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Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology

Case studies: Lessons learned

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Introduction

Contributing institutions

Aberystwyth University

Funding models for purchasing audio and video equipment

Strategy objectives

The activities described in this case study were designed to address the objectives:

ii. Mainstreaming the role of technology in enhancing learning

v. Enhancing the student learning experience.

Background

As part of our technology-enhanced learning activities, Aberystwyth University set aside some funds to support small technology-enhanced learning projects. Staff could bid for funding for a variety of projects. This case study relates not to the projects themselves, which were all successful and had a positive impact on learning and teaching, but rather to some of the decisions that were made in the allocation of funding and resourcing of audio-visual equipment.

During the funding calls, a number of departments requested the purchase of audio and video equipment. At this time, the university had a limited number of cameras and recording devices in a central loan stock. However, the aim of funding department-level purchasing was to give staff easy access to equipment and encourage them to use them for learning activities with their students. Activities requiring students to produce video material would then be easy to run – staff wouldn't have to rely on students using their own equipment, students wouldn't have to compete with other students and staff members for centrally-held loan stock. It was further hoped that having visible, successful media-enhanced learning activities in departments would encourage more staff to consider them as viable options for their teaching. Departments would be able to cascade information about using media in teaching to other colleagues. Once the activities had run, equipment was designed to stay in the departments to enable the activities to run again and also to enable follow-on projects to take place. It was also hoped that, when not in use, other departments would be able to ask to borrow the equipment.

Lessons learnt and reflection

The learning activities that required equipment provided ran successfully during the first few years and staff and students were satisfied with uses they were able to make. However, gradually staff moved on and modules changed, and it has been hard to keep track of where the equipment is and whether it is being used. Once the programme was underway, we decided to ask staff to put the equipment into the general university loan stock after they had finished using it. However, there was no efficient mechanism to ensure that this happened, and equipment is still housed in departments.

The departments in question have undoubtedly benefitted from easy access to video and audio equipment, and it has helped them to take flexible approaches to planning media-enhanced learning activities. However, because the equipment hasn't been available to other departments, those outside the funded departments have still had to use a small centrally-funded loan stock for any media-based projects.

Based on our experiences of the resource allocation used in these projects, we have changed our model of funding enhancement activities such that now any equipment purchased is automatically added to our centrally available loan stock system. Whilst this does mean that more people have the opportunity to make use of that equipment, potentially causing problems if several modules need it at the same time, it also means that a wider group of people are able to make use of it. This is particularly relevant if the video activity only runs for a few weeks during one semester.

Since this project, student-owned devices have become more ubiquitous. Our experiences of the Making More Mobile project and data from surveys such as the AU Learner Experience Survey have demonstrated that students are willing and able to use their own devices for learning activities. Given the high quality of mobile devices and the growing popularity of a Bring Your Own Device model, asking students to use their own equipment, and supplementing with a small stock of centrally-owned devices, is also becoming a viable model of running media-enhanced learning projects.

Despite the issues relating to resource allocation, the projects requiring the purchase of specific equipment did stimulate an interest in media-enhanced learning activities.

Kate Wright, E-learning Team, May 2014

Bangor University

Pushing boundaries, sharing resources

Background

Blackboard Learn has been Bangor's VLE of choice for several years. A conscious decision to make it the vehicle for all on line learning has meant other software and systems are integrated with it. Such systems include Banner, the student records system, Talis aspire the library reading list software, Turnitin and Panopto software. This has enabled Bangor to focus its online teaching and learning to a single place, which we believe enhances the student learning experience and is also beneficial to academic staff.

However such integrations are not without their own issues too. As staff increase their use of Blackboard, systems not only have to be robust but are subject to further demands from staff as they wish to extend the learning capability of Blackboard.
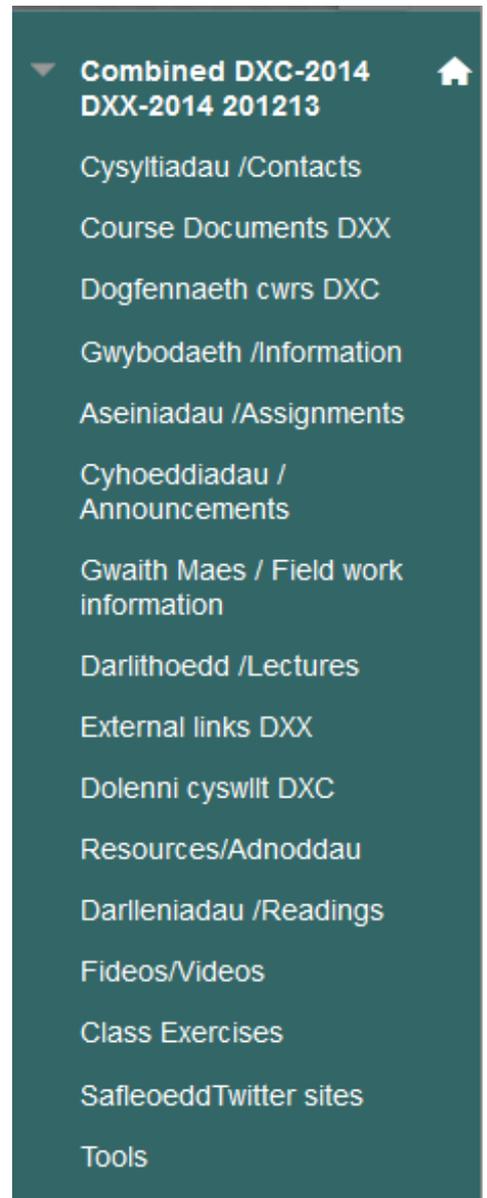
Challenges

The Learning Technology team often receive requests from academics wanting to push the boundaries of the software which is frequently interesting and often a challenge.

One seemingly simple challenge of sharing resources in Blackboard has been achieved with mixed success, but is significantly better now than in the past.

