  
of Social and Political Studies, University of Westminster.....29

### Web-based museum trails for design students in higher education

Rebecca Reynolds and Catherine Speight, CETLD at the Victoria and Albert Museum.....35

### The use of Personal Digital Assistants in medical education: the Brighton and Sussex Medical School experience

Dr Inam Haq with Professor Richard Vincent, Gregory May and Mark Packer  
Brighton and Sussex Medical School.....42

### Multiple roles – multiples selves: exploring students' experience of a shared learning space

Mark Price, School of Education.....48

### An investigation into the experience of non-graduates undertaking masters courses

Dr Gail Louw and Carmel Keller, Postgraduate Medical School; Dave Baker, London Institute of Education.....55

### Creative space: writing retreats for HE lecturers

Dr Maria Antoniou, Centre for Learning and Teaching and Jess Moriarty, School of Language,  
Literature and Communication.....65

### Assessing perceived value of reflective practice in two different modules

Sue Will and Bob Smale, Brighton Business School.....71

# Editorial introduction

This collection of articles arising out of the University of Brighton's internal learning and teaching conference under the title *Connections: sharing the learning space* begins with **Professor Clive Holtham's** keynote presentation, and his piece is completely germane to the conference theme. He provides an analysis of the different types of learning spaces: physical, virtual, emotional, communicative, and ties them together with the notion of '*universitas*', asking how we can put *universitas* back into universities. This means reclaiming true interaction across the disciplines and helping universities to fulfil their true function of 'challenging the status quo in society', a role which 'is becoming harder, but as a result, more vital'.

**Dr Paul Martin** and colleagues follow up the theme of different aspects of space for creativity, identifying the physical, the virtual, and the private (personal or internal) space. The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) project in Creativity has enabled the building of a Creativity Centre at the University of Brighton. The article explains the philosophy underpinning the design and facilities of the Centre, its physical dimensions and attributes and the fact of its close proximity to the Engineering Design area. It explores the enrichment of learning opportunities which the Centre is intended to foster, and the complexities involved in realising the pedagogical ideals behind the project.

**Dr Viv Martin** writes about an example of extending the boundaries of the university by introducing a wholly new dimension and culture to the institution in the educating of new recruits to the police force. The foundation certificate level of this development has been successfully established, and curriculum development is proceeding for the higher levels. Blended learning routes are being designed to provide flexible study opportunities at each level to complement face-to-face provision. This elearning space requires its own approaches to pedagogy (lecture notes do not transfer directly) and learner support.

**Professor Gina Wisker** also writes about extending educational boundaries by e-communication, this time on an international scale, and with greater potential for inter-cultural misunderstandings. Gina has been providing postgraduate research supervision in conjunction with Israeli universities for over a decade, and she has distilled her experience to provide useful pointers to what is required for success in such an enterprise.

**Dr Paula Wilcox** combines the justice-related theme (see Viv Martin's article) and the development of international e-communication. Her contribution is about criminology students at three British universities linking up with fellow students of the discipline in three American universities. She illustrates the type of learning materials and questions used to prompt cross-continent interactive learning. A tailor-made Web-CT site is the vehicle. The outcomes and challenges section of the article contains wonderful feedback on the student's perceptions of the learning benefits and their enjoyment of the process.

**Rebecca Reynolds** and **Catherine Speight** also take us outside the university environment, this time into the Victoria and Albert Museum. Their article explores the potential of developing the use of hand-held electronic technology to enrich the educational value of gallery visits for higher education students. The impetus for this is associated with diminishing staff/student ratios and increasing demands on academic staff time. The authors stress the importance of education leading the technology and not vice-versa. In the context of the Design Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLD) project, a collaborative venture between the University of Brighton and the V&A, the research centres on the design of web-based museum trails. The article concentrates on the formative prototype stage of the project, which allows substantial input from the students in identifying productive ways of designing the trails to allow individual tailoring of the learning experiences.

The application of handheld technology is also the subject of **Dr Inam Haq's** article on 'The use of personal digital assistants in medical education'. He reviews the literature on developments in this area and reports on the results of a pilot scheme within the Postgraduate Medical School.

**Mark Price's** article provides a valuable investigation into foundation degree students developing their professionalism in workplace-based courses. His research with Nadia Edmond used interviews and questionnaires to explore how studying on work-related courses impacts on their work and personal lives and the strategies they adopt in order to manage the multiple identities involved. The article provides interesting insights into the personal issues for mature students undertaking study, and the quotations enable the authentic student voice to come through.

**Dr Gail Louw, Carmel Keller** and **Dave Baker** look into how students without a first degree cope with studying alongside graduates on masters level courses in the health professions area. The research focuses on mature students in employment, enquiring about the reasons for their choice of course and their feelings about the experience. There are issues here about confidence and self-esteem, and the article concentrates on the students experiences during their course and their potent sense of achievement at the end.

We return to the theme of creativity with **Dr Maria Antoniou** and **Jess Moriarty's** piece about their creative writing courses. This is a recent addition to the developmental work of the Centre for Learning and Teaching, linking with creative writing provision in the School of Language Literature and Communication. Colleagues enjoy the support for liberating their creative and academic voice.

**Bob Smale** and **Sue Will** introduced the idea of students keeping a reflective diary to chart their learning and to create a dialogue with themselves about their preparation for lectures. As a point of reference the students had completed the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles Inventory, and the research attempts to relate their individual profile to their receptiveness to the idea of reflective practice. The research would indicate that first year students in the 18-21 year old age group need careful induction to persuade them to engage with reflective practice.

**Joyce Barlow**

Chair of Conference Organising Committee

# Making Spaces for Learning

Professor Clive Holtham



## Abstract

.....

This presentation examines the impact of spaces on learning in universities. Although it starts by considering physical spaces, this is extended to cover virtual learning spaces as well. It also examines the space for universities in wider society, and the way in which communities now perform a vital role in learning processes. Consideration is given to the significance of scholarship across all aspects of university life, concluding with the potential importance of *universitas* to the university of the 21st century.

.....

## Spaces

There has been a welcome re-awakening of interest in the importance of physical space as a key dimension of learning in universities. The role of virtual space now needs to be re-assessed in this context. Our research has suggested that there is also a third space of importance to the creation and sharing of knowledge, which can be labelled 'emotional' space (Holtham 2003; Holtham and Rich 2005).

However we should not disembodify spaces, and disconnect them from the fundamental purposes of a university. It may be useful to return to one idea at the heart of higher education – *universitas*. From the perspective of teaching and learning excellence, how far it is possible or desirable to put *universitas* back into our fundamental purpose?

## Presentation

I was very honoured to be invited to the University of Brighton, because it is widely known for its many innovations in teaching and learning. But I had no idea until I received the day's programme and abstracts, how widely distributed was that innovation, and also how deeply embedded it appears to have become. I feel there is a real risk that I will learn more from the University of Brighton than you will learn from me, the quality of the programme quite bluntly challenged me to re-orientate my own presentation.

It is one thing to provide months in advance a title, it is quite another to have to deliver on that title, and as my preparation proceeded it became clear that compared to 2002, for example, when we opened our new business school, the subject has moved on considerably. In particular, it is not just undesirable but actually risky to focus just on spaces. We must see spaces for learning as part of a bigger picture. My task is to paint that bigger picture.

Just to give an overview at this stage, I am going to start by looking at my headlined topic – spaces for learning, and am then going to go on and review two further dimensions of learning: scholarship, and society. And my fourth s is

communities (still looking for an s-word – ‘sodality’ is close enough, but I just don’t think somehow it has a catchy enough sound). So I have my four S’s: **spaces, scholarship, society and communities**, and in conclusion I am going to propose interconnecting these through the medium of the ‘*universitas*’.

My first theme is **space** and I can use Oticon, a Danish hearing-aid company, to illustrate the three types of space for knowledge work. Oticon is an exceptional company which has re-engineered itself around very high technologies. The three types of space are:

- Virtual – Oticon has a near-paperless office
- Physical – Oticon has redesigned its space to encourage conversation and accidental meeting; despite being so high-tech it encourages face-to-face and telephone discussion rather than email
- Emotional – even the coffee area was designed by an architect to encourage informal discussions.

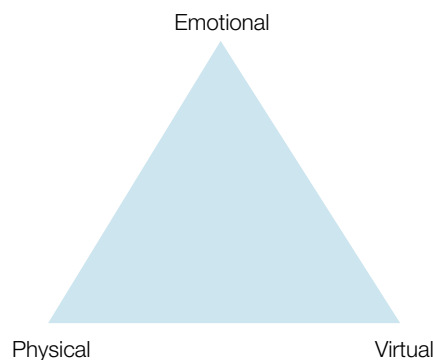


Figure 1 – Spaces

Space is probably the most obvious sense of ‘making spaces for learning’ but I want to move on to a second theme, this one which I am coming to believe is of increasingly fundamental importance to the space design of universities, namely our roles in **society**. There are many different models of such roles; I just want to high-light three key dimensions:

Firstly, there is the role of sustaining the values of a civilisation, particularly to promote the health and survival of that civilisation. My illustration for this is the University of Bologna (which has itself survived 800 plus years!) Its task was to sustain higher learning across Europe – we need to remember that in the Dark Ages the European elite had effectively lost their history, with only the Arab translations of classical texts ensuring the survival of Greek thought in particular. But Bologna also highlighted the philosophies of higher education. Was a University to be concerned primarily with the needs of students (*universitas scholarium*: Bologna?) Or was a university to involve masters whose job was to teach the students (*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*: Oxford and Paris?) In Bologna, the students were very much in charge – rather a strong challenge to those who believe that ‘student-centric education’ or even ‘student-funded education’ will make the sky fall in.

Secondly, a university clearly has a role to discover and enhance knowledge and skills. My own inspiration is Aristotle, who was not just a theoretical philosopher, but one of the greatest management educators of history. Aristotle paid very close attention to knowledge and skills in higher education, and I will deliberately reduce Aristotle’s intellectual virtues, as set out in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, to three:

- Epistime (Scientific knowledge)
- Techne (Skills)
- Phronesis (Practical wisdom)

True leaders needed phronesis above all – Aristotle felt that this made those expert in scientific knowledge (in our terms academics) particularly unsuited to high-level decision making.

The final role of universities was brought home to me by Manuel Castells in his lecture after City University presented him with an honorary degree. He sees a key role for universities as challenging the status quo in society, partly because of its emphasis on the scientific method, (which is never satisfied with the status quo), partly because of the historic quasi-independence of universities, and partly because it is one of the few areas of civil society actually in a position to challenge. That challenge role is becoming harder, but as a result more vital. My illustration is the Bauhaus, which despite working within the strict German accreditation system had an enormous influence on the theory, practice, and pedagogy of design, which it helped radically change (Wick 2004).

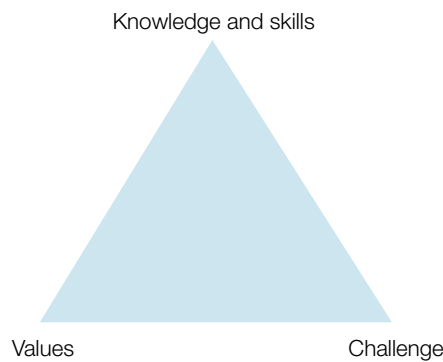


Figure 2 – Society

My third theme is **communities**, which I am going to analyse in a very specific way, using the three well-worn themes of teaching and learning, research, and practice. Each of these can be prefaced by the word community, as in 'community of practice'. Each of the three is profoundly inter-related with the other.

My first illustration relates to exceptional teaching. It is a quite incredible 80 minute lecture I attended very recently at the Barbican. Entitled 'Floating', its theme was 'the detachment of the Isle of Anglesey from the British mainland, its journey to the South Atlantic and final return to the mainland'.

Put on by the Hoipolloi Theatre Company, it was undoubtedly a better lecture than any I have attended in any University in the last 20 years. 'Floating' held our attention with many technologies and artefacts:

- laptop with PowerPoint and data projector
- roof mounted data projector
- overhead projector
- flipchart
- pre-printed maps/diagrams mounted on card
- audio recordings
- video recordings
- dry ice
- numerous objects handed round the 150 plus audience for close inspection including:
  - wrestling magazines and a tea towel from Llanfair PG
- props such as a suitcase and a bowl of water
- a 35mm handheld slide viewer
- xylophone
- megaphone
- alarm clock
- audience operated clicker counter
- a skateboard with a 3-D map of Anglesey mounted on top.

And as the audience left, the performers gave everyone a badge and stamped their hands with a map of Anglesey. My own favourite was a pair of laminated double-sided 6 x 4" index cards with the words connection/disconnection and decision/choice respectively. These simple and cheap cards were appropriately deployed at specific points to provide emphasis and reinforcement.

I doubt the actors (who were also the writers) have ever trained as lecturers, yet they were incredibly successful in engaging with an audience of strangers, exploiting the whole 3-D space they were in, and creating an intense, memorable and fun experience. Of course, I am sure that students would soon get bored if all their lectures were like this.

Secondly I am interested in making an impact on communities of practice, and my hero is Leonardo Da Vinci. When I visited the Leonardo exhibition at the V&A this year, I was amazed to find that at least 40 per cent of his magnificent drawings were actually 'sales pitches'. So he wasn't just a researcher, a teacher or artist/inventor. He was immersed in the world of business and government, in the world of everyday practice.

Thirdly I am interested in tools to connect research communities (but which can also be used as a free by-product to enhance teaching and learning). My illustration here is a piece of software we installed at City in 2006 and which has been making quite an impact ever since. It is called Adobe Connect Professional, though its earlier version was called Macromedia Breeze Meeting. I have been using video and web-conferencing tools since the early 1990s. Without doubt, Adobe Connect looks likely to make a greater impact on my personal practice than almost any other piece of technology over the last 15 years (I am on no commission for sales).

Basically:

- 1 It is an internet video-conferencing system (1:1)
- 2 It is an internet electronic meeting system (video and or audio) say for 10-20 equal participants
- 3 It is an internet lecturing system (1: many)

It is equally well suited to teaching, research and administration, and to academic and student use.

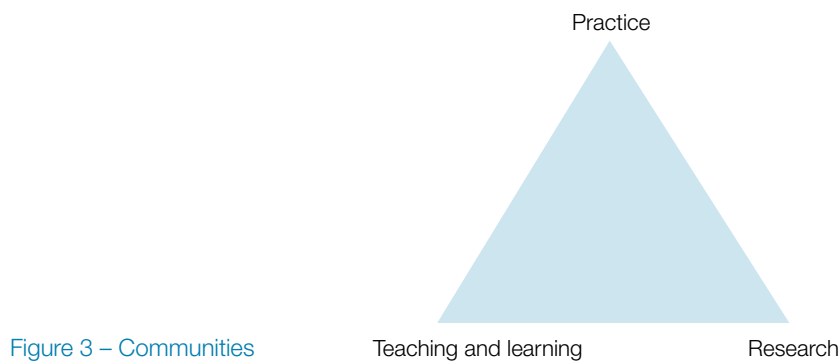


Figure 3 – Communities

My fourth and final dimension is **scholarship**. Really there is very little I have to add to Ernest Boyer's (1990) masterly book *Scholarship Reconsidered*, so I'll just use a very simple three stage cycle:

- Inquire
- Reflect
- Conceptualise

For each of these, I want to draw on recent innovations that we've developed at the Business School, specifically in our MBA Elective 'The Business Mystery'. The main thrust of this course is what Gary Knowles of the University of Toronto has called 'artful inquiry'. We draw on methods developed from the fine arts, to seek greater insight into the art of management. We completely reject the 'What Shakespeare can tell us about management' approach because ultimately that leads to the actual examples of what we can learn from 'Winnie the Pooh' and 'Star Trek'.

One method we have been working on is 'Learning by Walking About' (*Solitur Ambulato*). Our theory is taken from the French Situationist Guy Debord writing as a Marxist in the 1950s about psycho-geography. I suspect he would be turning in his grave at the idea of a capitalist business school hypothecating from his invention, specifically the *dérive* (drifting), where students in teams 'draw walk' in the city, as an opportunity for observation, collaboration and reflection.

In relation to the reflection phase, we have actually abandoned our original formative reflective method (electronic portfolios) in favour of old-fashioned paper based 'reflective sketchbooks'. These are more popular with about 75 per cent of the students and the other 25 per cent can still originate them electronically if they wish.

For the third 'understanding' phase we require the students' summative work to be an 'artefact' which could be a video, painting, poem, game etc. All sketchbooks and artefacts are brought together in a public exhibition. So here in the Business Mystery Course we have been promoting all three phases of scholarship with masters students, and we have begun to redevelop our undergraduate induction using similar approaches.

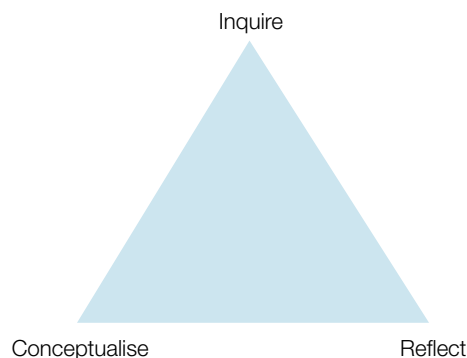


Figure 4 – Scholarship

Having developed our four dimensions of learning, we can now bring them together: (Figure 5), in what could be rather negatively described as 'the sum of the parts'.

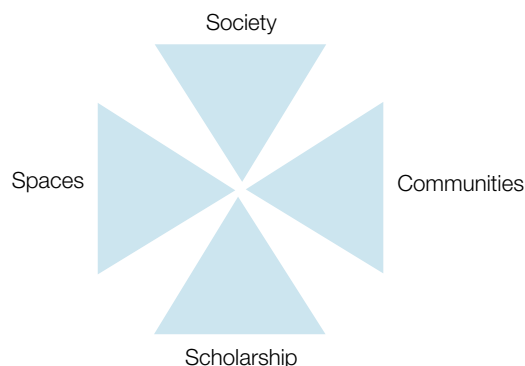


Figure 5 – Sum of the parts

I see a real risk in that these are four dimensions that can quite easily remain fragmented and disconnected, even typically so in UK higher education. So the sum of the parts can easily be less than the whole. We urgently need something that can bring them together.

I want to return the creation of the University of Bologna, referred to earlier. The Latin title of the University was: '*Universitas Scholarium*' which translates into 'The whole institution of learners'. The key word here is: '*universitas*'.

The *universitas* is the dream of the whole actually being greater than the sum of the parts. It is the dream of C P Snow, drawing together the arts and sciences. I sense and hope that it is the dream of many. It was certainly my dream when I moved into the university world in 1988. Only after I joined did I realise that philosophical debates didn't occur much across schools and disciplines, and they didn't even occur much within business schools made up of 100 plus different disciplines of finance and management.

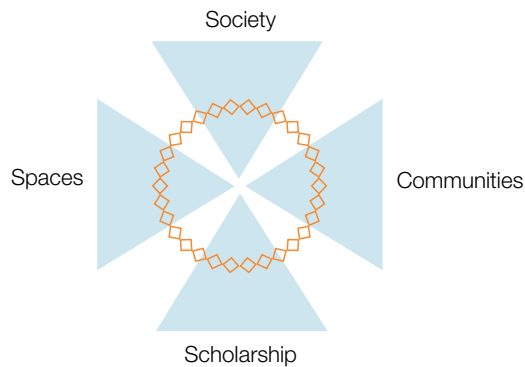


Figure 6 – *Universitas*

This is not the fault of Vice-Chancellors or Deans. It reflects the whole trajectory of the modern German, American and British university from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (and I am even increasingly looking to blame the approach of the Universities of Paris and Oxford in the twelfth century). The demands of government, the military and large business for 'Big Science' have probably inexorably led to fracturing of disciplines, narrowing the scope of sub-disciplines 'in search of excellence'. Journal citations have taken on an exaggerated significance across all subjects, regardless of their utility to the whole gamut of scholarship and professional practice.

Our 2007 Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL)-funded project 'Quality in Business Education' (QuBE) seeks to address this head on, and we have developed a board game called 'The Dean's Dilemma' that you can download and adapt – one of my City colleagues is planning to adapt it to become 'The Midwife's Dilemma'.

I do see some glimmers of hope for wholeness, and they mostly come from teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is a much greater stimulus to *universitas* than is much narrow discipline-focused research. So it is not too fanciful to suggest that in fact it is teaching and learning-led *universitas* that may evolve into the central rationale for the university as an institution, rather than the bureaucratic view of a university as a series of basic services which happen to be carried out more efficiently or effectively at institutional level.

The fragmentation of knowledge in a research sense cannot now be undone, though there is still much to do by looking for more diverse ways of working across professional boundaries. One very specific example touches on experiences which I and a colleague at City University have had working across wide disciplinary boundaries with two colleagues at other institutions since 2005:

Law and Dance: Nigel Duncan (Law, City University) has collaborated with Chrissie Harrington (Dance, Bath Spa University)

Business and Theatre: Clive Holtham (Management) has collaborated with Allan Owens (Theatre, University of Chester)

The four of us have run two workshops on this collaboration in Washington DC and York. The title of the workshops was 'Extreme Collaboration' which I'm delighted to see now also being used as a concept by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). The workshops have identified tremendous scope for, and interest in, extreme collaboration, particularly as a stimulus to innovation.

Some of you who know my enthusiasm for elearning may be surprised that I've hardly mentioned it. I still very much believe in it, but of course we have a much better idea now about what works and what is value for money than we did five or even two years ago. I've come to realise that the academic not the technologist is the primary force for successful elearning, so the academic needs to be involved before decisions are made, not merely given instructions on how to use equipment and systems after the event.

Our current major project at City is called 'Investment in Learning' and involves upgrading 85 classrooms on our main campus to high standards of reliable equipment. I argued that 10 per cent of the budget of over £ 1,000,000 should be devoted to training and faculty development, not simply in which buttons to press but in how we can all exploit technology. Somewhat to my surprise and pleasure, this was agreed and became the 'Classroom Experience Initiative'.

I'd like to think that in this project we are drawing on the spirit of innovation of the Babylonians, the intellectual virtues of Aristotle, the student-centred set-up in Bologna, the holistic approach of Leonardo, the re-thinking achieved by the Bauhaus, and the integration of physical, virtual and emotional spaces achieved by Oticon. We should aspire to the excellence in student engagement perpetrated by the Hoipolloi Theatre Company.

It has become fashionable these days to criticise PowerPoint. But PowerPoint isn't evil in itself. It's just a space. We can fill the space creatively or we can use it to bore both students and ourselves. The same is true for all physical and virtual spaces, and I'm in little doubt that we have to address urgently the third, and most poorly understood, ingredient of space – the emotional element.

I am deeply optimistic that universities like Brighton and City really can, however limited our resources, succeed in engaging more effectively with students and each other, as well as balancing our stakeholders' needs, especially the society that we must both support and challenge.

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## Biography

**Clive Holtham**, Professor of Information Management, Cass Business School and Director, Cass Learning Laboratory

After taking a Masters degree in Management, Clive Holtham trained as an accountant and was Young Accountant of the Year in 1976. Following six years as a Director of Finance and IT, he moved to the Business School in 1988. His research is into the strategic exploitation of information systems, knowledge management and management learning. He has been an adviser to the European Parliament on educational technology, and led a major EU project on intangibles. In 2003 he was awarded a UK National Teaching Fellowship. He is author of a large number of publications, and lectures, broadcasts and consults in the UK and internationally. He was a founding member of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists, the City of London's 100th livery company.

# A learning space for creativity: early findings

Dr Paul Martin, Dr Tim Katz, Richard Morris and Steve Kilgallon

## Abstract

This paper discusses the context and early experiences of the Brighton Creativity Centre based in the School of Environment and Technology. The Centre is one half of **InQbate**, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in Creativity. The other half is based at Sussex University, where there is another Creativity Centre. The paper explores the idea of a 'creative space' and the dimensions of 'physical space', 'virtual space' and 'personal space' associated with it. It raises issues about the capabilities associated with learning spaces and how these may pose both challenges and opportunities to learners, teachers and facilitators alike, and questions how the Centre staff can optimally support its use.

## Introduction

The development of 'creative spaces' as part of the CETL in Creativity has started a voyage of discovery, not only into the question: 'what is creativity?' but also, which environment, technology, and learning and teaching approaches can best support the creative process.

## The changing learning space in higher education

Since the 1950s in the United Kingdom there has been what Barnett (1994) calls an 'elite to mass' change in the numbers of people entering higher education. This dramatic rise in numbers has been driven by ideals of both creating a fairer society and increasing capital for the economy. At the same time as the numbers and diversity of students have increased, so too has what Toffler (1970) called the increasingly 'rapid obsolescence of knowledge'.

The combined pressures of increased student numbers with a greater diversity of backgrounds and learning needs, the speed of change of knowledge, government calls for greater efficiency in the teaching process, and developments in information technology, along with greater understanding of learning and teaching have led to the adoption of new styles of teaching. These new approaches are vital in order to avoid what Knowles calls the potential 'catastrophe of human obsolescence' (Knowles 1990) and they include, for example, helping learners acquire the skills of 'learning how to learn' and of 'self-directed inquiry' (Knowles 1980).

The traditional teacher-centred transmission model of learning by the 'sage on the stage' has begun to change to a more facilitative approach to teaching that is learner-centred, and where the teacher becomes the 'guide on the side'. Barr and Tagg (1995) see this shift from an 'instructional' to a 'learning paradigm' as changing the role of higher education from a 'place of instruction' to a place to 'produce learning'.

In response to these pressures, governments and education institutions have been modernising their buildings to support the perceived shift in learner requirements, pedagogic approaches, and the effects of new technology. Although there is much anecdotal evidence from education practitioners that learning spaces can affect the learning process, there is surprisingly little hard evidence as yet to support the premise that improvements in the learning environment improve learning. In their literature review 'The Impact of School Environments' for the Design Council in 2005, the researchers found that: 'It is extremely difficult to come to firm conclusions about the impact of learning environments because of the multi-faceted nature of environments and the subsequent diverse and disconnected nature of research literature'.

Both this, and the 'Spaces for Learning' (2006) review of learning spaces in further and higher education for the Scottish Funding Council, agree that there is evidence that poor ventilation or noise can have negative effects on staff and learners. However, the positive effects of learning environments which meet minimum standards are less clear, though there is some evidence that staff and students respond positively to enhanced buildings and landscaping.

## The concept of a creative space

In the modern world the concept of creativity has become one of the most 'used and abused' of terms, expressing anything from brainstorming ideas in order to solve a problem to the creative practice of a Pablo Picasso or Roger Penrose. Negus and Pickering (2004) chart the change in meaning of 'creativity' from the creative act of a god and the elitist concept of the divinely inspired artist, towards a more inclusive approach which sees all people as possessing creativity. Some forms of creativity are seen as having more value than others, but these value judgements are dependent on both the context and the dominant values of the society, or section of society that is making those judgements. The Creativity Centre is involved in exploring the nature of creativity, and it is not attempting to limit engagement by narrow definitions but rather to embrace the complexity and richness of creativity and the possibilities it holds for learning in higher education. Given the diverse nature of creativity, the concept of a creative space that encourages creativity is complex.

The idea of having a special 'creative space' in which to work and be creative is not new. Since early Renaissance times, artists have had their 'studio', usually as a private place in which to develop ideas in safety. Likewise, writers may find places of creative refuge, or engineers and designers have a workshop in which to fashion their ideas. These spaces may vary according to individual needs and include specialist tools, materials or research, but many have privacy at their core, where the individual can take risks without external judgement or even ridicule. The creative spaces which are part of the Creativity CETL are grounded in this tradition. They are also strongly influenced by the changing needs of the 21st century learner, modern approaches to the facilitation of learning, and the potential for re-configurable spaces and modern technologies to enhance the creative process.

There is a domain of literature about creative thinking and techniques that can be effective in stimulating creative thinking, but as with learning, there is little research evidence about the spaces in which these types of thinking and practice can take place. There is a danger that the Creativity Centre may only be perceived as a physical space, whereas in fact the 'creative space' can be conceptualised as comprising a '**physical space**', a '**virtual space**' and a '**personal space**'.

The **physical space** is the environment in which creative activity takes place. Its characteristics will vary depending on personal preference or need, and the chosen discipline: writer, artist, designer, engineer, and so on. It is important that the physical space should support the creative process and not obstruct it in the way that, for example, lecture theatres with fixed seating can inhibit learner participation.

The **virtual space** encompasses not only contacts between individuals and groups locally, but also contacts with the wider community through the worldwide web. Opportunities for learners can be provided in various interactive forms, giving the learner great freedom to make connections and to trace interests and interest groups in the virtual environment. In addition, the potential to collaborate with other institutions, both in the UK and in other countries, is far greater through communication in the virtual space than it could ever be in the physical space.

The **personal or internal space** for creativity and learning, is shaped by the characteristics of the individual and by the contexts in which they live, work, socialise and learn. A learner's personal values, beliefs and perceptions arise from cultural influences of family, friends, religion, society, gender, profession, discipline and life experiences. These form the basis of the filters through which learners decide how, or even whether to engage in learning activities or creative processes. Furthermore, the perceptions surrounding attitudes and expectations of fellow learners and teachers or employers, even one's emotional state, may also positively or negatively affect the outcomes of engagement in creative activities.

The establishment of ground rules for engagement in the creativity zone, and the style of teaching, are therefore considered crucial to success. This is borne out by Goodall, cited in Jankowska (2007), who characterises the Innovation Lab (iLab) as having three main components:

- firstly, it has a 'dedicated space' that does not resemble normal working conditions with appropriate technological support
- secondly, co-operative ways of working are used to encourage engagement and contributions from everyone
- thirdly, facilitation techniques are employed to stimulate open and creative thinking.

Goodall is making the crucial point that the creative spaces themselves will only promote creativity if co-operative, democratic and facilitative approaches to the learning and creative process are adopted by both learners and teachers.

### The University of Brighton Creativity Centre

The Creativity Centre's mission is to 'enhance creativity in learning', 'enhance creativity in facilitating learning' and to 'enhance the creative process'. In order to achieve these aims the Creativity Centre has both a virtual and physical presence.

The **physical presence** comprises two technology-enhanced spaces, plus offices for Centre staff. The main space, called 'Leonardo', is approximately 10 x 13 metres in size with a comfortable theatre-style seating capacity of 60, with ideally no more than 30 to 40 for workshops. It is a non-configured space that can be left empty to allow freedom of movement, or it can easily be divided into a variety of smaller areas for group work by means of the 'write-on-able' moving panels. The environmental controls in Leonardo include temperature controls, coloured lights, a sound system, and a range of aromas to help create or change mood. The space has a five metre stereo curved back projection screen and a three-sided cell that can create total immersion for groups or individuals. It also has seven ceiling-mounted projectors controllable centrally or from individual wall sockets and the space has e-connectivity throughout.

The smaller space, named 'Galileo', can seat 40 and has 3-D projection capability and the technology to observe what is going on in Leonardo. A wide variety of technical and facilitative back-up is available in the Centre to help programming of the local environment and support learning activities. This includes, for example, two dedicated full-time members of Centre staff.

It is interesting to compare the types of spaces in this zone with those in the 'Bridges' Creativity CETL at the University of Bedfordshire. Jankowska (2007) describes their area as containing three distinct spaces:

- a creative space, which is similar in design and purpose to Brighton's large space, though with slightly less technology
- a formal space, which is similar to Galileo, and
- a social learning space designed to enhance learning in social settings.

A very important aspect of the Brighton University Creativity Centre, and a reason for its location, is that it is part of the Centre for Design Technology within the School of Engineering, which includes new design studios for 150 product design students. Although the centre is intended for cross-university use, it is potentially a great resource for these students' development as designers.

The **virtual presence** will be developed through:

- the compiling of online resources and links accessible via the website [www.brighton.ac.uk/creativity/](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/creativity/)
- the creation of a community of practice
- the deployment of new learning technologies for those using the Centre.

The **personal space** manifests itself through the other spaces and underpins all the creative activity in and around the Centre. For this reason the role of the teacher/facilitator becomes a crucial factor in promoting creative processes.

### The Creativity Centre and the role of the teacher

The success or otherwise of the Creativity Centre may hinge as much on the teaching and learning philosophies and paradigms adopted as through the technology employed. The Creativity Centre may therefore present challenges to the traditionally conceived roles and practices of the teachers and learners who use it.

If one agrees with Bauman's view of the post modern world as being in a state of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000), then the theory of learning which correlates with this world view is 'social constructivism', in which meaning and knowledge are created and re-created within each individual through social interaction. If we view creativity as

requiring a fluid state of possibilities, where the elements of creativity are essentially uncertain, then a facilitative approach to learning becomes a pre-requisite. Erica McWilliam (2007) in her paper 'Unlearning how to Teach' argues that a shift from 'sage on the stage' to 'guide on the side' has enabled the focus to shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred education. However, to address the present and future needs of learners she proposes a change for the teacher to 'meddler-in-the-middle' or even to 'co-creator'. In this view of the learning and teaching process, the learner and the teacher make a joint venture into the process of creativity, which some staff with a traditionally didactic approach may perceive as threatening. However, meaning making and creativity can only flourish in an atmosphere of creative inquiry.

The evolving Creativity Centre philosophy is constructivist in nature and sits mainly between the mentor and meddler models of teaching, recognising that learning and creativity are developed within the learner, based on their experience, and not delivered externally via endless PowerPoint presentations. It must be acknowledged, however, that the concept of 'creativity' has a range of meanings that vary from discipline to discipline. It also embraces a variety of traditional approaches to teaching within those disciplines. Part of our work will be to inquire into, engage with, challenge, and learn from that variety and then to disseminate our findings.

### **Early insights and issues**

After the first six months of operation, there are already tentative findings arising from observations and evaluations of sessions held in the Centre. A wide range of activities have taken place, including: student presentations, assessments, brainstorming sessions for industry, a writers' retreat, a product design day, several elearning days, the Elgg conference (a higher education conference devoted to the Elgg blogging technology), an environmental conference, and 'awayday' planning sessions for various university units.

The strongest finding to emerge so far has been almost unanimous agreement from facilitators and learners alike that the versatility of the space has made a positive contribution to the creative process. The main factors include the easily re-configurable space made possible by the moveable wall panels; the ability to write on those panels; the versatility of the projection system; the mood changes available through the lighting and sound systems; and the elearning facilities. The flexibility of the physical spaces alone has enabled the use of more creative approaches to learning, for example allowing a group to split into small groups, move between bases, and easily reform into the large group.

Observations have also reinforced the team's view that the quality of the teaching/facilitation is core to the success or failure of the learning or creativity that may take place. Learner-focused sessions facilitated by staff who have familiarised themselves with the possibilities offered by the Centre and have planned their session with the help of the Centre staff have generally been more successful. It is also apparent that teachers who take a more didactic approach are less inclined to visit and plan sessions with the Centre staff beforehand, and this limits the potential outcomes for learners.

Sometimes both learners and teachers seem reluctant to move around or reconfigure the space and tend simply to use it as a traditional lecture room. The reasons for this appear to be a combination of a lack of facilitative skills and a fear of leaving the comfort zone of traditional teacher control on the one hand, and learners' nervousness or lack of understanding as to how to actively engage in the learning or creative process on the other. From the learner perspective, transformational learning and creativity need a safe environment in which to be fostered, and whilst the space may be 'nice' to be in, facilitators need to actively develop a safe psychological space and adopt techniques that encourage the risks inherent in the creative process.

### **Conclusion**

Experience to date indicates that the Centre team's function is moving firmly into the area of the facilitation of teaching, learning and creativity, which is a core educational development role within the institution. The Creativity Centre is a wonderful opportunity not only to explore the possibilities of creativity in such a technologically enhanced environment and re-configurable space, but also to enquire into the learning and teaching processes which will best support learners and teachers on their creative odyssey. We welcome colleagues from across the university to join with us in this exciting venture.

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## Biographies

**Dr Paul Martin** has worked in the field of adult learning for many years. He co-authored and led a degree in fine art; he has worked for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) supporting the development of national learning and teaching projects; he is a practising artist and is currently employed as Creativity Centre Manager.

**Dr Tim Katz** attained a PhD in Solid State Physics in 1985, after a career firstly in industry, but then as a physics teacher. He is now the final year course tutor, and admissions tutor for the product design portfolio. He remains strongly focused on student empowerment and learning.

**Richard Morris** trained in Engineering Product Design, and has worked as a designer in Australia and London. On completion of a Masters degree in Business Administration, he ran his own business for seven years, and now leads the portfolio of Product Design courses and the university's Creativity Centre.

**Steve Kilgallon** attained a degree in Applied Physics and went on to study for an MSc in microwaves and opto-electronics. He became a qualified teacher of physics and mathematics. His interest in how technology could be used to enhance the teaching and learning processes led him to work in the School of Computing at Brighton University and as the Educational and Technology Facilitator within the Creativity Centre at Brighton University.

# Blended learning to increase flexibility in initial police training and development

**Dr Vivien Martin**

## Abstract

A blended learning project including elearning materials is intended to increase flexibility in a professional development course currently delivered face-to-face, in universities and in the workplace. These new materials are intended to be provided in a blend with paper-based and interpersonal elements to enable participants to learn effectively at any time and in any place. The anticipated benefits of the project are outlined, together with the process for development of materials, some of the financial considerations, staff development needs and the schedule. What has been learnt so far is discussed and a number of associated issues are identified.

## Introduction

This paper outlines a project in which elearning materials are in development to increase the flexibility of a course that provides initial police training. The new materials are intended to be provided in a blend of paper-based and interpersonal elements to enable participants to learn effectively at any time and in any place. The project is outlined, together with the process for development of materials, financial considerations and schedule. Progress is discussed and a number of associated issues are identified.

The term 'blended learning' is widely used in workplace training and development to mean learning with a range of materials and support, blended to provide flexibility and to meet individual choices and needs, rather than learning within a programme with fixed timescales and attendance patterns. The term has been used in Distance Education for some years (Osquethorpe and Graham discussed terms and definitions in 2003) and Graham (with Bonk) went on to develop a *Handbook of Blended Learning* (2005).

## Potential to use blended learning

The Student Officer Course leads to the award of a Foundation Certificate in Policing in Partnership with Communities after 43 weeks. The course has been running successfully for over a year with approximately 200 police students studying on three university campuses and in community and police placements in East and West Sussex in the south of England. This course has been established in a partnership including Sussex Police, the University of Brighton (as the lead university), the University of Chichester and the University of Sussex. The police students are employees of Sussex Police and spend about half of their initial training period of 43 weeks studying on university campuses, and the other half in police placements, carrying out patrol duties under the supervision of a tutor constable. They also spend two weeks in a community placement, working in a community organisation that provides services that often bring them into contact with the police but with which each individual student has had little or no previous experience. This course was developed to replace the national police training scheme that had been in place for a very long time. Although the National Occupational Standards for policing are built into the course and are essential for workplace assessment, the partnership with universities has enabled police officers to gain credit on a pathway to a degree for the first time.

The training and development of police officers has traditionally been a mixture of didactic training in national centres and supervised experiential learning in the workplace. Learning in the workplace is usually fragmented, including some structured training alongside experiential learning that is inevitably shaped by the opportunities offered in the working context. Billett (2002) showed how individuals in different workplaces follow very different learning pathways, although working towards similar outcomes. These pathways may be partly shaped by individual choice, but are substantially shaped by the opportunities which occur within the workplace. Using Jarvis's classification (2002) we might differentiate between personal development, which can be self-managed and draw on informal and formal learning opportunities, and planned development, which is a formal strategic investment within organisations.

Individuals have less personal choice in formal training and development, as participation is usually a compulsory part of workforce development. This partnership course that has replaced the traditional training provision includes both campus-based learning and supervised learning in the workplace, but these are drawn together through an emphasis on reflective learning. Participants write regular reflective accounts, discussing the application of theory in practice and reflecting on their learning from practical experience. Therefore, although the course is delivered to cohorts of student officers, there is a strong sense of each individual taking increasing control over the management of their own learning.

It is anticipated that blended learning could be used to enable participants to work more independently through some parts of the course, studying where they like, at their own pace and setting their own timescales, but still receiving the support of a tutor when requested. It is not proposed initially that any participant will take the entire course entirely by elearning, but that a blended learning option could be offered to enable greater flexibility. Learners will be able to work with a personal tutor to complete parts of the course whenever and wherever they choose and to be assessed when they are ready. This will mean that no-one will have to wait until there is an opportunity to learn on the course. It will be possible for students already on the course to speed up or slow down their learning, providing flexibility for those whose studies are interrupted by illness, etc. and also for those whose prior learning enables them to take a faster learning pathway. Instead of joining another cohort in the course to study a particular block or module, as at present, they will be able to study independently and join or rejoin a cohort when convenient. It will also enable those who can apply for advanced standing because of their prior learning to fill in any gaps in their learning and to progress to the status of Independent Patrol more quickly.

The course has been validated to have a second level (leading to a Foundation Degree) and a third level top-up which would complete an Honours Degree.

### **Potential benefits**

There are a number of other ways in which the use of blended learning is expected to bring particular benefits:

#### **1 To provide experienced officers with access to Level 2 and beyond**

Officers who already hold Independent Patrol status and have gained experience in their policing role can gain access to Level 2 (the Foundation Degree course) by producing evidence that their learning is equivalent to those who have completed Level 1. This new course contains several areas of learning that were not included in the previous initial training courses. Distance learning materials could enable these officers to fill in the gaps and complete a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that they have met the outcomes of Level 1. The blended learning materials would include support for those preparing their AP(E)L claim, facilitating the process and encouraging wider participation.

The introduction of this new type of initial training course may lead those who were training in the previous style to feel disadvantaged. Elearning opportunities can enable anyone in the workforce to study alongside their normal work without having to be released to attend a particular venue at a particular time. Those who want to complete a full undergraduate degree could gain credit for Level 1 through AP(E)L, complete Level 2 using a substantial amount of distance learning and have only one more level to complete to gain a full degree.

All public services are moving towards developing the body of professional staff to degree level and many of the difficulties raised by bringing in recruits with higher levels of qualifications can be overcome if the existing workforce can be offered opportunities to gain similar qualifications through processes that recognise the extent of their learning from experience.

#### **2 To enable wider use of the course for Continuing Professional Development**

The Certificate course will provide a resource for all Sussex Police staff to attend sessions for their own updating, but it will not always be convenient to attend at a particular place and time. Blended learning materials will enable anyone to learn at any time in any setting. The materials could be provided in electronic form accessible on CD-ROM, on the police intranet or on the University of Brighton intranet. It may be appropriate to provide CD-ROMs or police intranet access for completely free and independent use throughout the force by anyone who does not seek any formal credit for their learning. Those who seek accreditation could register for modules or whole levels and would then have access to the university intranet and be provided with a personal tutor, a learning plan, further learning resources and an assessment plan.

### **3 To provide wider opportunities to respond to diversity in the workforce**

Use of blended learning materials can enable those who would normally be unable to attend the course to take advantage of opportunities to learn. Blended learning is attractive to people whose time is very limited, often because of commitments as a carer, leading them to avoid any commitment other than the essential working hours. Distance learning can enable people to study at home and at any time. Similarly, people who are incapacitated for a long period, perhaps recovering from injury, can study and progress even if they are not fully fit to return to work.

### **4 Access for the wider police and justice community**

Provision of these materials in electronic form brings the potential to create different types of blend with the addition of paper-based materials and personal tuition. There is also the potential to create a different type of blend by amending elements of the materials in ways that make them useful for a much wider community. This might include the wider police 'family', for example, uniformed officers with limited powers in community posts or non-uniformed civilian staff. It might also include a much wider community such as those working in prisons, probation services and youth justice.

Developments within the existing course have included simulated court events in which the police students prepare case files (based on real cases in which they have had involvement) and these files are used by law students to prepare them to take roles as prosecuting and defence lawyers, with the police students giving evidence as witnesses. Real magistrates and court officials run the simulated courts in a realistic way, giving all the students experience in the roles they will take in their professional careers. The involvement of this wider justice community in the current course implies that there would be scope to extend the use of blended learning materials to enhance inter-professional working.

### **5 Production of specific training short courses**

There would also be opportunities to create packages of distance learning materials for particular groups of staff to support particular initiatives or specific training and development needs. For example, one of the modules is focused on issues that are often addressed in diversity training, and it may be appropriate to create a blend specifically to provide support on this issue. In some cases it might be useful to produce paper-based learning guides to provide guidance to learners and to map out specific learning routes and assessment requirements.

The potential of the course to support culture change within policing will be enhanced if these new elements of the course are made more widely available to experienced staff.

### **Development of elearning materials**

The development of elearning materials is the largest and most essential part of the project and will enable production of a number of different 'blends' to provide the range of flexibility anticipated. The content for the elearning materials will be drawn directly from the materials developed by the course team for face-to-face delivery. Although the course team will be involved in informing and shaping the distance learning materials, they will not have time to carry out the development. A project manager has been appointed by Brighton Business School to lead the design, planning and development of the materials. The Business School Course Leader is overall leader of this project. The school is also contributing some technical and academic staff time to assist with the development of the materials, in recognition that this project would provide the opportunity for the school's staff to learn more about distance and blended learning. The Business School will also provide the platform for electronic materials and staff development for the course team in using the materials and supporting learners in their use.