For several reasons teaching staff sometimes need Blackboard sites combining to increase flexibility of provision, allow increased access or to simply save time and improve efficiency. In the past this task had to be undertaken manually, it was onerous and prone to error. Recently Blackboard has offered an automated merge tool function. Two or more modules can be combined into a single module. The merge tool effectively creates a single location where materials can be accessed by students and staff that have been enrolled on separate modules due to constraints imposed by the SIS

Recent examples of resource sharing in this way include:
- Combining the Welsh medium version with the English module, thus allowing full access to all resources regardless of language;
- Combining cross school or even cross college modules, for example project work or research skills;

Combined DXC-2014 DXX-2014 201213

Cysyltiadau /Contacts

Course Documents DXX

Dogfennaeth cwrs DXC

Gwybodaeth /Information

Aseiniadau /Assignments

Cyhoeddiadau / Announcements

Gwaith Maes / Field work information

Darlithoedd /Lectures

External links DXX

Dolenni cyswllt DXC

Resources/Adnoddau

Darlleniadau /Readings

Fideos/Videos

Class Exercises

SafleoeddTwitter sites

Tools

- Combining modules with an underlying common thread e.g. all Healthcare students have access to core information;
- Cross institution collaboration. This involves not just sharing resources but sharing access to other institution's installations e.g. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol;
- Cross functional collaboration with the library systems.

Lessons learnt

As the combinations become more complicated and diverse, the main challenge is the management of such sites as usually more than one staff member is involved, or even more than one school, or college or service department.

- Materials can inadvertently be duplicated;
- Users locked out due to SIS integration conflicts;
- Scalability is an issue when dealing with more than 1 year's student cohort.

We have found

Academic staff need to be clear what they want to achieve. It can be difficult to identify (and decide) how, when and why modules are combined.

Consideration is required on the impact merging sites will have on the other integrations, especially those hosted elsewhere.

All stake holders involved usually have other demands on their time as well as Blackboard management.

Communication is key, from the outset all staff need to understand how the site will operate. They may need some training or help to set up and manage the site effectively.

Regular updates on any issues which may impact on the student/staff teaching and learning experience is essential.

Future developments

We will continue to push the different software products to help the staff meet the needs of their teaching and to allow an enhanced learning experience for the students. This may mean we pilot ideas and eventually reject them for a better solution, but we always try to keep the student's learning at the forefront.

Cardiff University

## Using Grademark to improve the quality of feedback

Background, challenge and intended outcomes

Student dissatisfaction with feedback on their assessments is a UK-wide issue. To investigate what could be done to improve this, Cardiff University's Learning and Teaching Committee funded a collaborative research project in 2010/11 between the School of Nursing and Midwifery Studies (now the School of Healthcare Sciences), the School of Medicine and the School of Dentistry. This research project intended to examine student perceptions of electronic feedback and marking of students' summative essay-type assignments through Turnitin's GradeMark® tool. It has been claimed that GradeMark® can improve feedback, including enhancing students' ability to access feedback and the time taken to provide feedback. The intention of this study therefore was to find out two things: can the use of the GradeMark® tool help enhance the quality and consistency of feedback, and can it improve access and timeliness?

The approach

A pilot of the use of GradeMark® was carried out with a sample population within the three Schools. GradeMark® offers a toolset for online marking, and included the following uses by markers for this study:

- Annotation and highlighting, allowing detailed feedback to be placed at any point on the student's paper;
- Reusable 'QuickMarks' comments for repeating commonly-used feedback phrases (a stored 'bank' of comments which can be used and personalised);
- General comments about the paper overall;
- A marking rubric embedded within the software, which can be customised to the specific assignment. The rubric offers set criteria against which the student's work can be assessed and graded.
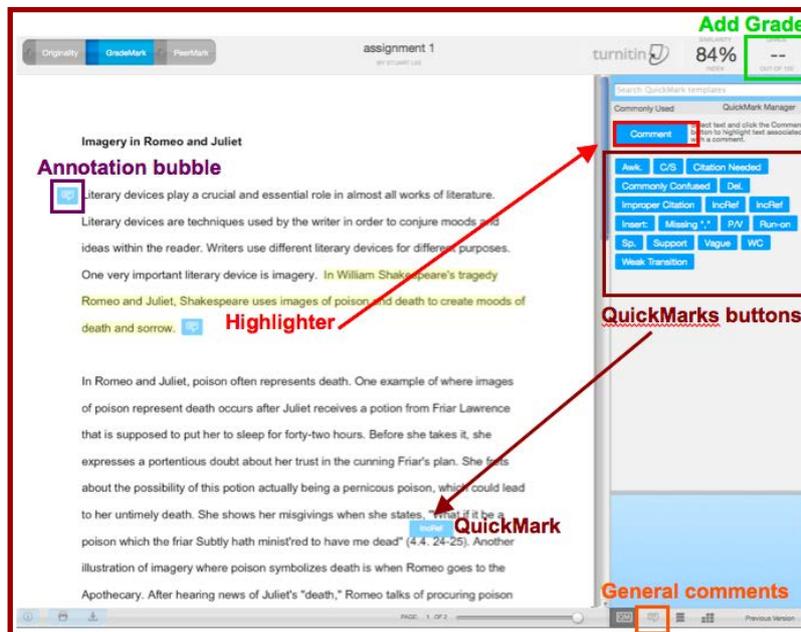
The GradeMark® tool was the only online marking solution considered for this research project. The key reasons for this were:

- It is integrated with the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE), so feedback and grades are available only to the individual student;
- Many students were already used to submitting assignments to Turnitin;
- Markers already had the appropriate secure access rights to student work.

Two members of staff were employed (seconded on a part-time basis) to manage the research project pilot over an academic year. All 35 assessors across the modules in the three Schools were trained to use the tool, once at the beginning of the academic year as part of a wider commitment to communication and management of change, and a second more focused session nearer the time marking began. A project steering group met regularly to discuss issues such as training, approaches to marking schema and methodologies, student requirements, and the pedagogical research approach for the study.

Response from students

Input from the students taking part in the study was a key part of the delivery of the project. The project steering group included student representation and met regularly. This gave students the opportunity to air any concerns about the approach taken.