### **Content of the e-materials**

The primary purpose of the materials is to provide flexibility in learning of Level 1 modules, particularly those that would not normally be covered through completion of the National Occupational Standards, which are predominantly taught and assessed in the workplace. Areas of focus are therefore:

#### **Module C1: Learning to learn and creating a basis for career long learning**

setting up an individual learning plan; learning from reflection on experience; oral, aural and written communications; structured and coherent argument; planning, reviewing, revising and continuing learning.

**Module C2: Understanding and engaging with the community and social diversity**

underlying concepts and principles of prejudice and discrimination and interpretation and application in the context of policing; researching and analysing the diverse nature of local communities; problem solving within the context of police and community; appropriate use of communication with individuals, agencies and communities.

**Module C7: Positioning oneself in the role of police officer in the police service**

the ability to explain professional standards and ethical conduct governing policing and apply this to personal decision making and behaviour; describe and contribute to continuous improvement of performance in policing in individual and organisational terms; describe how policing changes to reflect changes in the needs of society; concepts of teamworking and the ability to interpret, evaluate and apply them in context of policing.

**Module C8: Making decisions and professional judgements**

problem solving and decision making applied in the context of policing; use of quantitative and qualitative data to develop argument; evidence-based judgements; problem solving; communications of decisions and judgements; structured and coherent argument.

In addition, materials will be developed to support Level 2 modules and will have the following areas of focus:

**Module D1: Managing personal learning and career long development**

plan, manage and review personal learning and development in the context of policing; collect and analyse feedback using 360 degree approach and apply to continuing professional development.

**Module D2: Engaging with communities and developing understanding of social diversity**

analyse and interpret concepts and principles relating to diversity in communities, prejudice and discrimination and apply in context of policing; choose, justify and use appropriate communication with individuals, agencies and communities; act in a liaison role.

**Module D3: Working with partners for a peaceful society**

contribute to partnership initiatives in the context of policing; contribute to maintaining a peaceful society through improvement of interpersonal and communication skills with groups and agencies.

**Module D4: Coaching and mentoring**

coach in at least one area of expertise; mentor student officers.

**Module D5: Integrative project**

improvement in responsive and appropriate services to diverse communities; use of applied research to contribute to improvement and write up report.

**Costing estimates**

The purpose of the two CD-ROMs (which may now be DVDs) or intranet is to provide some distance learning materials in a simple form for those wishing to study at their own pace and in their own time. The materials will also be used to provide continuing professional development for the police and will encourage users to follow up their own development with more formal learning and accreditation through the Student Officer Course. On registration with the University of Brighton the material can be accessed through the university intranet, along with access to many other learning resources. This material would also be available to anyone following the course in the usual blocks and workshops and would enable part-time study that would be scheduled in the individual learning plan. It would also support revision and anyone needing to catch up or move ahead more quickly.

The e-materials will cover a number of modules, with both content and interactivity, and including some audio and video materials. As the aim is to develop the user professionally, the continuing professional development element will 'lead' each level of the materials and carry references to other materials and learning pathways that are available within the Student Officer Course.

**Budget and cost considerations**

As in most education budgets, the most substantial costs lie in staffing. Module authoring carries the highest costs, followed by scripting and production of trigger audio and other presentation materials, and project management. A budget has been allocated for project template design and production of a user portfolio, alongside asset acquisition, as we anticipate buying some stills for slide presentation, artwork and photos and possibly some content materials. In addition there is an allowance for travel.

The collaborative nature of the project has reduced the costs significantly, as much of the video filming and audio recording can be done within police and university resources and most of the participants will take part on a voluntary basis.

### Progress and issues encountered

The first module has been completed and the second is scripted. Production of the first module took much longer than anticipated, as we found it necessary to consult much more widely than originally intended. It consequently took much longer to agree a core script than had been planned. Although the delay was worrying at first, it now appears that savings will be made in the planned times for further modules because those involved are now more familiar with the processes and have more confidence in the product.

We learned that it is unwise to share the early stages of this type of project with people who do not understand the iterative process and are expecting to see a high quality product. In its early stages the script looked tentative and very weak in some areas, but our attempt to engage people in enriching it tended to invite criticism rather than collaboration.

It has proven much more difficult than had been anticipated to translate materials used face-to-face in the classroom into a form that provides good quality pedagogy in an elearning form. In many cases alternative materials have been sourced or developed. In addition, existing elearning materials have been discovered that have been added to the resources available.

Effective project management is essential. A project that links the interests of police, universities and community groups is a sensitive matter, and it is essential to devote time to accommodating the concerns of all involved if progress is not to be blocked. One of the important lessons learned has been to invite and establish fully representative consultative groups. Another has been to remember that a project plan is a working document and that the whole purpose is to provide a way of managing revisions and adjustments – delays are not in themselves something to worry about as long as we can maintain a balance between time, costs and the quality of the products.

This learning will inform the continuing production activities and will help us to shape the next phase of the project, which must address the development of staff and systems to ensure that the benefits offered by these additional materials can be realised.

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### Biography

**Dr Viv Martin's** career includes adult learning, management and professional development. From Adult Education Principal she moved into employee and management development and joined Brighton Polytechnic's Centre for Management Development in 1990. She became Director of Management Education in the SE NHS Region and later joined the OU, lecturing in management and health services. Later came a national role in the NHS Leadership Centre, a senior management role at Chichester University and she re-joined Brighton Business School to develop the partnership with Sussex Police and to lead the professional doctorate in the Business School.

# Supervising postgraduates: internationally, and at a distance

**Professor Gina Wisker**

**Abstract**

International postgraduate students represent a growth area for UK and Australasian universities, and locally such an increase would be in line with the University of Brighton’s corporate plan. Ten years research with, and support for, international postgraduates studying both locally and at a distance suggests the usefulness of considering culturally inflected preconceptions, the management of expectations, and a range of effective learning and teaching practices which can help build communities of practice and sustainable research capacity.

**Introduction**

Nationally and internationally there is an increase in the number of postgraduate students studying at a distance. Their reasons for doing so include: issues of access, location, and balancing work and study. This paper is based on experience of working at a distance and locally, with part-time international postgraduate students and on research carried out into the learning of international and distance postgraduates. In the light of the University of Brighton’s new 2008 corporate plan and increased focus on both international and postgraduate students, the paper encourages colleagues to ponder the kinds of issues which these diverse students present and to consider ways of supporting their learning so that they can become autonomous, conceptually sophisticated researchers who can help build research capacity building in their own contexts.

The international PhD group with whom I have been involved since 1998 present a range of issues which could arise with other international postgraduates, and my experience of both working with them and of carrying out action research for ten years, alongside the research development programme, offers data and strategies for good practice which could be useful to other colleagues.

We might consider specific problems/issues and what strategies have worked or could work to enhance interaction, and student research as a form of learning.

**Cultural difference**

There is a range of issues that may affect postgraduates. These can include adjusting to postgraduate level learning, with the transition to a major project more complex than undergraduate or masters work; tensions between discipline-based and interdisciplinary expectations; the different demands of studying full or part-time; whether their research is orientated towards the workplace or professional practice. In addition, international students sometimes present issues in terms of tertiary literacy, communication and interaction differences and protocols, cultural and cross-cultural differences in expectations and preconceptions and the previously rewarded methods and strategies for learning. They may also present issues in terms of motivation, the design and intended outcomes of the project. For all students, but perhaps more particularly for those from international and culturally diverse origins, issues of power relations, cultural confusions, misinterpretations, and potential clashes in the supervisory context can emerge between the student and supervisor, all augmented by issues such as gender, class, religion and age. This may sound like a minefield, but it is better to consider these issues in advance as potentially problematic, both so that good practice strategies and ground rules can be brought into the relationship early on, and also as sources for enrichment culturally, intellectually, professionally and personally. Cultural diversity and distance affect our work with international postgraduate students, whether they are culturally diverse indigenous students, or international students studying here or abroad.

I have mainly been involved with the distance supervision of culturally diverse students in the context of Anglia Ruskin’s Israeli PhD students who, as part-time mid-career professionals, represent the full ethnic variety of modern

day Israel, with important differences in that they include more Arab students and women than are usually present in the postgraduate population. A five stage research development programme conducted largely overseas, a postdoctoral symposium and communities of practice, and some web presence have enabled improvements in provision for these and other distance students.

Concerns with culturally diverse students include language, and possibly cultural assimilation. The international research students who have been the subject of several studies (Wisker et al. 1998, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2007) are not expected to become culturally integrated into life as students in the UK. Provision has been made for them to have support with translating and presenting their theses in English, and a translator is available to enable the external examiner to discuss the thesis in the viva. Discussing how international postgraduate students relate successfully to the demands of research in the UK is fraught with concerns about potential cultural discrimination, the authority and power involved in supervisory discussions, and the discourses of research methods which could involve assumptions of cultural superiority, assumptions which we wanted to avoid. Problems in relation to this particular, very well established cohort of PhD students/teachers/managers with whom we were working, and with similar individuals or cohorts could be:

- misunderstandings over methodology – arising from different cultural practices in research, or from the level at which the students are used to working
- students' own learning paradigms. Some could be used to accumulative learning approaches and transmission modes of teaching and learning. This could lead to a tendency to regurgitate rather than question authorities
- proposals which have problems of lack of complexity, depth or scope, or which seem inadequately developed
- students are often key figures in their own contexts (among these students was a dean of students, a local education minister, and a school head), perhaps working alongside younger more qualified colleagues in their institutions, and in the student group.

Alongside the research and training programme there developed a mutual cultural induction, especially useful when students are working in the host country, so that they get a sense of the culture in which they are studying, its nuances and contradictions. But the process should not be one way. It is essential for us as supervisors and tutors/teachers to understand as much as we can of the cultural expectations and behaviours of the contexts from which our students come. This enables us to overcome potentially crass and destructive cultural assumptions, and to engender cultural enrichment.

The focus of my research and development activity has been on encouraging metalearning (Flavell 1979), fostering students' reflective awareness of research as learning through their collaboration in action research and enabling reflection on learning strategies, development, and developing their ownership of the process. This takes place alongside a research development programme in five stages:

- development of questions, problematising given ideas and concepts, developing conceptual frameworks
- methodology and methods choices and development proposal
- actioning the research post proposal
- maintaining momentum-data analysis, writing strategies
- completion: conceptual conclusions, writing up, exam and viva preparation

The workshops, group and individual sessions focus on problems and developing successful strategies.

We developed a variety of activities and materials to suit different kinds of learner:

- variety of materials for those who read carefully over time
- workshop activities for action and practice
- group support , exploration, explanation, activities
- one-to-one activities and interactions with supervisor and other students
- activities which support varied learning styles-activist, reflector, theorist, pragmatist
- importance of developing and trying out discourse of subject, and of 'doctorateness'
- building peer support through teamwork and groups, email lists

### **Distance supervision with culturally diverse students**

Contact between supervisor and student is crucial in distance supervision, but it is not merely a matter of getting the communication medium or the technology right. Supervision of distance students requires cultural awareness on both parts. Finding out about, respecting and working with each other's culturally inflected research and learning behaviours is very important. There could be a myriad of differences and potential difficulties in terms of communication rituals and methods which need to be dealt with early in setting agendas and defining ground rules for distance supervision sessions. Getting into good habits about polite social and supervisory communications help the research and supervisory relationship to develop more smoothly. Similarly, it is important to match the technology, so that both student and supervisor can read, comment, question and return work with accuracy and ease.

Ideally, there should be consistent contacts and intensive research supervision periods either in the university or the home country. My own PhD was conducted part-time and at a distance (only 120 miles but it often felt further!) and I valued those rather long sessions discussing the chapter I had sent in advance. Students closer to home can pop in with a query, but can also be too reliant on informal contact rather than systematic discussion of work. Formal contact needs to be established and maintained. Commitment is necessary on both sides, aided by both ground rules and learning contracts.

Distance research students need guidance and educational development-based induction into the scope of projects, the demands, potential problems, and strategies for dealing with them. They also need induction into agreed methods of distance communication and supervision. This can be provided in several ways:

- The student can be asked to read papers or specific books, and to consider specific questions prior to defining their area and title
- They could attend a systematic and well organised research programme held in their own country if there is a cohort of students or funds permit, and/or during an extended period in the university when potential students from different parts of the world come together
- It is important to ensure library and other information sources are readily available in their own country
- The student must be committed to an appropriately defined and agreed frequency of contact with their university based research supervisor(s) and, additionally, they need a home based supervisor who can address daily needs and difficulties (preferably someone with subject expertise but also pastoral responsibilities and abilities).
- Like home based students, they need to go very systematically through the processes of definition of title; methodology and methods; theory and the literature; outline of the project and time scale; awareness of stages of the project; commitment of time, space and resources; setting up a scheme of work and establishing contact with research support groups. This can be done through a home based supervisor, or through university based advisers and supervisors.
- The student needs to be in contact with a research culture. While we can certainly provide a version at a distance over time, condensed and organised when they are in the university, students studying abroad need to develop local support groups to help progress (see: Gibbs G, Wisker G and Bochner D 1995).
- Distance students need a structure of reports, meetings, progress checks and responses to written work which is firmly in place. With distance, this cannot be casually left to chance and re-scheduling.

For those of us working with international students at a distance, it could be ideal to work with them for some time in the university, either as individuals or as a cohort, so that face-to-face relationships can clarify explanations and interactions, building modes of communication with the supervisory team. Valuable on-site contacts can be marshalled to help with queries and needs at different stages in their research work. The supervisory team could visit and become more aware of the cultural context in which students are working and so consider, for example: library availability, supportive contexts and practices, blockages, communication problems and cultural differences.

### **Online tutoring and distance provision**

Many courses, especially at postgraduate level, are now constructed with integrated online tutoring and support, although postgraduate cohort support is still unusual. Online tutoring or support varies in kind and amount depending on:

- the discipline
- students' needs

- appropriateness to the learning outcomes
- availability of an appropriate technology skills base of staff and students

Working with students online and at a distance, whether in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or by audio, video and email contact, involves different kinds of organisation, timing, pacing, selecting elements of the work to be engaged with and assessed and varied interactions – to replace the face-to-face.

We also need replication of appropriate support and response communications so that students are not just faced with the course content in paper or e-version and expected to get on with it. There can be online or other electronic forms of communication to support them through their studies, such as communities using Web 2 technologies such as Elgg (community@brighton is a good example of this) or Moodle.

Our students are probably going to be far in advance of us in their use of online discussion and interaction because of their experience of contacting friends using msn messaging and other media. It is useful to build on this experience, involving those less used to online communication by gradually explaining and trialling it with them and asking for peer support. We need to ensure that there are slightly more formal ground rules in the online work context, so that social learning takes place, personal space is respected, and work gets done.

Online tutoring can reach students who normally might be unable to access learning because of other commitments, remote living or disabilities, but to be successful it does require certain learning behaviours, protocols, ground rules, boundaries and social interactions. The website (now archived) of the Online Tutoring Skills OTIS project <http://otis.scotcit.ac.uk/> contains useful advice on the importance in e-tutoring of the different nature of interaction between student and tutor, the use of a different kind of text, the absence of cultural markers (physical appearance, speech and voice, ethnicity, race) and the need to encourage reflection and a deep approach to learning.

In much online learning, contact with the tutor or supervisor will often be augmented by email, skype, video, webcam and phone in different instances. It is possible for supervisor and research student, and for research students in a group, to be in contact over long distances, either during specifically arranged sessions by video-conference, or together through a chat-room or a discussion list. Web-CT, Blackboard and Moodle online course management systems, among others, provide opportunities for this, as do chat rooms which staff can set up for specific courses, and chat groups which students set up themselves. Instant messaging systems enable you to speak with your student or encourage them to seek support by being in touch with others in their working group synchronously, or asynchronously by email. These relatively hi-tech options can be used by students wishing to maintain the necessary level of support from peers as well as supervisors.

In terms of social networking space, it is possible to be in touch with students or encourage them to seek support from each other using social software such as Facebook or Myspace. Social networking interactions offer the opportunity to make friendly, supportive overtures to students, send basic information, reminders, links, provide a contact for questions, and give them a space in which to contact you which feels less intrusive and more familiar perhaps than via the formal university email. However, this might be more intrusive as Facebook and Myspace in themselves are really the students' home spaces, so interactions need agreeing and setting up to suit both supervisor and student.

Research supervision aided by email and video-conferencing can support individual distance students by involving them in groups for multi-media video-conferencing or skype conference chats, with or without webcam. Video-conferencing links and skype enable students in different locations to offer each other peer support and to share their work or research in progress. Information and ideas can be exchanged, and you can either monitor the discussion or leave it to operate on its own depending on intention and outcome. Peer comments and support can be a very valuable resource, especially to the more remote or isolated international distance student, reducing isolation and making one-to-one work with each student a richer experience. International students can support each other and exchange ideas, building ongoing communities while you observe and enter discussions if asked. This builds independence and can enable a culturally diverse breadth of knowledge and approaches. Students can recommend reading materials to each other, and resources and links in a number of countries, while establishing valuable contacts that could be most useful in the years after they have finished their studies or completed their research.

### Notes of caution

Potential problems with hasty flame emails, and ignorance of different time zones and key moments in the week or year need spotting and managing. It is also important to set some ground rules about email exchanges, such as when you can answer emails, and what kinds of advice, support and feedback may be impossible, given security consideration, and the limits on your time. Possible ways of working include:

- **Virtual office hours** – your indicative times for dealing with emails
- **Short responses** – exchanges, short emails with bullet point lists of ideas and suggestions and comments, in answer to short questions
- **Longer responses** – these involve commenting on the work itself, either work in progress or final documents, using ‘track changes’ to substitute, cut, alter, and enhance, re-phrase, see what further work has been added and altered, and ‘comment’ – to make notes, suggestions, provide hints, tips and links to further reading. With the latter tool, your comments can be interlaced, and students need to decide what alterations to make to the work, but with ‘track changes’ itself your words can be substituted for the student’s work, and the temptation is to merely accept your changes. This is sometimes acceptable, but only for short re-phrasings, otherwise it looks as though your work is largely a writing or an editing role. It is probably better for the student’s own learning to re-phrase according to your suggestions rather than merely accept everything.

It is possible to work in detail on a particular paragraph, section or page in ‘track changes’, changing it minutely, and to then indicate to the student, using ‘comments’, that they should apply the level of this response and changes further on through the rest of the work.

Selective feedback and hierarchies of feedback can enable students to focus on particular issues. Models of writing are very useful if students need to write at a different level and in a different way. You can offer them examples of the successful work of others, or published material in a similar format to the work required, and ask them to process at the level of expression and structure, then see how this can inform their own writing development.

Cultural difference as well as distance may affect tone and misunderstandings so it is important to develop agreed guidelines of interaction and behaviour through these exchanges.

### Conclusion: some suggestions for coping with cultural difference and student research needs at a distance

- Set up compulsory research development and support programmes involving induction into: the culture and learning paradigms, inception and development of research questions, development of methods, and training in their use. If students come from a learning culture of accumulation learning and deference to authority, this and specific supervisory focus on research-as-learning strategies should help shift paradigms and learning behaviours. In some cases development programmes could be provided locally if students cannot travel to them.
- Set up on-site and distance individual supervisory meetings which enable gradual engagement with the underlying questions and issues of the thesis/dissertation/project and a natural progression from this into appropriate research methods and plans.
- Avoid the cultural imperialism of assuming knowledge from one culture is absolute. Enter into debate and open minded discussion and exploration.
- Set up student support groups/encourage them to be set up in the student’s own country/home location.
- Offer a variety of developmental ways to enable supportive distance contact: chat rooms, email discussions, skype, VLE, email tutoring, video-conferencing, distance learning materials.
- Put distance learning students in contact with other academics in the broad international academic community.

Many of these ideas are good practice *per se*, others are particularly useful when working with international postgraduates in their own context, at a distance, or with other distance students. With developmental programmes, institutionally supportive practices, and sensitive supervisory arrangements in place, distance research students are more likely to feel able to get on with their research, and be successful in it.

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## Biography

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# UK and US criminology students communicate online: enhancing current learning and teaching practices

Dr Paula Wilcox, Dr Helen Jones, Maggie Sumner and Dr Eileen Berrington

## Abstract

Discussion of an international initiative involving universities in the UK and the USA focuses attention on how the use of online technologies can evolve alongside current learning and teaching practices in higher education, thus enhancing student communication. The aims of the initiative were fourfold: to change modes of student communication (individual and group), to develop students' potential to think across cultural and national borders, to extend their communication across such borders, and to develop students' ICT mediated interactional skills. The paper concludes that, although the students involved in this project study criminology and criminal justice, its structure and principles are transferrable to other disciplines.

## Introduction

As globalising forces gain momentum, the social processes impacting on our students' lives are as likely to come from outside national boundaries as from within them. The internet thus becomes a potentially powerful medium of communication, enabling students to traverse geographical and cultural boundaries. As Weller argues, the 'net changes the way people communicate and who they communicate with' (2002,34). Today's graduates are expected to be computer literate, and meeting the demands of computer literacy within the context of higher education requires that educators exercise more than their 'sage on the stage' skills. Important reports in the UK encourage the use of new technology to enhance student learning (Dearing 1997; CVCP and HEFCE 2000; HEFCE 2005), and the role of online learning is likely to be central to this (Koschmann 1996; Web-based Education Commission 2000; Schmidt and Werner 2007).

Developing students' social support, their social abilities, and their confidence in communicating with each other, has always been central to learning and teaching (Wilcox et al. 2005; Winn et al. 2007). New technology can be harnessed to add new forms and ways of communicating and networking to traditional tried and tested learning and teaching methods. Russell's (1999) now famous 'The No Significant Difference Phenomenon' compared different modes of delivery: for example, online versus classroom. His conclusion was that the mode of delivery made no difference to student performance; it was the content and what we did with the medium that was important. Mayes more recently states that: 'we have generally come to accept that delivery of 'content' is only part – and perhaps a minor part – of the important role learning technology can play in supporting learners (2007,1). For these reasons, thinking creatively about how our students can engage with social changes and with new ways of communicating now seems imperative.