The study itself involved a sample of students across the Schools. Those involved in the study were chosen purely by circumstance. At the time of the pilot, the tool was only really suitable for essay-type assignments due to its design; hence the student sample chosen was governed simply by the choice of assessment delivered in student's modules. 296 students participated and received feedback through GradeMark® for one essay-type assignment each.

At the end of the marking cycle itself, an evaluation study was carried out and all students offered the opportunity to feedback. Feedback data was collected in two ways: an online survey available for all students in the study with a series of closed (Likert scale) and open questions; and three discipline-specific focus groups, with semi-structured discussion questions, carried out with students randomly selected from each School. The response rate to the survey was 62%, and 27 students participated in the focus groups.

The project evaluation clearly showed that accessibility and timeliness of feedback had improved. Ease of access and timeliness was a common theme across the focus groups. 23 of 63 free texts comments mentioned ease of use, and 86% agreed in the survey that GradeMark® was effective for retrieving feedback. The results on quality and consistency were more difficult to ascertain; 57% agreed feedback received was constructive, and the same agreed they were satisfied with the quality of annotated feedback. Overall, the focus groups revealed that feedback is considered high value when it provides clear direction on how to improve existing and future work.

Benefits to the University

In relation to the perception of the influence of GradeMark® on feedback, students in the study were asked if it should be used more widely across the University. 74% of students agreed in the survey, and 18 out of 40 students reported in the free text comments that it was an improvement on previous marking systems. Students could see the potential of GradeMark® if used in the most effective ways to provide valued feedback.

The knowledge and experience gained from this case study was widely distributed across the University, and garnered significant interest in using the tool. In 2010/11 GradeMark® was used to give feedback on 3,365 papers. Usage has increased each year, and this year (2013/14) has already more than quadrupled (the figure so far to April 2014 stands at 13,904). It is likely that the distribution of the case study findings, along with learning technologists offering support and training, has contributed to the significant increase in the use of Turnitin GradeMark® across the University. It is also likely a contributing factor has been an improvement of features in GradeMark®, many of which were reported to the company as issues after the original research project. These features include:

- improvements to the rubric for more flexible marking schema;
- the ability to link annotations in the paper directly to the rubric;
- the ability to submit new file types, such as PowerPoint;
- the implementation of an audio feedback option;
- the introduction of an option to mark papers offline (currently available only for iPads).

These latest developments are really helping to make marking easier for our academic staff. Dr Jeremy Evas of the School of Welsh (pictured) said "*marking with Grademark on an iPad is an enormous help. If anything, it's even easier and quicker than on a PC. All the reusable functionality is available, and the audio feedback facility is accessible and straightforward. The best thing about it is the ability to mark 'offline' and later sync with Learning Central (our Virtual Learning Environment). This has enabled me to mark whilst travelling on business and make more productive use of my work time.*"

Learning points and insights

Accessibility and timeliness of feedback are important factors in students' use of feedback, and these are aspects GradeMark® clearly can assist with. However, it was clear from the research project that further work needs to be done on the consistency and quality of feedback. This is a common thread across higher education and does not depend on the use of a particular technology. The key learning point, therefore, is that a holistic approach to changing the way feedback is

delivered is important. An enhanced study on effective feedback would combine the use of a tool like GradeMark® (especially the combination of reusable comments and rubrics) with a closer study of marking, including 'team marking' and the processes involved, and staff development.

In summary

- GradeMark® offers a secure method to provide annotated feedback to students. Used effectively, rubrics, reusable comments (and now audio feedback) have the potential to improve the time it takes staff to provide feedback. This in turn improves timeliness of feedback returned to students;
- Students in the study clearly felt timeliness and accessibility was improved by the use of GradeMark®, which has some value in itself, but this did not necessarily increase their perceptions of the value of the feedback received for future work;
- The use of any online marking tool can only improve student perceptions of feedback to some degree. An enhanced review of the type of feedback given across modules and marking teams is needed.

Contact information

Enhanced Learning Technology Team - ELTT@cardiff.ac.uk
Registry and Academic Services
Cardiff University

For further details on the research project please see the paper published in the Journal of Information Technology Education 'Healthcare Students' Perceptions of Electronic Feedback through GradeMark®':
www.jite.org/documents/Vol13/JITEv13ResearchP027-047Watkins0592.pdf

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Improving student learning and engagement using a Personal Response System

Key Words: deep learning, feedback, engagement, participatory learning, interaction, clickers, discussion.

Where was the initiative introduced: Across Cardiff Metropolitan University

Background/Aim

In a typical lecture situation, only one or two students have the opportunity to answer a question. Even if the response is correct, a teacher has no way to gauge whether the rest of the class knew the right answer. Students who are unsure of the correct response are often unwilling to take the risk of being publicly incorrect and therefore do not engage in opportunities for discussion and participation. In large lecture theatres it is especially difficult for tutors to encourage interaction and dialogue, or to provide useful feedback to students on their performance. Consequently, students in these learning environments can become extremely passive.

In 2009, the Learning and Teaching Development Unit at Cardiff Metropolitan University invested in Personal Response System (PRS) software and 100 'clickers' to address the issues raised above. PRS can be used to encourage student interaction and promote active learning. Through small remote devices/clickers, teachers can poll or quiz their students, ensure that key learning points are being understood and increase opportunities for student interaction. Unlike asking students to raise their hands in response to a question, PRS responses are anonymous, thereby enabling students to provide input without fear of public humiliation and minimising students' concerns that more vocal peers will dominate the discussion. With PRS, student responses are registered instantly and results appear live, on-screen once the vote has been closed. Teachers can then provide immediate, customised feedback (e.g. clarifying key points that have not been understood by the class) based on the outcomes.