Bach, Haynes and Lewis Smith (2007,33) argue that online learning 'offers exciting new ways for students to interact and share learning'. We agree, but in this paper we do not argue for online learning merely for its own sake, nor do we argue simply that new technologies offer new possibilities (although they do). Our central argument is that the promise of online technologies and online learning opportunities lies in their evolution alongside current modes of learning and teaching in higher education. The online e-communication project described in this paper is one potentially fruitful route forward in this process of adding to and enhancing existing learning and teaching methods. McConnell (2006,9) suggests there are 'two key ideas, that of learning in groups and communities, and communicating in networked environments, [that] come together in the notion of networked collaborative elearning'. These ideas were drawn on in the development of an initiative involving criminology tutors who collaborated across two continents, the UK and the USA, and seven universities.

### The international e-communication exchange (IEE)

The International E-Communication Exchange (IEE<sup>1</sup>) is a project which started to change the ways in which our students were able to communicate with other students (Jones et al. 2006). The students who engaged in this project study a range of different modules in criminology and/or criminal justice studies. However, we argue that it is possible to transfer the basic structure and principles of the project to other disciplines.

The universities eventually involved in the IEE were chosen to cover a broad spectrum of geographical locations, different cultural mixes in terms of student populations, different criminal justice jurisdictions, and widely differing cultural ideas and values:

- University of Brighton
- Manchester Metropolitan University (hosts the VLE)
- University of Westminster
- University of West Florida
- University of North Carolina Wilmington
- California State University Fresno

Why did we decide to develop an international project collaborating with other universities? We live in a shrinking world where knowledge is no longer confined within geographical boundaries. Linking up with universities in another country provides an opportunity for students to experience and engage with culturally diverse ideas and practices. The IEE provides students with a range of potential benefits:

- a 'no-cost' alternative to traditional international exchange programmes
- a demanding yet rewarding experience for students
- the opportunity for collaboration across different institutions in different countries.

Although not always easy, there is pedagogic value in developing and embedding the use of communication and information technology as routine. In our view the design of the IEE offers a transferable model for other associated disciplines that hold the pedagogic desire to stimulate critical awareness, analytical thought and reflective practice.

### How does it work?

Using a tailor-made Web CT-based virtual learning environment which was carefully designed and developed to provide space for discussion and a repository of supporting materials, self-tests and other relevant material including Frequently Asked Questions, the IEE offered students structured asynchronous discussion groups over a specified time period. Rovai (2006,9) suggests that '[b]reaking large numbers of students into small groups (typically under 10 learners each), providing specific tasks, and setting timelines support the concepts of situated learning and communities of practice'. Students were allocated to small discussion groups of about 10 students to discuss topics/questions over three two-week blocks (six weeks in all). In addition, there was an induction week to enable students to familiarise themselves with the VLE site and introduce themselves to other members of their group.

Students at each university follow their own distinct criminology/criminal justice modules, so at Brighton, for example, the module in which the IEE is embedded is SS222 'Trans-cultural Issues in Crime and Justice'. This is perhaps particularly apt for this project, as SS222 is 'a module to complement and broaden the Criminology and Criminal Justice programme through the consideration of a range of international and trans-cultural issues, raising critical questions about the notions of 'crime' and 'justice' in other societies, cultures, times and places' (Module Handbook 2007). What all students have in common, however, is that they will all engage with the e-communication project over a particular time period in semester two.

The timing of the project can be flexible. In this case the IEE runs for seven weeks (the first week being the induction week). Every two weeks there is a different discussion topic, and students are advised to make at least two postings on each topic. The discussion groups run alongside the universities' traditional lecture/seminar format. This is sometimes called blended elearning as the elearning is integrated or blended in with traditional modes of learning and teaching.

It is important that discussion topics should be relevant to the diverse modules being taken by the students. For example, the first topic (which proved the most popular with students) considered relationships between gun controls and crime rates. The immediate relevance of the discussion topics encouraged student engagement and proved to be an innovative medium to give students real life experience in articulating personal and cultural 'taken-for-granted' understandings, at the same time building their confidence in expressing views and developing their technical competence in using the discussion boards.

### Box 1 Sample topic: gun control

#### Does strict gun control mean less crime?

In approaching this topic students might like to think about some of the following questions:

- what are the patterns and trends in gun related crime in your own jurisdiction?
- is there a relationship between firearms possession and crime rates which holds true internationally (Switzerland might provide an interesting example here)?
- what about the argument that citizens have a right to bear arms for legitimate purposes such as self-defence?
- what implications does stricter gun control have in relation to the arming of police officers – does an armed police force help to reduce crime?

Over the two-week discussion period each student was required to post a minimum of two responses per week, the recommended word length for each response being 300 words. We wished to encourage students to compose concise, well-researched and informative writing responding to particular points made by other students, rather than long, unwieldy 'stand alone' essays. An important section of the site showcased messages from the previous year's groups, selected as good examples of responsive team working, cultural awareness, clear communication and critical reflection skills. Although these messages were being read outside their threaded discussion, the quality was evident and they functioned well as examples of what was expected of students. The messages included in the showcase provided students with a clearer idea of the kind of responses we were seeking:

- responsive and referenced
- sharing resources
- concise but critical
- culturally aware
- moving the discussion forwards
- challenging but considerate, non-judgmental and inclusive

### Box 2 Sample 'showcase' posting on media coverage of crime

In reply to your message, I also agree with Reiner's quote that the mass media does tend to focus their attention on the victims of crime. However this does not reflect an accurate picture of crime. As Jewkes (2004) 'Media and Crime' study reports, 65 per cent of crime coverage by the media involves interpersonal violence, however police statistics indicate that only six per cent of recorded crimes involve incidents of interpersonal violence. Furthermore, analysing the UK Home Office statistics on crime indicates that people can be victims of a vast majority of crimes, which were rarely reported on by the media. Let me give you some examples.

The media infrequently covers business and retail crime. According to the Home Office 'retail crime costs every household in the UK an extra £ 90 each year on their shopping bills and 75 per cent of retailers and 50 per cent of manufacturers experienced at least one crime in the previous year, according to the Commercial Victimization Survey (2002)'. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/business-retail-crime/>

Domestic violence claims the 'lives of two women each week and 30 men per year and is the largest cause of morbidity worldwide in women aged 19-44, greater than war, cancer or motor vehicle accidents', however the media often ignores this issue. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/domestic-violence/>

However all these victims of crime are hardly mentioned in the news and therefore it is obvious that the mass media does not reflect the true extent of victimisation. Is this different in the USA? Does the media report on all types of crime?

A major benefit to students as elearners is that they have considerable freedom of choice over where to do their elearning – in the open computer labs on campus, in library pool rooms – or at home in their slippers! They have freedom of choice over the pace at which they work and the time when they participate – there were no 9 am starts and night owls can participate late at night, others during the day.

In 2006 almost 400 students from seven universities in the UK and the US came together with:

- similar degree programmes, with a core focus on the criminal justice system, its organisational components and processes, and its legal and public policy contexts, and
- experience of developing elearning and supporting students through the process.

This e-communication discussion project enables students to interpret and understand contemporary policy and popular concerns around crime with reference to an international dimension as well as from their own national perspective. The disciplinary relevance of the discussion topics encourages student engagement and proves to be an innovative medium to give students real life experience in articulating their understanding and thereby building their confidence.

### **What were the outcomes and challenges?**

In feedback from our students via end of module questionnaires and broader focus group research we found that (perhaps paradoxically) it was the lesser 'outcome focused' experiences that they most valued (Jones 2005). While the final mark gained was important to them, participation was seen as having additional positive and valuable outcomes:

- *'this was the most difficult and also the most rewarding experience of my university career'*
- *'a great opportunity to broaden my horizons'*
- *'I thought it would be easy – it wasn't – but I loved it'*
- *'it made me question my own views on things'*
- *'about eight times as difficult as an essay but I'm also eight times as confident'*

The assessment postings and critical reflections were seen as instruments that set students in competition with each other and which judged them through a hierarchy of success. This discouraged some students from expressing views they thought might deviate from those expressed by their educators. This entailed a risk of strategic, surface level learning rather than critical and thoughtful engagement. Our aim, therefore, was to engage students in critical discourse that is valuable in itself as well as being preparation for their future careers. We wanted to create learning opportunities that fostered our students' desire to engage with others towards critical understanding and to develop critical self-reflection, encouraging students to examine and deconstruct their own beliefs, assumptions and values within a context in which they saw themselves not only as members of their own communities, but also bound to others in a global context (Nussbaum 1997; Weller 2002).

The Internet offers the possibility of international collaboration and represents an innovation with significant potential to support learning and teaching within disciplines that hold the pedagogic desire to stimulate critical awareness, analytical thought and reflective practice. Based on the theory of constructivism (Salmon 2005), the international collaboration discussed in this paper assigns an active role to students, providing 'room for the individual to experiment in order to create meaningful knowledge (Veen and Vrakking 2006, 104).

The central aim of the IEE was to develop students' ability and confidence in communication. The group work aspect of this project aimed to help less confident students to engage with other group members in a reflective manner, working at their own pace. It also aimed to enhance and develop students' independent learning skills and thus contribute to employability. Students were expected to carry out a range of epistemic tasks (Ohlsson 1995; Salmon 1998), including: describing, explaining, defining, responding, challenging and evaluating. Salmon (2005,5) has cautioned that 'educators miss opportunities for working comfortably and effectively online because they assume that online co-operation and collaboration needs to follow similar patterns to classroom interaction'. Although working online involves different organisation, it is worth exploring whether the best aspects of classroom group working can be achieved within online and collaborative learning platforms.

Students who are new to online learning will be as anxious in using the technology as traditional 'freshers' entering their first classroom. As educators, we know that in a traditional classroom setting some students struggle with group work that requires collaborative learning. Good teachers aim to develop a range of group work skills in traditional 'freshers', including: sharing resources, challenging others, explaining position statements, reflecting, evaluating and re-evaluating, negotiating consensus and summarising. These characteristics of traditional group work interaction formed goals in the development of the e-communication project. They also helped to set analytical categories for the evaluation of the IEE, which was carried out by participating academics.

Schmidt and Werner (2007,72) have reviewed the research on future time perspective (FTP) and suggest '[p]erceived instrumentality has been confirmed as a valid predictor of key motivational factors': in essence, students were motivated by future gains and high future gain is seen as increasing motivation. A lot of interest and excitement was expressed by students thinking about participating in this project and also, not surprisingly, there was some anxiety and concern over how it was going to go:

This project involves a number of prerequisites for success, including the need for the technology to be robust and reliable. Web-CT solves the kinds of problems encountered when trying to use email for student discussions, and messages can be tracked to see what date/time they were sent. The academics involved have to be champions of the project, selling it to their heads of school and academic standards committees. The co-ordinators have to be hard working – over 4,000 messages were generated during the six week period in 2006-07, and students used the system to pose questions – and expected a quick answer! This new form of delivery and assessment needed clear mechanisms of support for the students. A generic student handbook was written, which all participating staff could customise to suit their own needs, and students were inducted in computer labs and had ongoing support in classrooms. Lectures and seminars were used to support the topics of the project and the Web-CT area was used as a repository for relevant materials and web-links. We showcased examples of good messages at the end of each two week period, and this seemed to have the effect of 'raising the standard' for subsequent topics.

The most crucial factor was trust. As academics we placed an enormous amount of trust in the project's ability to deliver its goals and to enable us to work together in the virtual environment of Web-CT. The students, for their part, trusted in our ability to make the project a success.

## Conclusion

*'We were breaking the physical link between campus and student'* (Hirsch 2001).

As educators we need to look at how to increase 'reach and richness ... [and] the obvious means of adding richness is through some form of computer conferencing' (Weller 2002,43). The learning and teaching project under discussion in this paper certainly added richness to the students learning opportunities but also had secondary outputs in regard to increased confidence in using ICT.

The use of carefully designed and structured e-communication between students in different universities and countries opened up the potential for students to think beyond as well as within their national borders and across cultural differences and similarities. Using a Web-CT discussion board, students constructed knowledge through discussion with students in other countries. This paper therefore makes the challenge that with the use of communication and information technology we can more than replicate the debate of the classroom: we can develop real borderless classrooms.

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# Web-based museum trial for design students in higher education

Rebecca Reynolds and Catherine Speight

## Abstract

The authors explore the 'iGuides from StreetAccess' project at the Victoria and Albert Museum, funded by the Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning through Design (CETLD). The project involves the development and evaluation of web-based trails which design students in higher education can use to explore the museum's collections. These trails use the 'iGuides from StreetAccess' software programme and are accessed in the V&A's galleries on Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). It is anticipated that resources of this kind could strengthen collaboration between museums and universities by providing a medium for pooling the expertise of these two sectors.

## Museum-university collaboration

Research over the past 15 years shows that museums and universities are working together in productive and original ways, but are not collaborating as much as they could be (Anderson 1999; Arnold-Foster and Weeks 2001; Inspectorate of Schools 1993; van Heyningen 1999). This is partly because museums' role in formal education has historically been taken over by the formal education sector, with museum education left as a 'limited specialist service', mainly used by schools (Anderson 1997,xiv). Most university-museum partnerships are based on relationships between individual tutors or students and curators, rather than being part of a formally defined service (Anderson 1997; Inspectorate of Schools 1999; van Heyningen 1999).

Museums and the adult education sector, including universities, consequently lack the expertise which would arise from sharing each others' educational insights and approaches (Anderson 1995). Museums 'are not geared towards developing skills of getting the most out of objects at HE level' (van Heyningen 1999:44). Museums, in their turn, are often 'frustrated' by HE students' lack of skills in learning from objects and artworks, partly because HE tutors lack these skills themselves and therefore do not pass them on to students (Anderson 1997).

It was partly as a response to this need to improve collaboration between museums and universities that the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Design (CELTD) was established. CETLD is a partnership between the University of Brighton, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal College of Art and the Royal Institute of British Architects. Among its aims are encouraging the sharing of resources and expertise between museums and universities, improving design students use of museum archives and collections, and using technology to enhance design learning and teaching in higher education.

## Web-based trails for design students

The 'iGuides from StreetAccess' project is funded and supported by CETLD. 'iGuides' are web-based trails which use StreetAccess software, designed to be accessed on personal digital assistants (PDAs) inside the museum. The trails are two-way, in that users can access learning resources designed for them as well as inputting their own information, including voice recordings, photographs and text. The user can thus modify and input into the trails, which can be accessed on the web after the museum visit.

Handheld technology as a learning tool is increasingly being used and researched by colleges and universities (JISC 2005) and museums (Fisher 2005). However, their use in formal education in museums is just starting to be explored.

There are several reasons why such technology may have a role to play in design students' learning. As with other higher education courses, tutor time per student on design courses is falling (Durling, Cross et al. 1996; Swann 2002) due to factors such as increasing numbers of students, staff cuts and increasing administrative and managerial

tasks for staff. This means that self-directed study and equipping students with research skills which they can use independently is gaining in importance (Shreeve, Bailey et al. 2003). This includes the provision of computer-based learning resources (Durling, Cross et al. 1996).

Portable technology can also contribute to students' learning away from the library and the lecture hall. Due partly to the internet, study patterns are becoming more 'nomadic', and there is a desire for an 'extended campus' (Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Design 2006).

### **Museums and design students**

Museums are, or should be part of this campus for design students. Museums are 'quintessential free-choice learning settings' (Falk and Dierking 2000) where the learner is free to follow unpredictable paths (Hooper-Greenhill 1999). They are a key place for self-determined experimentation and exploration. They can thus be part of an 'extended campus' for design students by offering opportunities for experiencing and reflecting on objects and the museum environment. They allow choice and independent thought, and are thus conducive to the development of divergent thinking skills, which are essential for design students (QAA 2002).

### **Trail design and museum and design pedagogy**

We now explain some ways in which trail design and use can engage with museum and design pedagogy. We then suggest some areas in which museum trails on PDAs can contribute to design students' learning.

Museum education, like other areas of contemporary education favours a constructivist approach to learning. This contends that knowledge is constructed in the mind of the learner, rather than consisting in a certain amount of knowledge which is transmitted to the learner. It emphasises the need to engage the learner and understand their backgrounds and ways of thinking. Learning from objects is seen as a conversation between the learner and the object, in which the learner brings their own insight, opinions and so on (Hooper-Greenhill 1999; Hein 1998; Stainton 2001).

### **Depth of learning**

One debate in museums relevant to design students learning is whether and how museum visitors can progress from an initial engagement with an object to deeper or more detailed knowledge. Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson suggest ways in which exhibitions can go beyond the initial 'hook' which stimulates visitor interest to what they describe as a 'flow' experience in which the visitor is 'fully enjoying an intrinsically motivated activity' (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson in Hooper-Greenhill 1999,152). In their view, museums should encourage 'mindfulness', which involves 'drawing novel distinctions, examining information from new perspectives, being sensitive to context' and requires that 'presentation of the material is not fixed, so that exploratory questions are not precluded' (Hooper-Greenhill 1999:155). They quote Bitgood (1990) describing one way in which displays can engage the learner: 'Successful museum displays tend to be those that ask visitors to commit themselves to making guesses, evaluating, responding – and then provide information by which the visitors can compare their responses with some other standard' (Hooper-Greenhill 1999,156).

Can museum trails accessed on handheld technology engage the learner in these ways? This next section explores the concept of a trail and asks how it can contribute to learning, exploring the capabilities of the trail software and the PDAs in the context of design learning.

A trail can be seen as a narrative of a museum visit. Since narratives or stories are one way in which people order, remember and make sense of their experiences, making a trail of where you have been can help you to learn (Walker 2006). In evaluation of a family trail at City Museum and Art gallery in Bristol, families said that trails made them stop and look more closely at galleries (Drewitt 2006). These results suggest that trails can increase visitors' engagement with exhibits or objects. Csikszentmihalyi identifies this as crucial: 'what information we select to attend to, and how intently, is still the most important question about learning' (Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson in Hooper-Greenhill 1995,48). We suggest that they are one way of promoting 'mindfulness' which is part of deepening the learning experience in the museum.

### Challenges of web-based trail design

There are two main challenges faced by educators aiming to design or use such materials. One is to design materials in a way which facilitates a sustained educational encounter whilst not removing opportunities for students to make their own links and engage in open-ended exploration. Another is the recurrent challenge to museum designers in ensuring that facilitative materials are a way into engagement with objects, rather than a distraction from them.

Learning tasks can be designed to reduce the risk of this happening, for example by maintaining continual links between the trail and the objects in the galleries, or by making it clear that the trail aims to enhance strategies for interacting with objects which students can use independently of the trails.

If students are familiar with the PDA devices or can use their own, this will also reduce the risk of their constituting a barrier to appreciating objects.

### Trail design: theory into practice

When designing a web-based trail for educational use, one is in effect curating an online exhibition using pedagogically sound principles. If we look back at recommendations for encouraging an engaged museum experience, this means that the trails should take learners backgrounds into account, for example by offering learners opportunities for connecting new knowledge with their existing knowledge. It should encourage them to 'make guesses, evaluate and respond' as well as supplying information. So, for example, trails should start from the learner's position, perhaps by asking them what they know about a subject before giving them information, or asking them to explore and respond to a gallery before directing them to certain objects within it. In this way, the learner's input becomes part of the trail from the start.

Trails can also have different functions. For example, they can:

- offer supplementary information
- bring archive material together with objects on display
- provide framing questions to channel student responses
- provide the means for students to make their own trails
- temporarily change the museum environment – for example a 'soundtrack' trail could encourage students to think about the differences between objects and music

### Trail development and museum evaluation

The development of trails at the V&A was supported by a grounded system of evaluation to assess the impact and effectiveness of trails on student learning in the museum.

Evaluation in museums is an essential planning tool and is a useful way of ensuring that project deliverables are met. It takes a cyclical approach, with each stage defining the purpose, implementation and outcome of a project (Jackson 1998). In the museums sector, this is known as the front-end, formative and summative phases. As Jackson (1998) states, it is the match between the purpose and outcomes of a project which provides its measurement for success. Evaluation in museums can be applied to a whole host of activities including gallery projects, exhibitions and any form of learning resource including in this case, the 'iGuide' trails.

The main aim of evaluating learning technology in the museum is to provide the designer and the user with information to make confident judgements about the effectiveness of the technology (Jackson 1998). This can then be fed back into the re-design or adaptation of the technology to improve its performance. Evaluating learning technology in the museum is a new area of research and as such there is limited knowledge about successful techniques and methodological approaches to user testing (Kjeldskov and Stage 2004).

The development of any resource in the museum needs to be able to communicate with its intended audience. The trails have been designed to support the needs of practice-based design students in the museum. For the evaluation, we worked with undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Materials Practice and Three-dimensional Design and Fashion and Textiles course at the University of Brighton<sup>1</sup>. The evaluation was designed to explore how this intended audience would use the trails in the museum.

<sup>1</sup> Both groups had shown extensive interest in the work of CETLD prior to the 'iGuides' project and were selected as a representative sample for design practice.

As with any form of museum presentation, the focus of evaluation must always be on the content or message rather than the tool or medium (Economou 1998). Technology quickly becomes outdated, so it was important that the evaluation for the 'iGuides' project focused on the content of the trail in alignment with the technology rather than the other way round.

Each stage of the evaluation aimed to support the delivery of project milestones and also our own form of pedagogic enquiry. We wanted to know whether the trails actually worked, which ones were most effective, and whether they were suitable for the intended audience. In other words, was the trail a useful tool for supporting student learning in the museum?.

It was critical, therefore, that the evaluation should enhance the exploration of these questions and should help us to get as close as possible to the real context. This included users having real tasks to carry out as part of the evaluation, for example, conducting trails in the setting of the museum.

One of the difficulties when conducting evaluation in the real setting of a museum relates to the constructivist position of the learner. The learner will bring to the setting their own prior knowledge and experience, attitudes and beliefs, each of which will influence their experience of the learning technology. It is difficult to recreate the same environment for each learner throughout the evaluation.

There have also been suggestions by some in the field that the evaluation of mobile learning technology should take place in laboratory-based conditions (Stoica, Fiotakis et al. 2005). However, laboratory conditions lack the authenticity of the real environment (Beetham 2005). As Beetham (2005) also suggests, evaluation relies on the triangulation of methods for collecting data and consulting a range of different user groups. This helps to ensure that influencing factors can be balanced out over a period of time.

### **iGuides evaluation strategy**

The next section describes in detail the front-end, formative and summative stages of the 'iGuides' evaluation strategy.

The evaluation of the 'iGuides' project used a multi-method approach. Qualitative research techniques were favoured as a way of eliciting attitudinal information about users of the trails. The only difficulty in applying qualitative research techniques to this type of evaluation is that while qualitative descriptions of user behaviour can lead to a richer understanding of context and provide insights into reasons for behaviour (Cunliffe, Kritou et al. 2001), they can also be more difficult to analyse.

The aims of the front-end evaluation were:

- to explore student and tutor attitudes to the use of mobile learning technology in the museum
- to identify the learning objectives for visiting a museum(s)
- to identify key features and ideas for trail development.

Front-end research included two extended focus groups with students and tutors, and a series of one-to-one interviews. Feedback from the front-end stage fed into the design of five prototype trails exploring various galleries at the V&A. The prototype trails have been designed to encourage interactive participation from the user. However, like any form of presentation, the design of the trail is an inherent act of communication and interpretation on the part of the designer (Economou 1998). It is therefore important that any form of testing is conducted with the audience group during the formative stage. This often leads to several changes to the trail design, helping to tailor it to the profile and needs of the different user groups rather than the expectations of the designer (Economou 1998).

The purpose of the formative evaluation is to highlight what is effective, and to identify whether the trails can offer an enhanced learning experience for design students.

This stage of the evaluation was divided into two sections. The aim of the first section was to evaluate the content of the trails, including the amount of information relating to objects, preferred style of content for trails (written or audio)

and relevance of trails to level of students course. The aim of the second section was to evaluate the functionality and usability of live trails, including considerations of adequate coverage of wireless technology for numbers of students, reliability of the technology, speed of access to audio, and students' confidence in using the technology.

The formative stage consisted of extensive user testing, exploring the holistic functioning of the trail, including its interoperability and how users made sense of its capabilities in the context of real tasks. Student users were invited to conduct a paper based trail to begin with, followed by the live version on the PDA.

Students were accompanied by a researcher, who observed what they had experienced and occasionally prompted students to describe what they were looking at as well as their thoughts and ideas. This is an interesting methodological approach known as an accompanied visit. After each paper-based trail, students were invited to take part in a post-trail interview where they were asked a series of questions about the content of the trails. The accompanied visit followed by the post-trail interview was our favoured method because it facilitated dialogue at the point at which interesting questions or observations arose. This is important for both the user and the researcher in terms of understanding what it is they are both trying to do and being able to learn from each other.

The evaluation of the paper-based trail was followed by user testing of the 'live' prototype on the PDA, using the method described above. Students were invited to take part in a formal induction session prior to the live testing. This was an important way for us to identify the kind of support learners needed with the technology, which could also be fed back into the re-design of the trail.

We are still working on the formative stage of the evaluation, which has so far offered us some useful feedback. Some preliminary observations from our research have shown that:

- students spend much longer looking at objects when using the trail
- students appreciate extra information about the objects on display
- students prefer taking a trail outside their own subject area
- students enjoy the capacity that the technology offers. They like to make notes, record audio and take photographs
- it is difficult to pitch the content of information at the right level for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

These observations will be explored further within the formative stage.

The summative stage will collate information about the user interface and presentation, the structure and navigation, the content and its integration with museum displays, and the effects on learners generally. The importance of this stage is generally underestimated, but it is an important way of reflecting upon the project as a whole as well as the project's outputs. The summative phase of the 'iGuides' evaluation is due to take place in January 2008.

## **Conclusion**

The Quality Assurance Agency, which monitors academic standards in the UK, recommends that design education should include 'a range of alternative ways to engage practitioners in the historical, theoretical and critical dimensions of their discipline' (QAA 2002:4). Museums are a prime site in which such contexts can be explored, and we suggest that materials such as iGuides may be one way of engaging design students there. Our initial evaluation findings suggest that this may indeed be the case.

Such materials may thus have a role to play in filling the gap left by falling tutor-student contact time and in constituting part of museum provision for students in higher education, who have hitherto been neglected in comparison with other audience groups.

Continuing evaluation will also shed light on how far such technology can be a tool to enable reflective learning rather than simply a means of conveying information. However, more broadly, we hope that the project will allow us to develop and evaluate materials which include a range of learning strategies for use inside and perhaps outside museums, and which will have applications beyond the particular technology used here to access them.

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# The use of personal digital assistants in medical education: the Brighton and Sussex Medical School experience

Dr Inam Haq with Professor Richard Vincent, Gregory May and Mark Packer

## Abstract

In 2005 Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) became the first UK medical school to introduce the widespread use of personal digital assistants (PDAs) by its students, beginning with those in Year 3. PDA use is increasing in medicine, and their use has been shown to enhance undergraduate and postgraduate learning. The use of mobile technologies has led to an increase in learning at the point of need, which can help to embed knowledge, improve clinical care and reduce the risk of treatment errors. At BSMS, students with PDAs were provided with DrCompanion software, and PDA use by year 3 students led to reduced time spent on library visits and the internet, and access to clinically relevant knowledge when needed.

## Introduction

A PDA is a small, handheld, battery operated computer utilised via the touch screen and a stylus. Their use in undergraduate and postgraduate education and training is becoming more widespread. This article will review the literature on the utility of PDAs in medicine and the experience of undergraduate students at BSMS.

The PDA market was estimated at 10,500,000 devices in 2003 and research has shown the increasing use of PDAs in medicine<sup>1</sup>. The Harris Interactive Poll showed that in 2001 26 per cent of US physicians were using PDAs<sup>2</sup>. A report by the Canadian Medical Association found that one-third of physicians were using PDAs in 2003, a 73 per cent increase from 19 per cent in 2001<sup>3</sup>. In 2005 it was expected that over 50 per cent of American physicians would be using a PDA<sup>1</sup>. Ebell et al. found that 84.5 per cent of all physicians, and 94.1 per cent of those younger than 40, would consider carrying a PDA<sup>4</sup>.

The highest use of PDAs is by junior doctors<sup>5</sup> and 96 per cent of users are under 45 years old<sup>2,3</sup>. Older users (over 55) are less accurate and slower using touch screen, perhaps reflecting this age discrepancy<sup>6</sup>. In the USA, almost half of general practitioners use handheld computers<sup>7,8</sup>. More than one-third of paediatricians use PDAs in practice<sup>9</sup> and 50 per cent of radiologists use them daily<sup>10-12</sup>. PDAs are used by emergency medicine trainees and residents, palliative medicine physicians<sup>13,15</sup> and in psychiatric training<sup>16</sup>. Use is higher amongst men from urban communities who recently graduated and work in non-private practice<sup>1</sup> and the most active group of users are doctors in small practices outside hospital<sup>18</sup>.

Regardless of type of speciality, research shows that PDAs are used in medicine for many common applications. These include improving point of care treatment (ie. at the bedside or in clinic), medication reference, electronic text books, clinical calculations, prescription applications, patient information and tracking, scheduling, prescription writing, billing, patient documentation, communication, medical graduate education training and to document clinical procedures<sup>1,8-13</sup>. The amount of data contained in a single PDA would be impossible to carry around on a daily basis, leading to the concept of the use of PDAs in 'just-in-time' education, meaning that the student can access information regarding a clinical or scientific question at the point of need rather than having to go to a library or other computer to access the information at a later date. Immediate acquisition of the required knowledge in context can only improve the educational experience and retention of knowledge.

PDAs are used by both generalists and specialists regardless of whether their training program encourages PDA use<sup>16-18</sup>. 60-70 per cent of medical students and residents in the US use PDAs for education and patient care<sup>19-21</sup>. Medical students use PDAs for personal applications, drug references and clinical calculators<sup>22</sup> as well as patient tracking and documentation<sup>21</sup>. PDAs have been used by medical students to document clinical procedures and

encounters<sup>14</sup> and also to evaluate medical students during examinations such as Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs)<sup>23</sup>. Medical training requires documentation of experiential learning of knowledge and skills<sup>24</sup> and PDAs have also been used in this context to replace log books<sup>25</sup>. PDA use has been shown to increase adherence to medical guidelines<sup>26</sup> and can reduce discharge medication errors by 14 per cent<sup>27</sup>. Readily available Evidence-Based Medicine (the use of up-to date high quality research to inform best-practice in patient care) prompted students to cite evidence during ward rounds and bedside teaching<sup>28</sup>. After using a PDA for a year, 62.7 per cent of participants in a study revealed that their PDA enriched their education either ‘quite a lot’ or ‘a great deal’<sup>29</sup>. Physicians feel more confident when they have access to a PDA and importantly, patient perception is either neutral or favourable<sup>30</sup>. PDA use is still increasing but it must be noted that some research has shown barriers to using PDAs, including, for example, concerns about reliability and security<sup>31</sup>. Barriers to PDA use in the UK include the cost of software and poor applicability to UK practice<sup>32</sup>. Research found that more people would use PDAs if the issues of data security and data loss were addressed<sup>33</sup>.

### Summary

The evidence shows that PDAs enhance the educational experience and allow rapid information acquisition at the time of need. Software contained on the PDAs can vary from online textbooks to current treatment guidelines and drug formularies, thereby helping to ensure that treatment is up-to-date, and reducing medical errors. Administrative functions of PDAs (eg diary) are used by doctors and students to improve time management. At BSMS, it was decided to develop this concept of ‘mobile learning’.

### The BSMS PDA project

A volunteer group of 20 medical students were given a Palm Tungsten E2 PDA in the summer term of 2005, loaded with a suite of software known as DrCompanion (via an SD memory card) that contained the following items:

- Oxford Handbook of Medicine
- British National Formulary (BNF)
- ICD-10CM Diagnostics and Procedure Codes – searchable by keyword lookup and ICD classification
- Medical dictionary
- Clinical Evidence (BMJ) – describes the best available evidence from systematic reviews, RCTs and observational studies
- Cochrane Abstracts – summaries of the Cochrane Reviews provide a valuable source of healthcare information searchable by abstract title
- Netter Atlas of Human Anatomy
- A medical calculator – for drug dosing.

This group were given questionnaires at the start and end of the term, looking at expectations and ease of use, the effect on computer and library use (which would be compared with a control group of year 2 students with no PDA access), and their perceptions of the future benefits of PDA use in later medical training. 19 to 20 students found the PDA easy to learn to use.

**Table 1** below shows student perceptions of advantages of PDAs (students could select as many advantages as they thought appropriate)

	No of students (n=20)
Moving documents	1
Calendar	3
Convenience/portability	11
BNF	1
Note taking	6
DrCompanion	7

Table 1: Advantages of PDAs

**Table 2** summarises student perceptions of disadvantages of PDAs (students could select as many disadvantages as they thought appropriate)

	No of students (n=20)
Lack of internet access	2
Lack of compatibility with university computers	2
Concerns about security	2
Eye/neck strain	2
Difficult	1
Time wasting/distraction	9
Crashes/mechanical failure	2
Battery life	1

Table 2: Disadvantages of PDAs

At the end of the pilot, PDA students were making fewer trips to the library than the control group (mean 1.1 visits reduced to 0.4 visits), and in addition there was a reduction in computer and internet use. Focus group analysis showed the following themes, with quotes:

#### Utility (general)

- ‘Today I wrote up my case study notes whilst travelling in the back of the car – I think people will find (the handhelds) really useful!’
- ‘It’s good not to have to carry books around with you
- ‘I keep my diary on it so I know where I am supposed to be’.

#### Enhancement of learning experience

- ‘You have the relevant information at the time you need it’
- ‘Now you learn as you go along rather than leaving things till later in the term’
- ‘I used the Concise Oxford Handbooks to read up on topics before a lecture and I found it made the lecture itself much more accessible. I have also added a few of my portfolio write-ups so that I can add notes to them as and when I have time without having to look for the nearest computer’.

#### Utility in Years 1 and 2

- ‘...Useful at any time to get into the habit ..’
- ‘It would probably be more useful in clinical years, when you can look up the drug information and Oxford Handbook’
- ‘..pointless having it in last month of year 2...it will be really useful next year’.

#### Software/hardware difficulties

- Synchronisation
- Accessing PDF files
- Downloading large video/picture files
- Searching DrCompanion software
- Bluetooth problems when sharing information
- Screen size

#### Disadvantages of PDA

- Distracting
- More difficult to write notes on a PDA during a lecture compared to paper

### Continuing development of the project

From September 2005, all year 3 students at BSMS were invited to buy a Palm PDA. DrCompanion software would be provided free by the school. Appropriate training was given to students to maximise the utility of the software, and IT staff were available for students experiencing problems with the software or PDA itself. The amount of software available on the DrCompanion has increased, and the card has a USB interface so that it can be plugged into any computer. As expected from the initial data, students have found the PDA much more useful in the clinical environment, where information is required at point of need more frequently than in the Falmer campus-based years 1 and 2. The PDA allows the student to develop medical professional skills such as time management through use of the diary functions.

BSMS aims to make all module handbooks and timetables available for direct download onto PDAs. Further work is ongoing looking at PDA use in the clinical environment and effect on learning. An interesting further project is studying the danger of bacterial colonization of PDAs used by students and health professionals in the hospital environment, and the consequent risk of transmission of infectious agents from handheld medical equipment to patients.

### Conclusion

From the data above, it can be seen that the PDA was seen as a positive addition for learning by Year 2 students at BSMS, but with some caveats. Year 2 students have limited clinical contact, the course being based at the Falmer campus rather than at local hospitals as in years 3–5. The project students felt that the PDA would be more useful during later years of the course, when learning opportunities were more diverse and less predictable, due to the nature of learning in the clinical environment. Technical problems were a concern.

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### **Bibliography**

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#### **Current research: clinical**

An epidemiological study at BSUH studying musculoskeletal symptoms and autoantibody production in patients with hepatitis C. This study is ongoing, and we are hoping to characterise a large local cohort of 200 patients, and assess the effect of treatment.

A collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Architecture and School of Health professions looking at chair design and spinal biomechanics in patients with and without musculoskeletal disability.

#### **Current research: educational**

A study is ongoing looking at academic and demographic/socio-economic factors that affect student performance at BSMS.

A study in partnership with Dr Wesley Scott-Smith looking at the development of clinical reasoning in undergraduate medical students.

Use of PDAs in undergraduate medical education.

#### **Other information:**

Member of Royal College of Physicians MRCP Part 2 Standard Setting Group; Member of British Society for Rheumatology External Relations Committee; External Examiner in Medicine for University Teaching Hospital Lusaka and Queen Mary University of London Medical School; Foundation member of Academy of Medical Educators 2007.

# Multiple roles – multiple selves: exploring students’ experiences of a shared learning space

**Mark Price**

Research into professionalism and professional identity among Foundation Degree students presented here, formed the basis of a paper entitled ‘The emergence of new ‘professional’ and ‘associate professional’ roles in the children’s workforce – A rhetorical device or a new model of professionalism?’ presented by Nadia Edmond and Mark Price at the ‘Professional lifelong learning: critical debates about professionalism’ conference at the University of Leeds on 9 July 2007.

## **Abstract**

The conference workshop focused on the way that part-time students on work-based learning programmes manage the demands of competing roles and identities within their private, professional and academic lives. This paper reports on research into student experiences of undertaking foundation degree study in the School of Education. Notions of ‘professionalism’ and ‘professionalisation’ are explored and it is the learner practitioners that appear to be shouldering significant costs of government reforms into the children and young people’s services workforce. A visual mapping of the relationship between competing selves was considered as a useful framework for individual reflection and self-conceptualisation.

## **Background and introduction**

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) have outlined specific growth in terms of almost 800,000 new jobs in ‘associate professional and higher technician’ occupations by 2010 (DfES 2003), putting this employment category amongst the biggest and fastest growth sectors in the UK. The public sector, in particular, is important as a context in which the need for associate professional and higher technician skills has grown markedly as the result of the government’s ‘modernisation agenda’. Within the fields of health, social care and education, and public services more generally, the rising quality of the labour force is used as justification for a reappraisal of roles and responsibilities. Within health and education in particular, this is leading to a blurring of the traditional job boundaries which have previously defined the work of support staff. This redefinition of jobs is rapidly becoming the cornerstone of the modernisation and remodelling of the workforce (Butt and Lance 2005). As Simon et al. (2003) have noted: ‘The radical changes to the children’s workforce in terms of both structure and practice has meant new job names and roles are continually emerging and are subject to constant change’.

Part of this change has been the ‘professionalisation’ (Brennan and Gosling, 2004,3) of many roles in education and children and young peoples’ services, previously seen as low skilled and requiring no or low levels of qualification.

The linking of emerging associate professional roles to the Integrated Qualification Framework (IQF) (CWDC 2007) levels of qualification is essential to their credibility and status and this link is increasingly being made explicit. Specifically, Foundation Degrees (FDs), as ‘intermediate’ level qualifications built upon part-time, work-based programmes for employees, have been linked to continuing professional development (CPD) accreditation, as well as supporting claims for ‘professional’ or ‘associate professional’ status for many of the newly created roles.

Edmond and Price (2007) conducted a small scale research project in the context of the implementation of five children’s workforce related foundation degrees in the University of Brighton School of Education, to reflect on and raise questions about the implications of these developments and to deepen our understanding of ‘professionalism’ and the role of higher education in professional development. The context of these programmes, which include significant proportions of work-based learning for employed staff, raises questions about the nature of the workplace/ HE interface and partnership in the management of the quality of learning afforded by workplaces.

Issues of 'developing professional identity' in these programmes and the factors which sustain or inhibit such development were also explored by Edmond and Price (2007), with particular reference to the role of higher education and professional standards. The advent of emerging 'associate professional' roles and foundation degrees give rise to alternative work-based CPD models of qualification and progression into professionalism. In such models, different stakeholder perspectives on professionalism are brought into sharp relief, and this is illustrated by the way in which 'professional status' has been disassociated from grades of employment in many new 'associate professional' roles.

In common with many other schools of education, Brighton has, in response to the current policy context around the children's workforce, introduced a range of part-time accredited undergraduate CPD programmes. These programmes are:

Programme	Target group
Foundation Degree Professional Studies in Primary Education (PSPE)	Teaching assistants in primary schools
Foundation Degree Early Years Care and Education (EYCE)	Nursery nurses and other early years practitioners
Foundation Degree Playwork	Playworkers
Foundation Degree Youth Work	Youth workers
Foundation Degree Working with Young People and Young People's Services (WYPYPS)	Connexions Personal Advisors, learning mentors and other youth support practitioners

These are all part-time programmes of study, usually undertaken over two and a half years with a pattern of attendance normally equivalent to half a day per week. Students are required to be experienced practitioners and are supported in their study (in varying degrees) by their employer.

A further significant context to this research relates to on-going course leaders' concern over the stress foundation degree students appeared to be subject to whilst undertaking their studies, and in particular the multiple roles students appeared to juggle – as a practitioner, as a student and as parent, partner or carer.

This article reports on the findings and analysis of the original research. It also explores the way that students manage multiple roles and multiple selves in a shared psychological learning space, and looks at the implications for those responsible for developing and managing this learning space.

### Research method

Students in the final stage of their foundation degree were invited to volunteer to be interviewed or complete an online questionnaire. Eight students were interviewed and a total of 16 questionnaires returned, representing in total, 25 per cent of students registered on the final stage of a foundation degree in the School of Education at Brighton.

In interviews and through questionnaires, students were asked about:

- 1 their general experience of being on the course and the impact their work role has had on their experience of the course
- 2 their experience of being both a worker and student, and of managing different identities
- 3 their understanding of the concept of 'professional', and the extent to which they see their current work role as a 'professional' role
- 4 the impact that doing the FD has had on their work role
- 5 the meaning and importance they attach to studying at university
- 6 the extent to which their employer has supported their professional development whilst on the course
- 7 the relationship between university and employer, and the university's role in managing tensions.

## Findings and discussion

### 1 General experience of being on the course and impact of work role on the experience of the course

Students were unanimously positive about their experience of studying for the FD, and although most had found working and studying a challenge, many wanted to go on with their studies. For many this was associated with the HE nature of the award and aspirations fulfilled and a sense of achievement 'I have enjoyed the course enormously. Not having a degree was a 'hole' in my experience waiting to be filled!' (FdA PSPE student). Students particularly valued the relationship with other students and the positive impact on their practice.

The responses relating to the impact of the work role on the experience of the course were more mixed. Many students found it had been really helpful being employed, as their work context gave them a reference point for thinking about practice and applying theory to practice and empowering them in their practice.

*'I suppose because it's looking at what I'm doing, it's made me look at my role at work...because I'm reflecting on why I'm doing what I'm doing and that then effects on how I'm working at work and that might be me turning round and saying actually I think what's happened here is wrong with the organisation and standing up and saying something about it'. (FdA Youth Work student).*

On the other hand, many students found that work could get in the way of learning. This related specifically to not being given opportunities to undertake learning activities at work. It was often a case of juggling the demands of work and learning, and learning opportunities were often sacrificed to the need to do the job.

The table below summarises the positive and negative impacts of work role on learning

Positive	Negative
Relating theory to practice and immediacy of putting learning into practice	Difficult to juggle both work and study and needs of family
Wealth of experience to reflect and learn from (and this respected in learning context)	Demands of work have constrained learning opportunities
Professional development opportunities	Inability to apply learning in professional setting
Support from colleagues	Resentment or lack of support from colleagues

### 2 Being both a worker and student and managing different identities

The tension referred to above between 'learner' and 'worker' was a key feature of student discourse. All found it a challenge but accepted the challenge as the 'cost' of doing the course 'You just get on and do it'. Many found sources of support primarily through family and other students and the cohort as a functioning group.

*'I have found it very difficult to be both a worker and a student. There have been many times when the pressure of my workload at school has impacted on my performance at university. This has been particularly evident since I gained HLTA [Higher Level Teaching Assistant] status and started covering teachers' PPA [planning, preparation and assessment] time. Whilst it has helped me professionally, it has meant I work much longer hours and am often planning lessons and marking instead of studying'. (FdA PSPE student)*

The key issue for many was that, although students undertaking study are contributing to a government agenda of workforce development and remodelling, the 'cost' of individual professional development is seen as primarily a personal cost, borne by individuals.

### 3 The concept of 'professional' and the extent to which students' current role is a professional role

Students identified the defining characteristics of professionalism. The main categories identified include:

- expertise – associated with HE qualification, level of expertise and use of professional language
- individual approach to work – associated with confidence and self belief/attitude/integrity
- relationships with colleagues – associated with equivalence of status and joining the 'club' of professionals.

The table below shows the breakdown in responses. All respondents were unanimous that they see their role as a professional role.