Description/approach

The Learning and Teaching Development Unit developed a number of materials and resources to enable staff to utilise the PRS. These included how-to guides that focused on creating and embedding questions into PowerPoint slides, setting up hardware, configuring settings and opening and closing polls. Learning Developers also delivered PRS training when required. Staff utilising the PRS were able to hire the equipment in preparation for, and on the day of, their teaching sessions.
Staff from various programmes across all five Schools within Cardiff Metropolitan University utilised the PRS between 2009 and 2013. Below are some examples of how the PRS has been implemented within the institution:

1. In preparation for a summative assessment

The PRS has been commonly used at Cardiff Met as a revision tool, or a means of testing students' understanding/knowledge retention in preparation for a summative assessment, such as an examination. Multiple choice questions (MCQ) are used to test content knowledge, and are often drawn from a bank used for formal assessment on the programme. The advantages of the PRS when used for this purpose are that "marking" is fully automatic; each learner can know immediately if they gave the right or wrong answer, how their performance on the question compares to the group as a whole and tailored explanations are typically provided by the teacher. Equally, teachers are able to see immediately where gaps in understanding exist and can then spend a few minutes per item to clarify or explain answers.

2. To provide students with choice in relation to their learning

A PRS may be used within a class/lecture situation in order to discover topics that should be focussed on during the class. One or several question items at the start of a class are used to select a topic for detailed coverage, while the same or similar items at the end can be used to establish to what degree the group now understood the topic.

3. Formative feedback to the teacher

Generally, students at Cardiff Met are required to complete a module feedback form at the end of each term. However, the PRS is sometimes used by lecturers who wish to receive anonymous module feedback on a more regular basis. For example, a tutor may carry out a quick on the spot anonymous poll half way through a class (e.g. on whether the pace is too fast or too slow, the jokes too numerous or infrequent, the examples too many or few). The advantage of this is that the tutor can respond to student feedback in a much timelier manner. Making adjustments to the teaching every 30 minutes, instead of only once a year, and furthermore making them for the particular group that gave the feedback, is much more likely to be effective than the usual practice.

4. Peer assessment

PRS has been used as a peer assessment tool. For example, each student is required to give a verbal presentation which is peer assessed. At the end of their talk, the teacher displays assessment criteria and the other students enter marks for each aspect of the presentation, anonymously. The outcomes are then displayed publicly. The use of the PRS saves the teacher administrative time and provides learners with immediate feedback.

Anticipated outcomes

It was anticipated that the use of the PRS would be associated with the following outcomes:
- Increased participation and active engagement of students.
- Greater opportunities for discussion and peer learning.
- Improved student motivation, confidence and interest in their learning.
- Enhanced understanding of key concepts/topics in students' chosen disciplines.

Evidence of actual outcomes

Evaluation of the PRS showed that the PRS is an excellent tool for module evaluation and peer feedback. However, staff feedback highlighted a number of practical issues associated with the PRS, which was a barrier to engagement. The handsets were extremely cumbersome and difficult to transport. This was a particular issue at Cardiff Met, which has three campuses spread across the city.

The technology was sometimes found to be unreliable, which led to staff perceiving the use of PRS in lectures as 'risky'. A number of lecturers became so concerned about technical failure during classes in which the PRS was used, they began to develop 'back up' lesson plans and slides which was extremely time consuming. Lecturers also experienced a sense of frustration when they were unable to book PRS equipment, if for instance it was already on loan to (or had not been returned by) another staff member.

Whilst students described their experience of using clickers in the classroom as 'fun' and 'engaging', they tended to view the PRS as a 'novelty' and not something that had significantly enhanced their learning. Students also felt that staff placed too much focus on the technological aspects of PRS rather than the emphasising the pedagogical benefits of the approach.

Further investigation into the pedagogical effectiveness of the PRS revealed that poll/quiz questions are often too simplistic, testing only students' knowledge retention or surface learning. Thus, the PRS was rarely used to probe understanding or to encourage deep learning. The clickers were typically only used once or twice in a module, usually prior to a summative assessment. Because this method of learning was not used systematically to support student learning, students simply saw their use of the PRS as a game and therefore did not always take their use of it seriously.

In response to these findings, the Learning and Teaching Development Unit developed additional guides and resources on best practice in the use of clickers. These guides included tips on creating questions designed to challenge students and encourage deep learning and effective approaches to embedding the use of clickers in learning and teaching activities.

Although the PRS was somewhat useful in increasing student participation within the classroom, students felt that this aspect could be further improved. Therefore, LTDU encouraged staff to adopt alternative approaches to PRS that could be used to increase peer discussion and collaboration, for example:
- A tutor provides clickers to pairs or small groups of students and asks them to discuss the question and come up with an agreed answer. The tutor then feeds back to all students based on the collated responses.
- A tutor provides a clicker to each student who responds to a question individually. The tutor, however, does not indicate the "right" answer but directs the class to discuss their answers in pairs or small groups, since research suggests that having to produce explanations and justifications is conducive to learning.

Glyndŵr University

Developing a feedback dialogue in a collaborative online space.

Background

This case study explores the use of a collaborative wiki page in Moodle to provide formative feedback for students studying on the FdA Childhood Studies (online delivery) at Glyndŵr University, North Wales.

The department of Childhood and Family Studies at Glyndŵr University has offered a distance learning Foundation Degree in Childhood Studies since 2009. The purpose of delivering the FdA online was to enable professionals within the children's workforce to access high quality academic study with a flexibility to fit around work and family commitments.

The programme recruits from around the UK and internationally, with approximately 25 students joining the FdA each year.

With an NSS score of 98% overall satisfaction (2013), the programme team work hard to support and retain students throughout their two years of study.

The Challenge

As students study in an online only environment, effective formative feedback is integral to retention. Students will stay with a course where they feel their effort and hard work is acknowledged and communication is effective.

In 2012, the Programme Leader carried out an investigation in to the quality, consistency and timeliness of formative feedback across the programme using the following assumptions:

- Dialogue around feedback is important to online students;
- How feedback is delivered makes a difference;
- Different tutors mark in different ways but often say the same thing;
- Feedback is most effective when given timely;
- Formative feedback and summative feedback do not need to be given at the same time.

Feedback from students tells us that when feedback is comprehensive and constructive they react in a positive way:

"I'm looking forward to the feedback now so that I can take on board anything else I need to try and do".

"At first I was a bit disappointed with the mark for my safeguarding essay as I had dropped down from my last two but after reading the positive feedback comments and the ways to improve for next time I felt better."

However this was not always the case for all tutors and marking practice.