Approach to work (pride in job/take seriously/enjoyment/commitment)	8
Approach to work (seeking to improve/ongoing development/reflective)	5
Approach to work (integrity/impartiality)	2
Team work/dealing with colleagues/ dealing with outside agencies	3
Autonomy/decision making and accountability	3
Skill expertise/level of education/qualification	11
Pay and career	2
Leadership responsibilities	2

The two key areas for respondents were skill and expertise level which was largely associated with HE and the approach to work, with these two often explicitly linked. However, there was also acknowledgement that this professionalism is not necessarily recognised as such by others, in terms of status, esteem or pay, for example:

*'Well basically I'm teaching three days a week and not being paid for it!'* (FdA PSPE student)

*'I felt that my work role was not taken seriously enough by my manager'* (FdA EYCE student)

In one case the distinction between the professionalism of the role and the status accorded to it was explicitly noted:

*'I feel my role (as a Connexions Personal Adviser) can be a professional role if it is nurtured and understood properly. I feel that I have become more professional in the last two years because I have made a concerted effort to acquire the knowledge, skills, experience that I feel make a professional youth worker, and/or practitioner working with young people. I also feel that I should have professional status because it would mean all people working with young people would have to gain the appropriate level of experience and knowledge to qualify as a youth worker.'* (FdA WYPYPS student)

The extent to which students felt their current role had the defining characteristics of 'professionalism' was also mixed. Many felt that they are still not perceived by others as belonging to a profession. This, for many, involved the way in which their work role is 'badged' and the extent to which it requires higher level training. Where higher level training is optional it is not seen as contributing to the status of the job role.

Professionalism involves social recognition – and for many this was a result of their participation in the FD. This was specifically related to the HE nature and level of the course. Some students who had experienced National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) commented that these are a more limited form of professional development.

*'I've gone on NVQ courses before, so I can compare the two. NVQ shows that you are competent at doing the job, the foundation degree shows that there's that competency, but it also makes you explore why you are doing the job. It makes you look very closely at your practice, not just that you can do it, but why you are doing it and where you can improve greatly on your practice. ...it's a far, far broader remit, it goes far deeper and prepares you far more for the sort of professional work you're doing and possibly the progression through toward other jobs'...* (FdA WYPYPS student).

#### 4 Impact of doing the FD on work role

It was also apparent that participation in the foundation degree has an impact on students work role. Many referred to change of job or promotion within their organisation and/or seeing their work profile change to include more responsibility and autonomy.

All students felt that studying the foundation degree has made a positive impact on their practice referring to specific improvements in practice and a more reflective, critical and questioning attitude to their practice. Many also specifically referred to increased confidence arising out of the foundation degree to discuss issues with colleagues and a sense of being 'taken more seriously' by colleagues.

*'You'd see a difference in the way that I work with different structures as in I feel much more confident in challenging my line managers, my organisation, in thinking about ways it can be different, and actually implementing those as well, not just sitting there and feeling frustrated about it'. (FdA Youth Work student)*

A negative impact referred to by a few respondents was jealousy and resentment from some colleagues.

*'It's been really interesting, most of the (Teaching Assistants) TAs have been, you know, really nice..... [but] there's been one or two that say little things like, oh well she's 'higher' now, little digs but I don't let them worry me...and I think when I'm in the class teaching and they're in there as the TA then sometimes there's a slight conflict. I don't let it show but I feel it' (FdA PSPE student).*

#### 5 Meaning and importance attached to studying at university

In terms of the pragmatic issue of recognition and qualification, respondents showed an awareness of the perceived value and 'currency' related to HE: 'I need to be recognised both in my employer's eyes and other agencies I may wish to work for' (WYPYPS). Some also showed awareness of the perceived need to qualify at graduate level to achieve full professional comparability, and in some cases the FD is seen as a stepping stone to graduate status and access to a 'full' professional role.

*'Yes, I need to complete the BA (Hons) in order to undertake GTP [Graduate Teacher Programme] and reach my ultimate goal of Qualified Teacher' (FdA PSPE student).*

For many, though, the most significant aspect (and benefit) of studying at university was the process of studying. The key features referred to were the group experience and the importance of sharing the learning experience outside of work with other 'like minded' people and the development of reflective practice and criticality. Essential to this development of criticality is the relationship between professional knowledge and theoretical perspectives. Higher education is seen as providing a 'separate authority', a perspective from which to judge practice.

#### 6 Employer support of professional development whilst on the course

Where students were released from their normal work duties to undertake course related study, there was acknowledgement that employers were demonstrating their commitment to the students professional development. However, some students perceived that this was the extent of the support their employers offered. Some went as far as to say that the employer saw time away from work to undertake study as a 'day off'. Students were often very appreciative of the support provided by individual colleagues at work who provided direct support. The importance of the role undertaken by work based mentors or learning facilitators was clearly evident but did not necessarily extend to feeling supported by the organisation.

#### 7 Relationship between university and employer and the university's role in managing tensions

The issue of employer commitment to professional development can be contextualised by consideration of the tension that can exist between on the one hand, understanding and meeting student needs in relation to the development of criticality and professionalism, and on the other hand, an emphasis on competence and performance management. Many students felt it was the university's role to manage this tension.

## Research conclusions

The current policy context offers potential and dangers: the potential to democratise the concept of professionalism but also the danger of undermining it by constraining the notions of knowledge, autonomy and altruism to conform with a restricted model of professionalism. Knowledge which underpins practice is not sufficient, but rather students' value knowledge which enables them to develop and even critique practice and which contributes to professional autonomy. This means that sound, research based and current disciplinary knowledge as well as graduate skills of 'criticality', synthesis and research are fundamental to student's concept of professionalism.

An important dimension in criticality is distance or vantage point and students see HE as having a clear role to play in providing this 'other' vantage point to support criticality. This recourse to another authority outside of the workplace empowers students to develop, improve and sometimes challenge practice. Student responses also suggest that a key factor in student's sense of professional identity is the extent to which the workplace acknowledges and responds to their growing expertise.

If the professionalisation of support roles in the children and young people's workforce is to be other than rhetorical, there is a need to recognise how 'graduateness' contributes to the concept of 'extended professionalism' and the role of HE in this. Foundation degrees as CPD for employees are an ideal way of combining work-based knowledge and cognitive skills in association with HE to develop an associate professional tier. However, there is a need to recognise the importance and unique contribution of both higher education and the workplace and not allow this to be confused by spurious notions of equivalence between job competence and 'graduateness'.

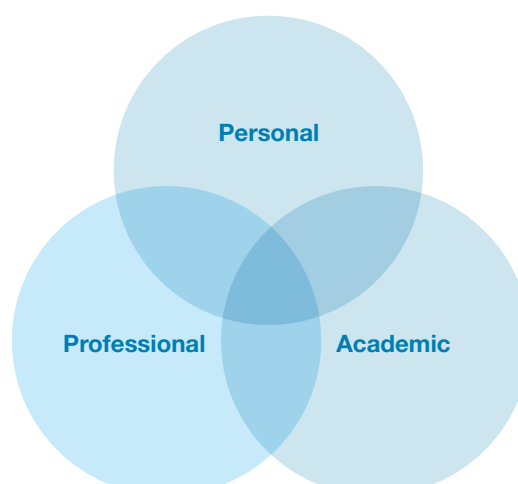
## Managing multiple roles and multiple selves

In exploring the nature of professionalism with foundation degree students, what emerges most strikingly for the students themselves, is the way that professional identity is an internalised process. It is the students who identify themselves most closely as being 'professional' and that this newly acquired professionalism amounts to an extended or expanded sense of 'self'. This is hardly surprising, since it is apparent that proportionally, the greatest investment made in the learning and development process is made by the students themselves. Throughout their studies, students may be seen to be required to manage three different, and often competing identities:

- *Professional self* – as a practitioner in search of identity and status within the context of their employment
- *Academic self* – as a learner within the context of higher education
- *Personal self* – as parent, partner and carer within the context of family and social networks

Anecdotally, these role conflicts cause huge stresses for students, as work based case loads, assignment deadlines and social and family responsibilities all compete. FD course leaders report the extent to which their 'personal tutor' responsibilities on a week to week basis involve supporting students' coping with and (where possible,) resolving these competing identities.

Within the context of professional development, action learning sets and tutorials, the following diagrammatical representation has been used to explore how students manage these identities and the relationships between them.



Students have been encouraged to draw the interlocking circles in differing ways, exploring their respective and relative domains. Whilst this remains un-developed, this visual tool has proved useful in exploring, through reflection and dialogue, the concepts of multiple roles and multiple selves.

### Further questions

Arising from the original research and the use of the three role domains diagram, a number of questions remain for further consideration:

- how useful are the concepts of 'professionalism' and 'professionalisation' for students, employers and HE?
- who should bear the cost of work-force development and how should this be agreed between stakeholders?
- what should be the relationship between the university and employers in managing work-based learning?
- how should the university best support students in managing tensions inherent in a shared 'psychological learning space'?

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### Biography

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# An investigation into the experience of non-graduates undertaking masters courses

**Dr Gail Louw, Carmel Keller and Dave Baker**

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## Abstract

A number of health related masters courses in the Institute of Postgraduate Medicine at the Brighton & Sussex Medical School recruit students who do not have a first degree. The researchers were interested in the experiences of these non-graduates on the programme, their learning and how they coped with studying alongside graduates on the course. There is little evidence of similar research in the literature in this field. This article is based on a qualitative study of the experiences of the non-graduates on the programme, the problems they experience, and how they cope with the demands of a masters course. Through focus groups and one-to-one interviews with a number of diverse current and past students, the researchers report on non-graduates students' use of, and engagement with, academic practices; their interactions with course tutors and colleagues at work; the development of their critical thinking; and their oral contributions to the programme.

## Introduction

There is a strong culture, and indeed professional requirement, amongst health professionals in the UK to inculcate the agenda of lifelong learning and continuous professional development into their practice. When nurses, for example, are faced with this impetus and decide to achieve a recognised qualification, they often have the choice of taking an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. They question which course is more appropriate for them and whether it is feasible to study at post-degree level without having engaged in the practices of a first degree. Students such as experienced nurses, midwives, health visitors, and some allied health professionals who do not have first degrees, have chosen in large numbers to pursue masters courses rather than undergraduate post-registration degree courses. Pertinent questions such as how they cope with study at this level, interact with graduate students, and deal with the demands of multi-disciplinary, multi-professional study with students such as doctors who are deemed to be both academic and have high status, are explored in this study.

The study was undertaken at the Institute of Postgraduate Medicine (IPGM) at Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS). This school runs 16 courses at masters level some of which can be taken with management or with education, and as Postgraduate Certificates, Postgraduate Diplomas and MSc. The courses are spread over three programmes; Clinical Specialties, Public Health, and Professional Development. Most of the course modules are run intensively over five days, with an assignment to be handed in at least six weeks later. The courses can be taken either full-time (which is an option favoured by overseas students, most of whom are doctors) or part-time. The latter is usual with professionals working full-time, mostly in senior positions, and often with families and the demands that these impose.

The student population at IPGM is varied and although half are medical doctors, around one quarter of all students do not have first degrees. This study was concerned to look at how non-graduates managed on the masters programme. It therefore only looked at the experiences of those students who are not graduates and within that, those who are studying or have very recently completed their study at masters level. The research question focused on the experiences of such students and ascertained their perceptions in terms of the reasons for their choice of study, how they felt before, during and after the modules and the writing up of their assignments, and how the experience has impacted on their jobs and other aspects of their lives. This paper focuses particularly on their experiences during their courses.

## Literature review

There was little evidence of previous or current research into the experiences of non-graduates undertaking professional health related masters courses (Cohen et al. 2005), despite substantial increases in masters courses in health related professional areas over recent years. There were, however, reports of research on masters programmes for other professionals, and on general educational issues such as advanced academic practices (Lahiff 2005; Larkin and Lahiff 2002). Based on the available literature, we identified the following four concepts as central to the conceptual and theoretical frame of this study:

- the academic practices of degree and masters study
- students' identities, habitus, backgrounds and experiences
- pedagogical approaches used on the courses
- students' health related subject knowledge.

These aspects became the focus of the enquiry, and the interview schedules and the data analysis were structured by them.

Academic practices are seen by many of the papers to be the most significant issue that affects student experiences and progression in professional masters programmes (Larkin and Lahiff 2002; Lahiff 2005; Arthur et al. 2006). Examples of these practices include: reading of academic and professional literature; confidence with reading; confidence in writing assignments and assessments for the course; interactions with staff and peers; the development of their critical thinking (Cohen 2005; Coombs 2005); contributions they make to/on the programme; methods of research; general confidence; ownership of professional development (Coombs 2005); critical judgement of evidence; and reasoned argument. Lahiff (2005,276), for example, says what is crucial is: 'participants' ability to engage critically with a range of sources, to judge the quality of evidence cited and to develop and use robust reasoned argument'.

In some cases programmes provide support for students' academic literacy skills, and others provide acculturation into academic literacy practices or discourse (Lahiff 2005; Lea and Stierer 2000). Lahiff (2005) was concerned that some non-traditional students see themselves as outsiders to academic discourse.

The educational experiences and backgrounds of the students may have an effect on the academic practices of non-graduates, which may be different to graduates and may be a factor affecting their performance on assessment, on access to resources and on the usefulness of academic support systems. This suggests that the research should focus on investigating the non-graduate participants' use of and engagement with these academic practices. This is not to suggest that their academic practices will in a deterministic sense affect their experiences during the course. It could be that on this particular masters course, with its diverse students' backgrounds and knowledge (cultural capital and habitus), and the pedagogical practices and strengths of the tutors, differences in academic practices are not a concern for non-graduates.

Habitus (Arthur et al. 2006; Lahiff 2005; Luke 1998), cultural capital and field are concepts that were developed by Bourdieu (1990) as ways of describing and understanding social and educational relationships within social interactions. Habitus is more the disposition with which individuals operate in that field. Masters courses such as the one in this study include social interactions and the cultural capital and habitus of all the participants in relation to the field of that course. From this viewpoint health studies includes the 'social construction of medical knowledge and not just the process in the application of that knowledge' (Luke 2006,6). Habitus in relation to postgraduate medical education could be taken to be the participants' expectations, habits, skills, values, beliefs and other aspects essential to his/her social identity (Luke 2006,5).

The educational experiences, personal circumstances, backgrounds and habitus of non-graduates may be different to graduates in relation to the field of masters study in health related professions. This may affect their experiences, perceptions and performance on the course. On the other hand, these differences may prove to be a strength and a resource for both the non-graduates and the course being studied. This is one of the questions this paper addresses.

Pedagogical approaches include styles of assessment, access to resources, institutional support systems, time, personal circumstances, and support in the workplace (Arthur et al. 2006); the sharing of health professional students' diverse experiences (Cohen 2005; Rodenhauser et al. 1998); and critical thinking inputs (Cohen 2005; Coombs 2005). Knowing how the students interacted with the pedagogical approaches to the teaching on this course could contribute to our understanding of the experiences of non-graduates and also enable other courses in HE to interpret the findings in relation to their own programmes.

Health related subject knowledge is a factor that was not raised by the studies reported in this review, apart from valuing the diverse experiences that participants bring to cross discipline programmes (Rodenhauser et al. 1998). Investigating the role of diverse professional subject knowledge on this kind of masters course adds to understandings of students' experiences and hence to improved provision. This study therefore considers the value of the diversity of student backgrounds.

### Methodology

This qualitative study used a generic qualitative approach (Caelli et al. 2003) and wished to gain an appropriate sample size to view a spread of courses covering a range of experience. Eight courses were chosen to provide this range of experiences: four from the Clinical Specialties programme (Cardiology, Diabetes, Nephrology, and Resuscitation Practice); three from the Public Health programme (Women's Health, Child Health, and Public Health); and one from the Professional Development programme (Professional Development in Health and Social Care). Other courses which were not included were: Trauma and Orthopaedics (all doctors), Teaching in Clinical Settings (all doctors), Medical Education (mostly doctors and all others graduates), and Primary Care (insufficient numbers).

Where possible, three students were identified from each of the eight chosen courses; a total of 21/24 responses was obtained. To obtain data from a wide range of student perceptions, students were chosen where possible from three stages of study; early (completed at least one assignment), mid (over three modules completed) and late or completed (where students had completed all their modules and were either engaged in their dissertation or had recently completed it). The profile of the participants is therefore as follows:

- 18 women and three men, with 16 of them aged over 40
- 12 senior nurses, two resuscitation officers, a physiotherapist, a midwife, an occupational therapist, a physiologist, a paramedic, a clinical effectiveness manager, and an education professional
- six were early students, six were in mid-course, and nine were late or completed students.

In the data reported here, the students were coded by profession, stage of study (early, mid or late) and gender (F and M) (Table 1).

The course codes are as follows:

Code	Profession	Code	Profession
WH	Women's health	CH	Child health
PH	Public health	C	Cardiology
D	Diabetes	N	Nephrology
RP	Resuscitation practice	PD	Professional development

Table 1: Profile of participants

	Code	Gender	Age Range	Job Title	Course	Stage of Study
1	WH1F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Women's health	Late
2	WH2F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Women's health	Late
3	WH3F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Women's health	Late
4	CH1F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Child health	Mid
5	CH2F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Child health	Early
6	CH3F	Female	41-60	Physiotherapist	Child health	Late
7	PH1F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Public health	Early
8	PH2F	Female	41-60	Midwife	Public health	Mid
9	PH3F	Female	41-60	Occupational therapy manager	Public health	Completed
10	C1F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Cardiology	Early
11	C2F	Male	31- 40	Physiologist	Cardiology	Late
12	C3F	Female	31-40	Senior nurse	Cardiology	Mid
13	D1F	Female	31- 40	Senior nurse	Diabetes	Early
14	D2F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Diabetes	Mid
15	D3F	Female	41-60	Senior nurse	Diabetes	Late
16	N1F	Female	31-40	Senior nurse	Nephrology	Early
17	RP1F	Female	41-60	Resuscitation officer	Resuscitation practice	Mid
18	RP2M	Male	41-60	Resuscitation officer	Resuscitation practice	Mid
19	PD1M	Male	31-40	Paramedic	Professional development	Early
20	PD2F	Female	41-60	Clinical effectiveness manager	Professional development	Late
21	PD3F	Female	41-60	Education professional	Professional development	Late

The criteria for inclusion in the study were that the participants should be non-graduates, have submitted at least one assignment, and should live in or within one hour of the city, for ease of interview access.

Two of the researchers on this study are programme leaders at the Institute (GL and CK), and steps were taken to minimise their impact on the study by using an independent researcher to identify and interview the participants.

The structured interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were returned to participants to agree accuracy. Some participants made slight changes.

The interview schedule and questions were derived from issues identified in the literature review and were designed to provide data to illuminate the research question. These interview questions were roughly grouped into:

- contextual questions concerning the students' intentions and experiences before starting the programme
- questions about students' experiences on the programme, including their learning experiences, feelings, habitus in relation to the course, interactions with others on the course, and demands on their academic practices
- questions about possible and potential impact of the course on their future professional practices.

The data analysis was undertaken by seeking links between the transcripts and relating them to the four themes raised in the review of literature: academic practice, habitus, pedagogical approaches, and subject knowledge.

## Findings

The findings of the research are presented in terms of contextual issues, course experiences and potential impact on future practices. Each of these areas has been dealt with by commentaries linked to illustrative quotes. These have been selected to reveal issues of concern or interest to the students. The quotations are coded to each interviewee.

### Contextual issues

All the participants in this research were non-graduates and senior health professionals. Their decision to do a masters course rather than a first degree provides the contextual detail for this research. Most students who joined the programme had at least an undergraduate diploma, which is between two and three years study. Missing the degree stage and going straight for masters can save a student a significant amount of study time and funding. This was a significant factor for many students.

The students had a variety of reasons for doing this course. In some cases, this was about broadening their knowledge or improving their job prospects. For others it was about their self-image and personal confidence. Despite being senior professionals they lacked confidence in themselves in relation to academic study. One said:

*'for me it was a personal achievement because of my age. I never actually had a first degree because it wasn't the done thing when I trained as a therapist. And so I just wanted to prove to myself that I could achieve an academic postgraduate qualification'* (PH3F).

Several were fearful about taking on a masters without a first degree. They said:

*'Initially complete terror (D1F) I was quite concerned... I was quite nervous about my ability to function at that level...I thought that I was going to be a little bit out of my league'* (PD1M).

They felt apprehensive and daunted by the prospect of the course, whilst others felt excited. These anxieties were ameliorated by sympathetic and supportive tutors, both at course interview and during induction. The tutors made the students aware of the value they placed on their diverse backgrounds, different kinds of knowledge, skills and experiences they brought to the modules.

Despite their anxieties, one of the most striking responses from several of the students was that they were excited about it. WH2F said:

*'I felt very excited all the way through. I found it a privilege actually having that [first] day for myself as a practice and being able to come in here and participate and listen to all those wonderful people who were coming to talk to us about things and use the library and everything else'*. (WH2F).

On balance the students seemed to be both apprehensive and excited by the prospect of doing these courses. The masters was an opportunity for them to engage in professional development in a challenging and supportive environment.

### Course experiences

The data were analysed in terms of the themes of student background, dispositions and habitus, subject knowledge, academic practice, and the pedagogical practices of the programme. In this section, the data for each of these is considered in turn. Students backgrounds, dispositions and habitus (confidence, attitudes, personal development, identities, and willingness to be critical).

Some of the students felt that during the course they had changed in the way they looked at their work and studies in terms of their confidence, their attitudes to other health professionals and their level of critical thinking.

*'I am much less likely now to accept things on face value, I am more likely to say 'You have made that statement, where is the evidence to back it up?'. I have been interacting with other health professionals at a level pegging now'* (PD1M).

*'doing the course reinforced that I had learnt a lot... it made me more confident in my own judgement and my own clinical skills' (D1F).*

Some of the modules encouraged the students to reflect on their own personal development. Some of the students found this most valuable. They said:

*'it changed my whole outlook. I began to realise what sort of person I was' (PD2F)... 'I have probably completely changed and the way I feel about education has probably changed because my job is to provide educational programmes for other people and I suppose it has made me re-evaluate how we provide educational programmes for others' (PD3F).*

In their relationships with other students, several mentioned that they remained aware that they did not have a first degree whereas doctors on the course did have degrees. However, they had advantages that came with age and other experiences that many of the doctors did not have. CH1F said:

*'I have not shed the bit that I don't have a first degree, I haven't shed that yet, the anxiety about that. Some of that is in relation to study skills, when it comes to writing assignments and that sort of thing. I think on that particular course there were the most doctors. And actually in many ways, I have to say, I think age is on my side there in that I am able to see that perhaps I have got some skills that they may not have'.*

This fitted with the views of others such as RP2M who valued the multi-disciplinary backgrounds of the student group. The modular nature of the course meant that the participants mixed with a wide range of students on a variety of modules. This contributed positively to the multi disciplinary nature of the teaching approaches and the students' learning experiences.

A few of the students said they felt there were barriers between students from different backgrounds, whilst others found no barriers. A paramedic (PD1M) said that he thought some of the problems came from students stereotyping each other. He felt the students, irrespective of backgrounds, were willing to listen to others and did not claim authority over others from their status. He said:

*'doctors don't appear any better informed than myself or the other health professions. They appear just as willing to listen to what we've got to say, they don't tend to dominate the groups, I found'.*

### **Subject knowledge**

The students' found the work often familiar and yet challenging. The familiarity seemed to come from content that was work related, and yet they found themselves fully challenged by some of the theoretical content and the focus on academic practices of modules on research and critical appraisal.

*'I question things much more...the kind of questions I ask now are different ... being able to say, well yes, research has shown this, however other research has shown this as well' (PH1F).*

### **Academic practices**

The data on this theme revealed aspects to do with time management, writing language and doing assignments, reading and literature searching, creative and critical thinking, and contributing to sessions.

Some students distinguished between the experiences on the taught modules and working individually on assignments. Although they did not find the taught component a problem, they did find private study more so. CH2F said:

*'Each time I've had great difficulty selecting a title for the essay and being able to focus on and hone in on study. I have not been very systematic, I've not used my time well in some ways and I have achieved what I wanted to achieve but not passed the assignment'.*

Being strategic about passing the modules and focusing efforts on that goal rather than others seems to be an issue about academic practice and especially academic writing.

The first assignment seemed to be a huge moment for the students, either as a stumbling block, a crisis, or the point where they began to resolve issues about confidence. CH3F said:

*'my anxiety was about doing the essay, the assignment, because it was that part that I really felt I hadn't done any, producing something like that for a very long time. Subsequently, it seemed much better. I now have a sort of system of how I organise myself, how I plan my essay, how I keep all my references together, all those things. And obviously I've become a little more confident in writing them as well'.*

Learning what was expected of them in assignments was a crucial element in their writing; that is, learning to play the game. They valued being shown copies of past student papers. They said:

*'the tutor was so brilliant that we really knew what was expected and we had been given examples of previous assignments so I knew, I guess, what level'.*

The aim of the masters courses in this institute is to develop an ability in the student to think critically about what is presented either as conventional wisdom, current practice or innovations. All students undertake the Research methods and critical appraisal module, which is intended to instil this culture of critique.

*'I think with the masters they want a bit more sort of original thought as well and I think when you've been in a role where actually you're almost not required to have that original thought. Thinking a bit more laterally I suppose, but I think I do that now' (D2F).*

In terms of searching for literature, students found using some libraries intimidating;

*'I asked once down there [a library, not the university one] something and I didn't use the right language. I'm not sure I communicated well' (CH2F).*

Overall class interactions seemed to be linked with age and maturity, gender, confidence, the size of the group and the facilitative skills of the tutor. Some respondents suggested it could have been related to what the students knew, but it did not seem to be related to status or educational background. They felt that they could all contribute. RP2M said:

*'participation hasn't been difficult because we're all prepared to let each other have a go at answering things or giving examples, and supporting each other's views. Discussing things with each other'.*

Some felt that their maturity helped them to interact and to make contributions. WH1F said:

*'I think because we are mature students we're not so worried about speaking and of course we speak all day long in the work that we do whereas if I was perhaps 18 I might have felt a bit differently'.*

### **Pedagogic practices on the course**

Most of the students found the staff supportive, knowledgeable, helpful, approachable, and that they treated the students equally, irrespective of background and qualifications, and they were sympathetic to their needs. The students valued the diversity of the backgrounds and interests of the lecturers, who often came from different schools within the university and different health disciplines. WH1F said:

*'very supportive, no problems here at all, met quite a few from consultants to permanent members of staff here because an awful lot of our tutors that came in to do the lectures. They were all really great'.*

Feedback was seen as especially important by students. Students are offered support in the form of additional non-costed tutorials and reviewing draft assignments. They are particularly encouraged to access this support in the early stages of the course. WH1F spoke of the importance of feedback on early drafts:

*‘..helped me so much saying, ‘No, you need to expand this, no, you can’t do that etc. etc. I’ve learnt a lot’.*

### **Potential impact on future practices**

Some students identified the impact their dissertation has had not only on their practice but potentially more widely. They felt it impacted not only on their job prospects but also on their images of themselves and their identities. For example, PH3F felt that having the masters would give her:

*‘an additional string to my bow for applying for other jobs not just in the NHS’.*

Others spoke about having more confidence (WH2F) and of acquiring transferable skills (WH2F), whilst PH2F said:

*‘I think I’m a very different person to the person that started the course and different much for the better’.*

This was reinforced by many others who suggested that it had impacted on their self identity and even the way that they interacted with other staff at work. D1F considered that:

*‘any learning you undertake changes you slightly ....[because] you interact with other people’.*

And PD1M (a paramedic) said after a confrontation with a senior nurse:

*‘whereas before I would probably have just rolled over... I felt strongly enough to take him up on it which I probably wouldn’t have done before. I feel the whole masters process has changed the way I work’.*

## **Discussion**

### **Academic practices**

In terms of academic practices, students were anxious about undertaking literature searches, using computers and writing assignments. The support they were given by a variety of academics ensured that this became less of a problem and an area they were able to develop proficiently. However, some expressed regret that they did not use the resources available to them as fully as they might. There are issues about students having the disposition to make use of the opportunity of study more productively.

### **Images of themselves – habitus**

The study has shown that students suffer from anxiety and nervousness at the outset of their studies. They believe initially that not having a first degree might impact on their ability to study, though this becomes less relevant the further into their studies they proceed. Apprehension about learning alongside those who have studied at a significantly more advanced level have proven to be less serious than initially thought. Very few struggled being in classes with graduates and medical doctors, finding that they were able to draw on their own resources or strategies, such as their maturity, experience and professional expertise.

### **Pedagogical approaches**

From the literature, it can be seen that from a pedagogical point of view students benefit most when the area studied is relevant to them personally and/or in their jobs. The curriculum should – and does – therefore reflect aspects that are either clinically relevant or which bring new knowledge, enabling the students to develop as individuals or as practitioners. Most of the students commented on the impact of the course on their critical thinking. The increased emphasis on critical approaches within a research methods module is an outcome of this research project, and this is a clear indication of the new learning that underpins a different, more critical approach to students’ professional practice.

### **Student diversity and background knowledge**

In line with the research of Rodenhauser et al. (1998), the data reinforced the importance of multi-discipline, multi-professional backgrounds and experiences of students on these masters courses. Students felt they were part of a rich environment for learning, where they were able to contribute and benefit from the contributions of others with diverse experiences and backgrounds.

## Conclusions

This study is the first stage of a wider ranging study, which will add a quantitative component to what has been reported here. In addition, there will be further in-depth qualitative studies exploring some of the issues that emerged here in greater detail, as we feel that the structured nature of the questions in this stage of the study tended to limit participants' ability to explore and express the perceptions of their experiences.

Overall, looking at the non-graduate data from this study, it is clear that there are a number of conclusions that can contribute to both the provision and delivery of health related masters courses. These are:

- the success of recruiting non-graduates to health related masters courses
- the value of cohorts of students from diverse backgrounds and professional experiences on health related masters courses
- the provision of modules that make use of this multi-disciplinary knowledge and experience and are professionally or personally relevant to the students
- the importance of students being enculturated into advanced academic practices in masters level study
- the importance in masters courses of supportive pedagogic approaches especially support for and feedback on their written assignments
- the recognition that students' identity and self image shift as they engage in post graduate health related studies.

The outcome of this study is important for a number of reasons: firstly, it can help inform aspects of the 'widening participation' agenda of educational policy; and secondly, given the lack of research and data in this field, it can provide evidence to help us assess whether it is appropriate to encourage non-graduates to attend masters courses. In terms of the latter, consideration should be given to whether students risk being set up to fail. This study shows clearly that this is not the case; students consistently talked about the impact it has had on their self confidence, self-identity and self-esteem. Participants have spoken of the impact the courses have had on the way they are perceived in organisations and amongst their peers, and the opportunities that are now open to them as a result of studying towards or having a masters qualification. The study shows that in many cases the non-graduate students, who would not, in normal circumstances, have been accepted onto a masters course, have successfully learnt to cope with the demands of masters level study. This approach is therefore a contribution to the widening participation agenda.

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## Biography

**Gail Louw** is a Principal Lecturer and Public Health Programme Leader in the Institute of Postgraduate Medicine. Her PhD was in the field of organisational informatics which was undertaken at the Information Technology Research Institute at this university. She had a training fellowship at the Institute of Child Health in systematic reviews and has been working here for almost ten years. Her research interests are in evaluation and evidence based practice.

**Dave Baker** taught on teacher education programmes and then undertook research into teaching and learning mathematics in teacher education, in schooling, in adult education and in non-formal education. As part of the Leverhulme funded project on Low Achievement in Numeracy Programme research team, he researched relationships between children's home and formal school mathematics practices. A book on this research, entitled *Navigating Numeracies: Home/School Numeracy Practices*, was published in 2005. He is currently working with Uppingham Seminars on training teachers to use socially and culturally sensitive approaches to teaching adult numeracy in the UK, South Asia and Ethiopia. He has also engaged in research on issues of widening participation in higher education such as the access of non-graduate students to masters programmes. He has published two other books, presented at conferences, and published academic papers on mathematics education. He is currently a Reader in Adult Numeracy and post 16 Mathematics at the London Institute of Education.

**Carmel Keller** is a founding member of the Institute of Postgraduate Medicine at Brighton and Sussex Medical School. She developed and leads a number of masters courses in clinical specialties for doctors and other senior health professionals. With a Masters degree in Evidence-Based Practice, she enjoys supporting postgraduate students of all levels with interpreting, using and evaluating research, along with their development of high level academic writing and communication skills. She is currently involved in research into the influence of postgraduate medical education in medical careers and practice, diabetes management policy in Malta, and she is now exploring the possibility for research into the links between cutting edge science, and faith groups.

# Creative Space: Writing retreats for HE lecturers

Dr Maria Antoniou and Jess Moriarty

## Abstract

The value of creative writing techniques for personal and professional development has been extensively researched and detailed in recent years (Bolton 1994; Brew and Boud 1996; Pennebaker 1997; Smythe, Stone et al. 1999; Grant and Knowles 2000; Hunt 2002; Murray 2002; Sampson 2004; Antoniou and Moriarty 2006,167). Creative writing workshops and courses have been used in academic staff development (Murray 2005; Antoniou and Moriarty 2006). This paper seeks to build on existing work in the field by reflecting on two writing retreats for academics that were held in March and April 2007. Interviews have been carried out in order to evaluate the notion that retreats might be more than just a pleasurable experience for those who take part and to evaluate any tangible effects on academic staff development.

*'While academic writing is different from fiction writing in some important ways (although perhaps the boundaries are fruitfully blurring), there is much that can be learned from the way productive fiction writers go about their business and live out their writerly selves'* (Grant and Knowles 2000,17).

## Introduction

This paper reports on two writing retreats we ran in March and April 2007, attended by 35 lecturers from the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex. We received funding for the retreats from the Creativity Development Fund<sup>1</sup> and, as such, the retreats were free to participants. One retreat was held at the University of Sussex and was residential; the other was held at the University of Brighton and was non-residential.

The aims of the retreats were to:

- develop the relationship between personal creativity and academic work, and
- to offer a space in which participants could explore more creative ways of teaching, researching and writing.

The retreats were modelled on creative writing retreats, with group work, individual writing, and discussion. However, all activities were framed by academic concerns and the demands of the academic role. We especially drew connections between academic and creative writing and examined the boundary between 'the academic' and 'the creative' and the similar processes involved in academic and creative writing.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive and we have now extended and developed the project in a number of ways including:

- 1 Jess has been researching the effects of the retreats on participants' writing and their other professional development as part of her Education Doctorate (EdD).
- 2 We have received a Commercial Fellows award from the University of Brighton to commercialise the retreats. We have set up Work Write Live – a venture offering writing workshops and retreats to professionals who write as part of their jobs and who would like to increase their writing confidence and skills. For further information on what we do, see: [www.workwritelive.com](http://www.workwritelive.com).

## The rationale for the retreats and its practical application

Today's university lecturers are faced with many competing demands and pressures, and are reported to be increasingly susceptible to stress and burnout. Although the academic year cycle provides a macro structure for managing academic work, juggling the multitude of everyday tasks is an often overwhelming experience, undertaken for most of the year in fast-forward mode, with little chance for rest and reflection, or to consider ways of 'doing it differently'. In this context, learning undoubtedly suffers – both lecturers' own learning and the learning of their students.

<sup>1</sup> The Creativity Development Fund is provided by InQbate, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Creativity. InQbate is a joint project between the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex.

Research on creativity shows that creative individuals have an intimate understanding of their own creative process: a cycle of work, rest and play which, if respected, enhances their work and their wellbeing. They know when and how to fill the creative well and when and how to draw from it. Even within a busy life, creative individuals honour the need to step back from their work, albeit momentarily, to reflect, refresh and recuperate. They know how to gain focus for a period of concentrated work, and they know how to deal with blocks to inspiration and motivation. They have the tools to engage in a full creative cycle – generation of ideas, intense work, reflection, recuperation – over and over again.

On our retreats, participants used creative writing as a tool for exploring their own creative process and to gain an understanding of how their creativity works for them in everyday academic life. The retreats included discussion of creativity and the creative process, the difficulties participants face with academic writing, and their understanding of the differences between creative and academic writing. Free-writing and creative writing exercises then encouraged participants to step outside the conventional academic mode of thinking and writing, and to enter a 'right brain' creative space. They played with language, told stories, and explored various writing forms (eg letter-writing, poetry and autobiography) to find ways of articulating what they had to say and to discover new ways of solving problems. Practical activity was interspersed with time for personal reflection and writing. Participants were invited to bring along a piece of writing they were working on and quiet space was set aside each afternoon for those who wanted to do this.

#### **Participants were invited to consider:**

- 1 what is your understanding of the creative process and how it relates to your academic work (teaching, research, writing, administration, interactions with students and colleagues)?
- 2 what blocks your creativity and what enhances it?
- 3 what is the relationship between academic writing and creative writing?
- 4 how can you encourage creativity in your students?
- 5 what would be the effect on staff and students if the Universities of Brighton and Sussex were more consciously creative spaces?

The retreat provided a safe space for undertaking new learning – learning which is grounded in personal experience and in interpersonal interaction. Creativity was explored through emotional and physical engagement and through intellectual understanding. In this way, we hoped that participants experienced 'deep' and holistic learning, which was sustainable beyond the retreat.

This retreat both draws and builds on a growing body of work which examines the links between creative and academic writing and explores the use of creative strategies to develop academic writing (including Grant and Knowles 2000; Hunt and Creme 2002; Lee and Boud 2003; Moore 2003). Our approach is also much influenced by Gillie Bolton's work on the value of reflective writing as a developmental tool in professional practice (Bolton 2005).

#### **Expectations of participants and their experiences of the retreats**

We asked participants to fill in an application form when requesting a retreat place, stating their reasons for applying. We wanted to a) ensure that participants understood the aims and scope of the retreats (eg that we would not be teaching academic writing skills) and b) gather information on participants' expectations, in order to design the retreats appropriately.

Participants' main reasons for applying for a retreat place were:

- to introduce a 'freshness' into their writing and wider academic work. Their creativity and writing often flagged when faced with the pressures of academic life
- to build confidence in their writing abilities, to learn how to write freely and overcome blocks
- to explore the relationship between creative and academic writing, between writing and the other art forms they practised
- to have 'time out', a space away from everyday academic life, to reflect and re-evaluate
- to meet colleagues who were also interested in developing their creativity, to discuss potential outlets for their creativity in academic life.

We asked participants to complete feedback forms at the end of each retreat. Feedback on both retreats was overwhelmingly positive. Examples include:

*'I have so enjoyed today. It has given me a real lift – suggested some insights that I already feel will be helpful'*  
*'I'll do more writing and feel really quite inspired'*  
*'It's brought back the pleasure of writing'*  
*'I feel more confident about expressing myself'*  
*'Thank you so much for such a stimulating and enjoyable retreat. It was a rare treat to be able to think so freely and hopefully creatively about the kinds of ways we all put pen to paper'*  
*'It was an enjoyable and enormously helpful experience'*  
*'I thought I might get a tip or two but instead I have a change of attitude which is much more valuable'*  
*'Permission to stretch some long-unstretched creative muscles'*  
*'There wasn't anything I didn't enjoy'*  
*'Inspiring and insightful!'*

Although both retreats achieved our stated aims, feedback suggests that the residential element deepened the retreat experience. Several participants described the overnight stay as a 'luxury' and said they valued the time away from work and family commitments and the chance to focus on themselves, their writing and creativity.

Participants made several suggestions for how we could improve the retreats. These included:

- requiring, rather than inviting, participants to read out their work (although other participants said they valued the fact we offered a choice about whether to read or not)
- including more structured creative writing exercises rather than free-writing/reflective writing during the morning sessions
- warning participants before the retreat that exercises had a personal focus and would draw on personal, and perhaps difficult, feelings and experiences.

We took on board all these points and have considered them when designing further retreats. Interestingly, the feedback forms from the residential retreat contained more constructive criticism than those from the non-residential. We suspect that a) residential retreat participants felt more comfortable with us following our group evening meal and overnight stay, and so expressed their opinions more freely; b) the overnight stay offered participants more time for reflection, for getting in touch with what they thought and felt, including their thoughts and feelings about the retreat.

### Examples of writing produced by participants during the retreat

We invited participants to send examples of their writing for us to include in the project report. Here are a few of them:

*'For me, creative writing is about taking risks. Freedom. To date, my writing has been constrained by academic conventions which haven't always been in my interests. As an academic, I feel caught up in simultaneously occurring, absolutely meaningless, multiverses. Cheated, I'm tied to a training rather than an educational agenda. I want to write myself in opposition to what I've written before. What does this say about my identity? Fractured? Schizoid? Or does it signal a desire to be whole; to find myself anew. I want to be creative; to start from ground zero'.*

#### 1 My brother is very fat

My brother is very fat  
He has a fat wife  
They feed on fat ideas, which they spew up again and again  
They swallow everything

Fat words pop out of their fat mouths  
Faster than fat food  
Clogging up the space between us  
forever

Undigested half-truths  
plump lies  
celebratory cakes

Gorging on their mediocrity  
their recipe for knowing me  
is always minus my ingredients

(Brighton lecturer)

## 2 The Magic Box

I will put in a box, a walk by the ocean, the oscillating colours of the  
phosphorescence – gasping for breath

I will put in a box, a storm door banging downstairs while the fire roars  
– flushed skin

I will put in a box, the purr of a cat, contentment  
– captured heart

I will put in a box, the work of Kandinsky, colour and place, symbol and feeling  
– whole canvas

I will put in a box, all this and more, and this box will be ours  
– shared life

(Brighton lecturer)

## 3 Untitled

There were days when the sky was blue, days when it fell around her ears, torn with pain in the muscles of her  
thighs, a head that didn't admit to the real world. Outside of the energy, the coming and going, working, usefulness,  
she would lie behind dark glasses, blinds drawn against guilt. Days slipped away without her moving to stop them.  
Mid-morning, sun fading into late afternoon, she sat in stillness, listening to the blood inching from her heart to tired  
muscles, the muddled brain, doing its healing in slow motion, time without measure, in a place where a month was  
no longer than an exhalation of breath, a sigh. Clocks stopped, no need to measure the detail of a cuticle's growth in  
solitude, her weight gathering at the base of her spine

(Sussex lecturer)

## 4 Marcus

You are worn denim and old brown leather shoes

You are a smile across a roomful of people

You are a stolen embrace behind a closed door

You are a cup of coffee, an old film, a postcard from India

You are a giant with a child inside

You are an old pocket watch wrapped in cloth

You are an aged satchel, a dog-eared book

You are an elephant, who loves spiders

You are a wise father and my best friend

(Brighton lecturer)

## Our experiences of running the retreats

We each wrote a reflective account of running the retreats. These are too long to share with you here, but here are  
some extracts to give you a flavour of the events:

'Participants were tentative at first – perhaps picking up on our own anxiety. When we asked them to read out their  
writing, they spoke about the writing rather than reading it. I had hoped they'd take a risk, step out of their academic  
personas, share their writing. I felt slightly disappointed. But we were also careful not to expect too much too soon,  
not to push. And maybe we hadn't made the space safe enough. A participant voiced her own disappointment.

This broke the spell. From then on, the personal and the academic collided. Exploded. Participants picked up the pieces and examined them: why don't we let our personal voices speak more often? What are our personal voices anyway and what do they have to say? What has blocked them and how can we find them? I was moved by the level of public self-questioning and sharing that participants began to engage in. But I also realised Jess and I had a big responsibility to construct and maintain boundaries, to keep people 'safe'. I started to listen to the group with my ears, my eyes, my gut, my whole body. By the end of the day, I was exhausted!' (Maria)

'A few days later we had to motivate ourselves for the residential retreat which was a struggle as the non-residential retreat had been a success in terms of feedback and participation and Maria and I were dreading a crash after this enormous high. The Creativity Zone at Sussex has beanbags which meant that we were all obliged to physically relax as soon as we arrived. It was amusing watching a room of academics slumped, reclined and at ease on giant soft furnishings and it helped me to feel more at ease and recharged. Maria had been worried that because we were repeating our material that we would be stale but a new group brought entirely new and unique discussions and ideas and work. Even though many of the anxieties were similar to the first retreat, the atmosphere still felt charged and stimulating. A creative and dedicated space, where people felt safe and supported, eased the pressures of work and they were able to take time to feel positive about themselves – professionally, personally and of course, as writers'. (Jess)

As Jess's extract shows, the venues had a big effect on the atmosphere of the retreats. Both retreats were held in the newly constructed 'Creativity Zones' at the University of Brighton and Sussex<sup>2</sup>. The Sussex Zone was more conducive to a writing retreat as it was a larger, more comfortable space with beanbags and movable walls which could create separate areas for different activities. A popular feature of both Zones however, were the write-on, wipe-off walls which encouraged experimental, fun and uninhibited writing.

### **The benefits of creative writing for professional development, within and outside of HE**

Jess has been researching the impact of the retreats on staff development as part of her Education Doctorate. She held focus groups and interviews with participants to ask them what effects, if any, the retreats have had on their writing and other academic practice. Initial findings are:

- Participants found the similarities and continuities drawn between creative and academic writing useful. For those who write creatively as well as academically, the retreat gave permission for them to reconcile these two forms and the associated parts of their identity.
- Having 'time out' for the retreats, made the participants reflect on the time they allocate to writing – and to other 'personal' activities – in the course of their daily work. Writing time was seen as time for themselves. Participants were still struggling with feelings of guilt and self-indulgence around taking this time – time away from students, colleagues, families.
- Participants reported that the retreats did increase their confidence with writing. This confidence had come mainly from realising they were allowed to put their own voice into their academic writing, rather than take on a detached 'abstract' academic voice. They had a renewed ownership of their writing.
- The retreat also influenced participants' teaching. Some of them had tried out new, more creative, activities with their students since coming on the retreat.