Through discussions held with tutors the following points arose:

- Comprehensive formative feedback was time consuming to complete;
- When two pieces of work were submitted at the same time the student would likely get similar feedback from both tutors – duplication of effort;
- However, tutors could also give contradictory pieces of feedback which would lead to confusion for the student;
- Formative feedback was often given to the student at the end of the marking process at the same time as the summative mark. This limited the amount of time the student had to react to the feedback in time for their next piece of assessment;
- Tutors did not have sight of previous feedback therefore students who were repeatedly making the same mistakes were not identified or offered additional support;
- Once feedback had been returned to the student the marking tutor did not expect to engage the student in discussion as they would not 'see' the student in passing.

This led the Programme Leader to rethink how feedback could be approached in an online only environment to support both the level of quality required by the students and to address some of the issues raised through discussion with tutors.

The Pedagogical Approach

It was decided to pilot an approach which involved developing a collaborative dialogue around the formative feedback in one Moodle space i.e. a wiki page.

The approach involved each individual student and the marking tutors sharing a Moodle space where all formative feedback for the year would be communicated.

An example is given in Figure 1 below.

This enabled the following actions and changes:

- Tutors could see the feedback of the previous marker and provide their own feedback appropriately. This avoided duplication as the second marker could refer the student back to an unresolved issue from previous feedback;
- If the student was still producing the same mistake after the third or fourth marker had posted comments, then this pattern could easily be picked out and the student directed to further support;
- The student could access all their formative feedback in one place and also spot issues and see real improvement from one piece of work to another;
- Students were invited to comment on and ask questions about the feedback in the wiki space, and the marking tutor had somewhere specific to look for comments and could react appropriately;

- Feedback typed in to the wiki page could be accessed by the student immediately, there was no need to wait for the summative mark;
- As a team we could choose which pieces of work students would receive comprehensive formative feedback on so that it was spaced appropriately, which gave students time to make improvements and act on the feedback before the next piece of work in the process. This cut down on the amount of work for tutors as not every piece of work required formative feedback and therefore other quicker methods of marking i.e. a rubric could be used for some pieces of work.

An example of the feedback found in the wiki page is shown in Fig 1 below. This is only a snap shot of a couple of comments to show the interaction between the tutor and student and the second marker's use of previous feedback.

The 'ref' numbers refer to examples highlighted on the essay script. The aim is to have the feedback sit in the wiki page for everyone to see with only examples of the issue highlighted on the script.

See Fig 2 below for an example of what this looks like.

Assignment 1 – Child Development

Well done Leah…………………. (general opening comments about the piece of work)

- In academic writing use third person rather than first person – report it objectively – for example: 'To begin, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory will be discussed'. (ref 1)

- You have obviously read all of this information somewhere and you now need to acknowledge this. One of the most important elements of academic writing is to use citation and referencing in the text of your essay to provide evidence in support of your ideas, opinions, arguments and discussion. This avoids plagiarism and also provides you with the opportunity for you to demonstrate to the reader that you have read around the subject and acquired a certain amount of knowledge and thinking behind your ideas. Therefore, you need to consistently use referencing throughout your essay. (ref 2)

Thank Kate for your comments, by citation do you mean I need to write the author and date after each piece of information?

Hi Leah, yes to start with you should aim to use (surname, date).

Assignment 2 – Positive Relationships

Well done Leah …………………………………. (overall comment)

- Still using 'I' see (ref 1) above. Please go back to session 3 and review the guidelines for writing in third person.
- Very good progress with the citation (ref 2). Next you need to add in a page number when using a direct quote for example (Williams, 2010, p3) (ref 3)
- You are making clear links between theory and practice by using clear concise examples from practice. This is good because it shows that you understand the application of the theories you are writing about. (ref 4)

Figure 1 – Example of feedback in a Moodle Wiki Page.

Urie Brofenbrenner- The Ecological Systems Theory

Firstly, I am going to talk about Urie Brofenbrenner and The Ecological Systems Theory. Urie Brofenbrenner was a Russian American psychologist and is very well known for developing his theory. The theory is based on the belief that development reflects the influence that different parts of the environment and different people, have on a child. It uses the following systems; the Microsystem, Meseosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and the Chronosystem. These systems surround the child, as if to be a bubble around them. Anything that takes place within one of the child's systems will have an impact on all of the other sections.

Comment [j1]: Ref 1

Comment [j2]: Ref 2
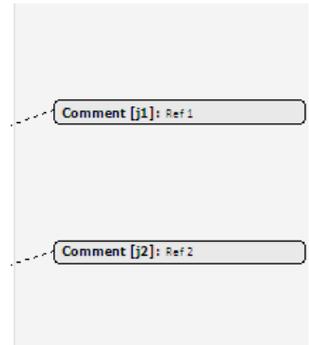
Figure 2 – Example of 'ref' numbers on a student's script.

The Outcome

Following the pilot in 2012/13 this practice was retained in the current academic year with some changes:

- Tutors had to agree on an ideal amount of feedback to be placed on the wiki page as it was easy for some tutors to get carried away and the amount of feedback to become overwhelming for the students;
- Students needed to be taught how to use the wiki page and how to leave their own feedback. When left to their own devices they either wrote nothing or it was superficial e.g.

For future assignments I plan to cite a reference as soon as it is mentioned in a paragraph. This will add clarity to the essay.
Use academic sources.
To discuss the topic rather than describe.
Proofread! I'm aware that this is something that is mentioned time and time again.
Longer paragraphs discussing the topic, not falling back into descriptive writing

Once training was given the quality of the written feedback improved e.g.

The feedback on my Safeguarding Report has highlighted the importance of familiarising myself with the sources of literature I use, and allowing time to digest them and analyse their meaning. I have a tendency to use the sources simply as information and validation but my feedback has shown that my work would be improved if I developed my critical analysis of the literature I use and aim to develop my own perspective on it. I do not believe I gave sufficient time to allow for the drafting and re-drafting of my work. I submitted my work with just 90 minutes until the deadline and the pressure of that meant that I was unable to spend sufficient time developing some of the sections and critically analysing my sources. I am pleased that I have grasped the Glyndwr Harvard Referencing and will continue to ensure that this is done correctly for each assignment. I will also continue proof reading my work before I submit it and ensure that it flows logically. I would like to start using more academic language and develop the vocabulary that I use in my assignments.