For more information on this research, please contact Jess.

### **Conclusion**

At the time of writing this article, we felt that the first two retreats were overall very successful and are looking forward to running our next retreat in March 2008. This retreat will be open to academics from universities across the UK and beyond. For more information have a look at our website: [www.workwritelive.com](http://www.workwritelive.com). Hope to see you at one of our events!

<sup>2</sup> The Creativity Zones, designed and operated by InQbate, are high technology areas intended to enhance creativity in learning and teaching. There are two Zones: one at Brighton and one at Sussex.

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## Biographies

**Dr Maria Antoniou** was until recently a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Brighton. As well as writing funding bids, managing research projects, and writing reports, journal articles and book chapters, she runs a programme of writing support for university staff. This includes teaching the module Writing for Academic Publication and providing one-to-one writer's surgery sessions. Maria has a PhD in Women's Studies from the University of Manchester, which focused the theory and practice of autobiography. Maria teaches autobiographical writing in educational and community settings and mentors writers producing their autobiographies. She has trained in counselling and has recently qualified and is practicing as a life coach.

**Jess Moriarty** is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Language, Literature and Communication at the University of Brighton. She teaches undergraduates on the degree programmes that have received excellent feedback and she has extensive experience in facilitating writing workshops and retreats for students and professional alike. Jess is currently writing her paper for a doctorate in education and also her first novel. She has written in a variety of genres and carried out research into staff development and writing techniques.

# Assessing the perceived value of reflective practice in two different modules

Sue Will and Bob Smale

## Abstract

We teach on a range of programmes at the University of Brighton Business School and use a variety of reflective techniques with different cohorts of students. In 2006-7 we conducted two small research projects in two different taught modules in order to assess how students perceived the value of reflective practice when compared with other pedagogic techniques. In this article we give some background to the modules and then develop a theoretical framework, before reporting upon our results and drawing some conclusions as to the students' perceived value of reflective practice in the two modules.

## Introduction

We teach on a range of programmes at the University of Brighton Business School and use a variety of reflective techniques with different cohorts of students. In June 2006 we attended a Business, Management, Accounting and Finance Subject Centre (BMAF) of the Higher Education Academy workshop at Portsmouth run by Professor George Allen on 'Reflective learning journals'. This both renewed and encouraged our interest in reflective practice and also inspired us to undertake some research into reflection, as experienced by our own students.

This article will report on two small research projects which we have conducted in two different taught modules, in order to assess how students perceived the value of reflective practice, when compared with other pedagogic techniques. We identified two dissimilar programmes for our research work, namely Managing Organisations and People (MOP) and Managing for Results (MfR).

In this article we will give some background to the two modules, and then try to explain the theoretical background to reflection within the context of our work, before outlining our methodology, reporting the results for both modules and then coming to some conclusions as to the value of using reflective practices to support learning in the two modules.

## Background to the modules

MOP is a year long double module for full-time students studying undergraduate courses in finance, accounting and law. In MOP students are asked to complete a 'Reflective learning journal' after each lecture (see *Appendix 1*). These are not assessed, but rather they are used as both a form of post lecture reflection and as pre-seminar preparation. The concept of reflection is introduced in the first lecture of the programme and students are asked to consider its value in small groups at this point. They are also introduced to the document, which is appended to the lecture handout and briefed on how it is to be used.

The Reflective learning journal document comprises five boxes, of which the first three are to be completed before the seminar in order that the student can identify what for them were key learning points from the lecture and what they have learnt from their reading and also to reflect upon how they might use what they have learnt in practice.

At the outset of each MOP seminar, students are asked to put their completed learning journals on the table. The seminar leader will tend to praise students who have made a good attempt to complete them, but where little or nothing is written, students are asked to complete box four also known as the 'naughty step'. The journals are then used as the basis for a warm activity before the students are split into small groups in order to complete a problem based learning activity.

Managing for results (MfR) is a single module for part-time students who are completing the first year of the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) Professional Development Scheme. Part of the assessment for this module requires students to write a series of four 'Reflective statements' on key themes associated with

the module content. Reflection forms an integral part not only of this module but also of the course and is further developed in subsequent years.

A workshop on reflective writing is provided at the start of the programme to help students to develop their written skills in this area. As guidance it is suggested that initially the students write their reflections under the following four headings: 'what happened', 'what I thought', 'what I learnt' and 'what I will do as a result'. Students are encouraged to undertake their reflective writing throughout the module and tutorial time is provided for help and support with this activity.

### The theoretical background to reflection

In trying to understand the nature of the problem, a working hypothesis was developed that was based on our experience of teaching established theory to Level 1 students within our subject area. The model devised (*figure 1*) shows two variables, with 'hard' and 'soft' learning on one axis and 'high' and 'low' student engagement on the other. It seeks to demonstrate the connection between students' levels of commitment and the relative perceived importance of different vehicles for learning.

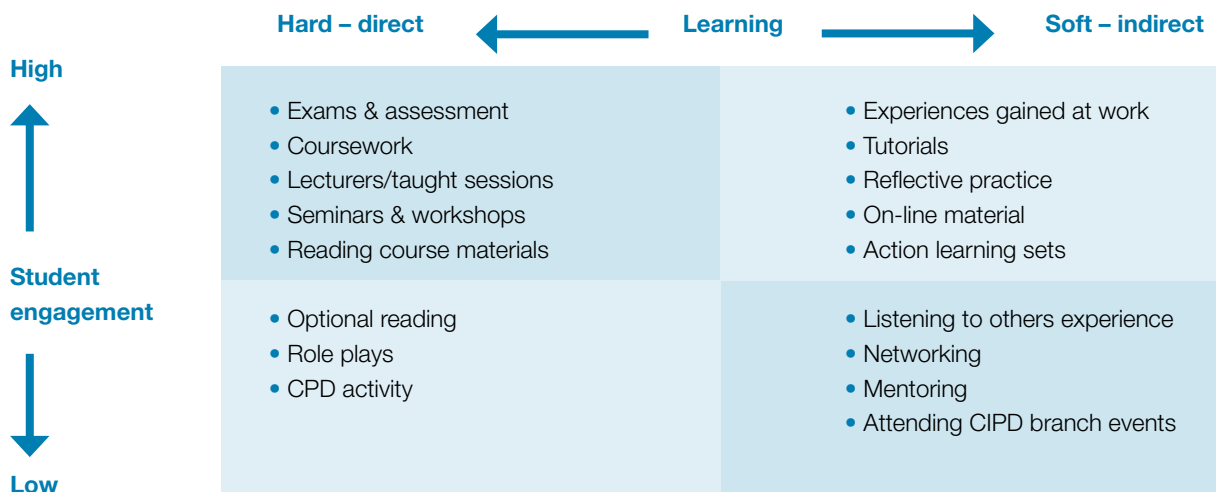


Figure 1 Learning preferences hypothesis – student levels of commitment to different vehicles for learning

'Hard learning' is seen here to include all structured events that relate to the course. This could be anything from attending lectures and seminars to course reading, or even taking module examinations. In other words all those activities that are seen as traditionally associated with academic achievement. Student engagement with such activity is seen to be relatively high as it is regarded as necessary to achieving a successful outcome, by passing the module. 'Soft learning' is perhaps seen by students as the less clearly defined learning events, including those obtained from experience, feedback from tutorials, listening to the experiences of others on the programme and talking to other students in coffee breaks. Such events are more likely to be under the control of the student and are often unplanned and unstructured events and for this reason are perhaps not always seen as real learning. Student engagement with these events would seem to be high where it demonstrates relevance to their studies, otherwise the tendency is to view them with low priority.

Our observations suggest that reflective practice is seen by students as fitting within the category of 'soft learning'. It is not seen as acquiring knowledge by one of the more traditional academic routes and as such is not valued to the same extent. Some students might even fail to view it as a valid method of learning.

Brockbank and McGill (1998,43) have developed an integrated model of learning based upon the three domains, namely; 'emotions', 'knowledge' and 'actions'. In both modules, the use of reflection is primarily focused upon the knowledge domain, although students are also asked how they think they might use the knowledge they have acquired, which is clearly located in the action domain. However, there is only limited evidence of reflection which falls within the emotional domain by students in either module.

The work of Moon (2000) may also be helpful in understanding the concept of reflection as undertaken in our study as it is designed to show the levels of attention that might be given to an experience or incident. She suggests (2000,138) a hierarchy of terms which commences with 'noticing' and ascends through 'making sense', 'making meaning', and 'working with the meaning' to 'transformational learning', the implication being that reflection helps us to progress to the higher levels of learning. A link is also made between maturity and the acquisition of the higher levels of learning and suggests that the ability to reflect only becomes possible when we are old enough to have something to reflect upon. However, she acknowledges that in some cases surface learning can become deeper learning with the aid of reflection. In both MOP and MfR, we observe a considerable difference in the depth of reflection which students achieve.

Brockbank and McGill (1998,45) have developed a model which seeks to explain how reflection helps to lift our learning from single loop (the learning cycle) to double loop learning, which takes our understanding onto a new level. In this model reflection becomes the means by which a higher level of thinking can be developed and taken to new levels of understanding. In MOP we ask students how they think they might be able to put new learning into practice, and in MfR we ask how it might alter their practice in the workplace.

### **Research methodology**

The aim of our research was to gain a fuller understanding of student attitudes and perceptions of the value of reflective practice compared to other pedagogical methods used in their programmes. For this reason the research was primarily undertaken using an interpretivist approach, as this purports to illuminate an individual's perceptions of the world.

As the main focus of the two studies was to establish student attitudes to reflective practice, it followed that data from the two populations would form a significant part of the investigation. The need to provide anonymity was also seen as an ethically important consideration for both groups. As reflective practice is a requirement of both programmes students might feel unable to express their true opinions if they felt a negative response could be traced back to them. It was therefore decided due to the population size and the need for anonymity the most suitable vehicle for obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data would be via a questionnaire.

We used similar questionnaires with both cohorts and asked a variety of quantitative questions with some scope for qualitative comments. Students were also asked to identify which pedagogic techniques they had used and which they favoured, and to make a qualitative assessment of, and to collect qualitative comments upon, their experience of reflective practice.

The questionnaire was initially developed for MfR, this being by far the smaller cohort, and it was piloted with students on another programme at the university to test the reliability and validity of its structure and design. Amendments were made as a result of the feedback obtained and ambiguous questions were reworded. It was further revised for use with the MOP cohort, with additional questions being added in order to gather some demographic data. The resulting two questionnaires are shown in *Appendices 2 and 3*.

In MfR the questionnaire was distributed at the end of the module in a taught session whilst in MOP the questionnaire was distributed a few weeks prior to the end of teaching, again in taught sessions. In both cases the students were briefed before completion that we were conducting research on how students learn. Respondents were not asked to identify themselves when completing the documentation, and thus anonymity was preserved.

### **The MOP findings**

The MOP sample size was 52 of 120-130 students who were enrolled on the module. The sample was predominantly young, as 63 per cent were under the age of twenty-one, more likely to be female (58 per cent), and of home origin (81 per cent). Whilst 42 per cent reported being at school or college in the previous year, 37 per cent were in work or on a gap year.

MOP Students reported that they had experienced the following learning methods:

Lectures:	98%
Seminars:	98%
Self directed learning/reading etc.	86%
Reflective learning journals	71%
Online or computer based learning:	44%
Other methods	10%

MOP Students reported that they considered the most and least effective methods in developing their learning to be:

Method	Most	Least
Seminars	44%	2%
Lectures	25%	13%
Self directed learning/reading etc.	25%	12%
Reflective learning journals	0%	40%
Online or computer based learning	2%	25%
None/no response.	4%	8%

These responses would seem to indicate that seminars were more popular than lectures and self-directed learning, although not perhaps overwhelmingly so. The results also suggest a clear bias against both reflective practice and online learning methods. However, students were also asked to score their first, second and third preferences for both most and least effective methods. Analysis of this data showed that seminars were rated the first, second or third most effective method by 96 per cent of respondents, with only 8 per cent giving it as their first, second or third least effective method. Self directed learning was rated in their top three most effective learning methods by 77 per cent, whilst reflective learning journals were considered among their three least effective by 63 per cent. It was a surprise to us that online learning was also quite unpopular, with 54 per cent scoring this in their three least effective methods and only 18 per cent in their three most effective.

MOP Students gave the following results when asked: 'How successful is reflective practice as a method of learning for you?'

Not successful			Very successful		
1	2	3	4	5	6
9.6%	19.2%	32.7%	30.7%	7.7%	0%

This shows a clear majority of MOP students reporting that they did not find reflective practice successful. When asked 'How useful have you found the reflective learning journal provided?' students gave the following results:

Very useful			Not very useful		
1	2	3	4	5	6
3.8%	21.1%	15.4%	15.4%	28.8%	15.4%

Here we see a clear bias against reflective learning journals specifically, and perhaps against reflective practice in general. However, responses to the qualitative question 'What are your views of reflective practice as a tool for learning?' were less negative, with 50 per cent reporting it to be 'generally useful/helpful' against only 25 per cent suggesting that it was 'Not generally useful/waste of time'. Interestingly, 23 per cent mentioned exam revision and or memory, whilst four percent made other comments which could not be easily categorized, and 29 per cent made no comment. This would suggest a somewhat more positive attitude to reflection than was apparent when MOP students scored reflection against other methods.

## MfR findings

MfR students reported that they had experienced the following learning methods:

Lectures:	100%
Seminars:	95%
Self directed learning/reading etc.	86%
Reflective practice	89%
Online or computer based learning:	79%

MfR students reported that they considered the most and least effective methods in developing their learning to be:

Method		Most	Least
Lectures		37%	15%
Seminars		47%	5%
Self directed learning/reading etc.		42%	10%
Reflective Learning Journals	1	0%	15%
Online or computer based learning		5%	42%

MfR students gave the following results when asked, 'How successful is reflective practice as a method of learning for you?'

Not successful				Very successful	
1	2	3	4	5	6
0%	25%	44%	25%	6%	0%

MfR students gave the following results when asked, 'How easy or difficult they found it to produce reflective statements for assessment purposes'

Very easy				Very difficult	
1	2	3	4	5	6
0%	12%	23%	35%	18%	12%

MfR responses to the question 'What are your views of reflective practice as a tool for learning?' can be summarised as follows:

Generally useful/helpful	24%
Not generally helpful/difficult	36%
Other comment	20%
No comment	20%

This might suggest a slightly more positive attitude towards using reflection, than was shown when MfR students scored reflection against other methods of learning. MfR Students made a range of qualitative comments including:

- 'it can be interesting to look back but can feel rather contrived'*
- 'sometimes it has provided real clarity'*
- 'reflection best done in your head and spontaneously rather than being forced'*
- 'I find it extremely difficult to write reflectively and am not sure of the benefits'*
- 'looking back on incidents and analysing my behaviour is a good learning tool'*
- 'probably more value to people who have spent more years in the workplace'.*

### Comparison of MOP and MfR results

The MOP students' dislike of the reflective journal may perhaps be related to its use as a form of seminar preparation, and which also might perhaps be seen as form of 'homework'. However, there was a general improvement in MOP seminars, despite their apparent unpopularity. In addition, reflective practice was perceived as a valuable revision technique by many students. In MfR, where students are assessed directly on their reflective writing, it might possibly create a further set of problems and diminish its perceived value as a tool for learning. However, in subsequent years of the programme it is generally seen that the quality of reflection improves, the more the skill is put into action. It is therefore suggested that by exposing students to this early on in their studies the better they will ultimately become at learning in this dimension.

It should perhaps be noted that as both cohorts were in the first year of their courses and as most students were new to higher education, that reflection may be a skill that they may develop later. The research has focused on students who are in the process rather than those who have completed it, from whom we may have solicited very different results.

### Conclusion

Whilst there may be compelling reasons for incorporating reflective practice into taught modules, it is clear from our research that very many of our students do not like it and that some find it difficult to do. However, we consider that although many students dislike reflective practice it might still be seen as a valuable developmental tool. In both cases the cohorts we selected were first level students who may have been new to reflective practice and it may perhaps be that with repetition that they might yet come to value the process more highly. We would suggest that our research raises a number of important questions which might be considered worthy of further exploration, and that these include:

- what is the value of reflective practice for those students who are reluctant to participate or don't want to engage with it at all?
- do we as educators, perhaps over rate the value of reflective practice to our students?
- what might be done to make reflective practice more relevant and perhaps more effective for more of our students?

### Bibliography

Brockbank A and McGill I (1998) *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*, Society for Research into Higher Education.

Moon J (2000) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development*, Kogan Page.

### Biographies:

#### Bob Smale

Bob commenced his working life in banking, working his way up from junior clerk to assistant branch manager and finally spending two years as a full time trade union representative. Then as a student, he completed a Labour Studies Diploma at Ruskin College Oxford and then a first degree and MPhil at the University of Kent, the latter whilst teaching locally in further and adult education. At Brighton Business School, he has been involved in leading and teaching human resource modules whilst also developing an interest in pedagogy and presenting a number of papers at the Learning and Teaching Conference.

#### Sue Will

Sue is a qualified teacher with a BA in Professional Education and an MA in Personnel and Development. She is a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and advises on the national CPD panel. Prior to joining the higher education sectors Sue spent several years working for large city institutions as a human resource advisor, firstly within insurance broking and latterly with two large firms of city solicitors. She has 12 years lecturing experience seven of these working within the Brighton Business School. She currently teaches on the CIPD professional programmes and has a research interest in reflective practise.

# Appendix 1

## MOP – Reflective learning journal for lectures

1 What for you, were the key learning points of this lecture?

2 What else did you learn from your reading to extend your knowledge?

3 How do you think you might use it in your future career?

4 What, if anything, prevented you from learning more about the topic?

5 What else do you need to find out about this topic to deepen your knowledge?

# Appendix 2

CIPD Licentiate – student questionnaire

I am currently undertaking a small research project to try and identify if effective student learning is linked to particular modes of delivery. Participants should be reassured that the data will be classed as confidential and that their contribution will remain anonymous.

<b>1 When were you last in full or part time education? (please tick)</b>	
Less than 1year ago <input type="checkbox"/>	1–3 years ago <input type="checkbox"/> 4–6 years ago <input type="checkbox"/> 7–9 years ago <input type="checkbox"/> 10+ years ago <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2 Are you currently in paid employment?</b>	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>3 What level of academic qualifications have you obtained to date? (please tick)</b>	
GCSEs <input type="checkbox"/>	NVQ's <input type="checkbox"/> A Levels <input type="checkbox"/> HND <input type="checkbox"/> Degree <input type="checkbox"/>
Post Graduate <input type="checkbox"/>	CPP <input type="checkbox"/> CTP <input type="checkbox"/> Other please specify.....
<b>4 From your previous experiences as a student have you taken part in any of the following? (please tick all applicable)</b>	
a Formal lectures <input type="checkbox"/>	h On line learning / computer based learning <input type="checkbox"/>
b Taught classroom situations <input type="checkbox"/>	i Reflective practice <input type="checkbox"/>
c Seminar activities <input type="checkbox"/>	j Action learning sets <input type="checkbox"/>
d Workshops <input type="checkbox"/>	k Study groups <input type="checkbox"/>
e Role plays <input type="checkbox"/>	l Self directed learning – reading, self study etc. <input type="checkbox"/>
f Tutorials <input type="checkbox"/>	m Mentoring relationships <input type="checkbox"/>
g Discussion groups <input type="checkbox"/>	n Other please specify.....
<b>5a Which three from the above list has proved the most effective in assisting your learning?</b>	
1.....    2.....    3.....    Other please specify.....	
<b>5b Which three from the above list has proved the least effective in assisting your learning?</b>	
1.....    2.....    3.....    Other please specify.....	
<b>6a If you have been involved in using reflective practice as a learning tool what format has this taken? (please tick all those applicable)</b>	
No experience in this area <input type="checkbox"/>	
Diaries <input type="checkbox"/>	
Journals <input type="checkbox"/>	
Logs <input type="checkbox"/>	
Stories <input type="checkbox"/>	
Statements <input type="checkbox"/>	
Other please specify.....	
<b>6b If you have experienced reflective practice in the past on a scale of 1-5 how successfully is it as a method of learning for you? (please tick)</b>	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Not successful	—————> Very successful

By completing this form it is assumed that the information can be analysed for research purposes. Thank you for your participation, all data submitted will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Sue Will MCIPD**

# Appendix 3

## MOP study questionnaire

I am currently undertaking a small research project to try and identify if effective student learning is linked to different modes of delivery. I would be most grateful if you would take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire.

Participants should be reassured that the data will be classed as confidential and that their contribution will remain anonymous.

<b>1 Which age band do you fall within (please tick)?</b>					
Under 21 <input type="checkbox"/>	21-25 <input type="checkbox"/>	Over 25 <input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>2 What is your gender (please tick)?</b>					
Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>3 Where do you come from (please tick)?</b>					
UK <input type="checkbox"/>	Channel Islands <input type="checkbox"/>	EU <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>4 Before your current course of study here, were you previously (please tick)?</b>					
At school <input type="checkbox"/>	At college <input type="checkbox"/>	At university <input type="checkbox"/>	Working <input type="checkbox"/>	Gap year <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5 Are you currently in paid employment?</b>					
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>6 What were your strongest learning style(s) that you identified in BAS or PAS Workshop 2?</b>					
Activist	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Reflector	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pragmatist	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Theorist	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Don't know/can't recall	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>7 Which activities from the following list have you participated in? (please tick)</b>					
a Lecturers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b Seminars activities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c Online learning/computer based learning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d Reflective learning journals	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e Self directed learning – reading, self study etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f Other please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>8 Which three activities from the above list have proved the most effective in developing your learning?</b>					
1.....	2.....	3.....	Other please specify.....		
<b>9. Which three activities from the above list have proved the least effective in developing your learning?</b>					
1.....	2.....	3.....	Other please specify.....		

*Continues overleaf*

<b>10 On a scale of 1-6, how successful is reflective practice as a method of learning for you?</b>					
Not successful					Very successful
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>11 How useful have you found the Reflective learning journal provided?</b>					
Very useful					Not very useful
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>12 What are your views on using reflective practice as a tool for learning?</b>					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					
.....					

By completing this form it is assumed that the information can be analysed for research purposes.

Thank you for your participation, all data submitted will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Bob Smale, University of Brighton.**