- Tutors had to agree on a structure for the feedback to achieve consistency. It was agreed that feedback would;
    - Mirror the progress of skills throughout the year i.e. at the beginning of the year tutors would concentrate on more basic study skills moving to more analytical skills by the end of the year;
    - Feedback would be more closely linked to the marking criteria (based on Learning Outcomes) for each piece of work.

Lessons Learned

From conducting the pilot and implementing the formative feedback wiki on the FdA Childhood Studies the following lessons have been drawn:

- Major changes cannot be achieved without buy-in from the programme team. The FdA Childhood Studies team was open to change and therefore implementation of the feedback wiki worked well. There also has to be a willingness and confidence within the team to share feedback and to learn from each other;
- Students will not automatically know what to do in the wiki page. Just by giving them an opportunity to respond doesn't mean that they will. In the second year students were shown how to use the feedback wiki and their first response to the feedback was graded as part of a study skills portfolio;
- Although devised for use in an online programme this method of feedback could be implemented in a classroom or blended learning course where a VLE is used;
- Any collaborative writing space could be used for the feedback dialogue. A wiki page was found to be the most suitable in Moodle, however it would equally work in an e-portfolio format where multiple but restricted access was allowed.

Programme Leader Liz Sheen: e.sheen@glyndwr.ac.uk

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

Using peer eGuides to promote Digital Literacy (PEDL)

Subject area

All subject areas across college with a focus on digital skills for lifelong learning.

Rationale and aims

The project rationale was based on the notion (supported by observational evidence from project members and College tutors) that within most cohorts of learners there are one or two learners to whom the rest of the group look to for informal support with ICT.

The Library and Learning Technology team sought to utilise this naturally occurring phenomenon by offering advice and training to these informal peer eGuides, and to better promote the formal support available within the institution. It was envisaged that by formalising this peer support all learners (and their tutor) would benefit from increased awareness, knowledge and use of a broad range of Digital Literacy skills including information seeking skills, use of college ICT systems, e-safety, Microsoft office and Web 2.0 tools.

Scope and context

This project was funded by JISC as part of the e-learning programme strand, managed by Rob Englebright.

Library and Learning Technology staff delivered the training programme and worked with developers from ICT Services to create the skills audit. Personal tutors and students from any academic area volunteered to be involved in the programme.

College tutors supported the project by enabling their learners to become peer eGuides.

ELTT elements addressed

Objectives:

Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and of Core Processes

i. Emphasising learning rather than technology

ii. Mainstreaming the role of technology in enhancing learning, teaching and assessment

iii. Staff development

An Enhanced Student Learning Experience, including increased flexibility and accessibility of provision

v. Enhancing the student learning experience

vi. Increased flexibility and accessibility

Effective Collaboration and Sharing of Current and Good Practice

ix. Collaboration

Indicators of success:

Enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment, and of core processes

- How technology has been used to facilitate the development of new pedagogic practices and assist in curriculum transformation;

- That learners and staff at all levels agree that technology is used in a relevant and beneficial way, while being integral to effective operation of the institution;

- An enhanced student learning experience, including increased flexibility and accessibility of provision;

- Where and how technology supports an enhanced student experience;

- Strategic understanding of the importance of technology in enabling flexibility and accessibility of learning;

- Timely adoption of appropriate technologies, with quality materials provided for all learners;

- That technology is integrated into operational processes for increased flexibility and accessibility of learning;

- That the student experience has been enhanced through working collaboratively and sharing experiences and outcomes.

Effective collaboration and sharing of current and good practice

- The benefits of collaborative activity, resulting in effective dissemination, sharing and promotion of good practice in the use of technology to enhance the student experience;

- Increased collaboration within and between institutions in Wales, the UK and globally, including open educational resources, shared services and cloud computing as appropriate.

Overview

Personal tutors for programmes of study were asked to nominate a student who would be invited to become an eGuide. Tutors were asked to identify a student who, most importantly, worked well with and supported other students and who also had an ability with digital technologies.

The eGuides were given a briefing session on the project aims and their role as eGuides. An initial Digital Literacy skills audit was conducted with the peer eGuides to gain baseline data and to identify training needs. The eGuides were offered the

opportunity to attend a series of seven core training sessions (with the expectation that all eGuides would attend at least one session).

At the end of the core training members of the project team visited the course programmes from which the eGuides were drawn, to explain to their fellow learners about the programme and the role of the eGuides. The Digital Literacy audit was then repeated with the whole learner group.

A dedicated course was created on Moodle to support eGuides. A general Moodle course – Tools and Resources for living and learning in a Digital Society (TARDiS) - containing a range of material covering learning resources, learning technology and study skills was created to provide all learners and staff with support.

At the start of the project, a pilot cohort of peer eGuides was identified (with the help of tutors) and trained on two campuses. After the initial phase the audit and training sessions were significantly revised. At the beginning of the next academic year, the programme was extended across the College network with a revised skills audit and the core training was reduced to four sessions, but take up was low in part owing to organisational changes and the removal of the student incentives offered previously.

Benefits and impacts

The use of peer eGuides has been regarded as model of good practice. Enrichment (i.e. non-curriculum) activities are seen as key part of the student experience in further education. In addition, peer support in the classroom is identified as an 'excellent' feature in classroom observation.

The peer eGuide project elicited favourable comments at the College's HE learner panel, which has promoted other learners to participate in the programme. In addition the project has been extended across the College network so that learners can participate whichever campus they are based at.

All peer eGuides reported some improvement in their Digital Literacy skills as a consequence of attending the core training sessions (as evidenced by the evaluation form responses).

The project has been promoted at Colegau Cymru network meetings (ILT Champion and Learning Resource Managers networks). Furthermore, the project has gained publicity at a UK level via the 2011 College of Further & Higher Education (CoFHE) conference and JISC 2011 e-learning conference.

Conclusions or lessons learned

In summary, the key findings of the programme are:

- Participants valued accreditation of the programme, even if this was informal – college certificates were produced confirming the learner had participated as an eGuide;

- There was little indication that learner participated purely because of the prizes on offer and we deliberately did not advertise those in advance. But take up was lower without the incentives;

- Participation in the project appeared to be better where groups had more than one eGuide;

- Staff need to act as mentors to support eGuide motivation and wider cohort engagement;

- Although classrooms tend to have interactive whiteboards many learners do not have access to personal ICT in the classroom – this makes peer support difficult;

- Even learners who had recorded high levels of Digital Literacy skills in their audit, gained additional knowledge from attending the core training. Furthermore, the peer eGuides opted to attend core training sessions irrespective of their prior knowledge;

- E-guides required ILT staff support in order to retain their focus and motivation. We were unable to provide that level of support to e-guides at every campus;

- Participation was highest where there was clear tutor buy-in.

Links and further information

Enhancing Practice (JISC Publication p5)
http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/programmerelated/2012/enhancing-practice.aspx

TARDiS Module
https://moodle.gllm.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=280&username=guest

Timeline
http://timeglider.com/timeline/line_77b5b1b9f1c0f7f84b8f026844b5dcfb

Handout
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-vfKY-0MZsreWpELVJSN05wdU0/edit?usp=sharing

Further Links
http://the-friday-feature.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/students-as-peer-eguides.html

The Open University in Wales

SocialLearn (linked to the ELTT Strategy Objective v: Enhancing the Student Learning Experience)

Partly driven by the diverse and distributed nature of its student body, the Open University recognised at an early stage the opportunity and power of socially networked learners and learning. To support this, the University developed a platform called *SocialLearn* which provided core social networking features, for instance allowing students and staff to create their own profile, build their network and participate in activities such as peer reviewing websites, materials and learning paths.

Although *SocialLearn* was released as a public Beta in July 2012, it has not been developed or adopted on a systematic basis for a number of reasons. These include the prioritisation of other major TEL initiatives such as *OU Anywhere* and *FutureLearn*. The development of *FutureLearn* has, in particular, caused the University to revisit how it can support a social learning experience and this is now forming part of a wide-ranging discussion to inform the OU's Learning and Teaching vision for 2020 and beyond. This also involves consideration of how the University makes use of existing social media environments in combination with OU study sites. Some modules are already making innovative use of *twitter*, for example, to support the development of a learning community that extends to leading academics and subject specialists beyond the OU.

SocialLearn demonstrates that all TEL developments do not necessarily come to fruition, but it remains necessary to support innovation in this area to keep pace with student experience and expectation in the wider digital arena.

Swansea University

PASS – the Portal for Academic Success. Pete Hanratty, ASP Tutor

In 2012 the University ran a one year trial of a commercial study skills e-learning package that could have links embedded with the VLE. The initial stage of the trial was combined with a research project that explored students expectations of university before they arrived and then after their first semester. Half the students in the trial had access to the study skills package. After the research project finished, although staff were encouraged to use the materials as part of their teaching, it was generally used as a generic resource for students to use on their own. The study skills e-learning package had some use during the trial but that tailed off once the trial had been completed. Towards the end of the year long trial only a handful of students were using the package. While comments from students who used the package were generally positive due to its general nature it didn't directly support the experience of Swansea students. In addition, again due to its generic nature, as it wasn't a direct match for teaching at the University staff found it difficult to embed the package into their teaching. This meant that few students were accessing the package by the end of the year. So a potential useful but rather too generic tool was not able to be embedded into teaching and was not taken up by students as a standalone support platform.

Following this, in 2013 the Academic Success Programme (ASP) was activated by Professor Alan Speight, Pro-Vice Chancellor Student Experience. ASP is part of Swansea University's Centre for Academic Success (CAS). The APR team run a series of certificated short courses and drop-in classes that have been specifically designed to help students manage the transition into Higher Education, and become a more confident and successful student during their time at Swansea University. They also offer confidential one-to-one appointments during which students receive detailed feedback on their work.

In order to widen the access to the support provided by the ASP and provide asynchronous support, the team decided to enhance their provision with online activities and materials. This resulted in the development of PASS – the Portal for Academic Success.
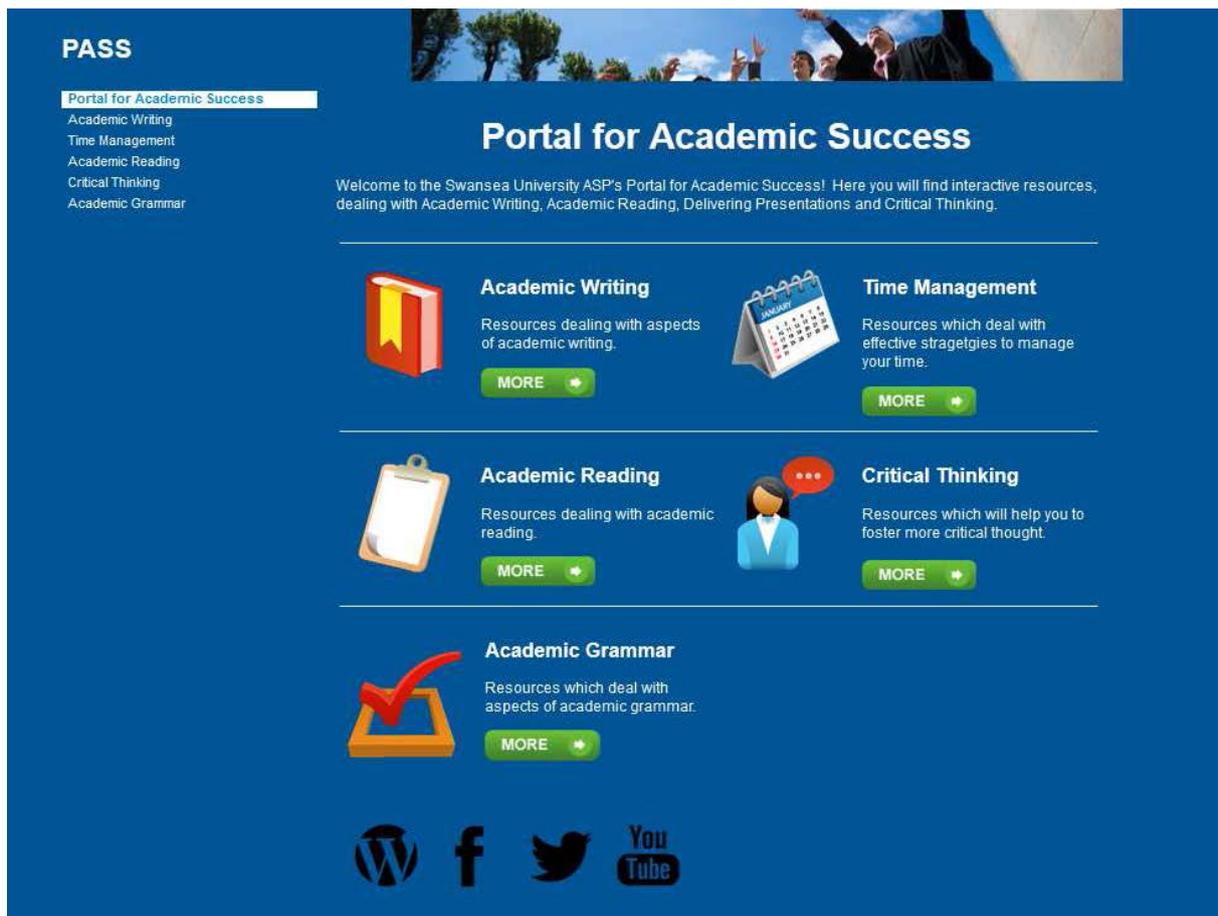
PASS Front Page

This is accessed through the Universities VLE. Students can book an individual session with a tutor to talk through their needs. They do this online via a simple form. This form alerts the ASP team who then conduct the one-to-one-session. During this session, they discuss the issues the student is facing and explore ways for the student to overcome these issues. Much of this involves directing students to specific activities in PASS. Notes of the issues facing the students and the actions recommended are collected by the tutor using an electronic form accessed by a tablet. All of the data from these one-to-one sessions is then automatically collated showing which issues students need help with and which resources they have been directed to. This gives a great overview of the needs of the students and indicates areas where teaching and resources can be directed.

The online activities are a mixture of short videos, of one to two minutes, and short interactive activities with feedback for the students. As with the one-to-one sessions, data on which activities have been accessed and for how long is gathered. This can then be analysed with the one-to-one session data to give further direction for further developing the PASS.

PASS Academic Writing Activities

As well as the interactive activities, there is also social media support to encourage two way communication between students and teaching staff. There is a regularly updated blog, a Facebook page, a You Tube channel and an active Twitter Feed. The vast majority of those following the Twitter feed are students on the ASP who reply and make retweets.

As mentioned earlier, the original commercial package was somewhat generic and not easily embedded into teaching. Having taken on board the lesson from this, the success of the PASS has been down to its embedding in teaching and the way that it has been developed with the student experience to the forefront. The success of the ASP, in which the PASS plays an important role, was recognised at the THE Leadership and Management Awards in 2013 winning the Outstanding Students Service Team award.

University of South Wales

Using recorded assessment feedback to improve the student and staff experience

Case Study Objective

To develop a method of assessment feedback that improves student learning yet maintains parity with more established assessment feedback and quality assurance methods.

Key Words: Assessment, Feedback

Where was the development introduced: Across the University (City and Caerleon Campuses).

Aims
- Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and of Core Processes;
- An Enhanced Student Learning Experience, including increased flexibility and accessibility of provision.

Description/approach:

The focus on using technology in assessment and feedback began through a JISC HEAT 3 funded project in 2008 in the University's Business School, involving Law and Economics. This successful project enabled staff in subjects notoriously technology shy to use audio and video to provide quick summary feedback to students with follow-up written comments. Outcomes were progressed in 2010 in a cross-institutional project involving further subjects funded through a Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching Award.

Written assessment feedback is a longstanding and accepted practice throughout the Higher Education sector. It provides the student with an overview of performance, and the validating institution with an audit trial for quality assurance purposes.

The rise in student numbers over recent years however has subsequently produced an enormous increase in assessment workloads for academic staff, resulting in many developing very generic feedback comments that rarely support or improve student learning, and which is often at odds with many learning styles.

This project used digital technology to enable students to 'listen' to feedback in order to enhance accessibility, provide a speedy initial response to assessment and to subsequently improve the experience of assessment for both students and staff

Using specific modules from across a range of courses, participating staff assessed projects in the traditional way, against validated criteria. Each module cohort was divided into two groups, with one half receiving written feedback (average of 5 minutes to generate), and the other receiving a recording of verbal feedback (of approximate 5 minutes).

Evaluation questionnaires were then developed to explore student perceptions of the assessment feedback and to examine the 'quality' and 'quantity' of learning resulting from the feedback.

Anticipated outcomes

Staff expected some students to prefer the recorded verbal feedback rather than the traditional written template. In particular, it was expected that these students may be dyslexic, or students for whom English was a second or additional language.

It was expected that some staff would prefer using the recorded system, particularly those who were confident with using IT.

Evidence of actual outcomes:

Feedback from both students and staff about this project proved extremely encouraging. Of the 100 students receiving recorded verbal feedback, just three individuals expressed concerns, and a preference for the traditional method. More importantly however, the interviews with students provided evidence to suggest that the verbal feedback provided a much richer learning experience. Discussions regarding the quality of information provided were far more extended and elaborate from students receiving recorded verbal feedback than from the sample group, with individuals frequently commenting on how the assessor clarified and explained their grading decisions.

A comparative analysis of assessment feedback from the trial suggested that students experiencing the traditional written feedback process, received on average just 120 words of feedback, based on an essay of approximately 2500 words. Students from the 'verbal assessment feedback' group, received close to 500 words of comment. Whilst closer analysis suggests the vocabulary of the written feedback is more formal, and directed closely at the assessment criteria, the verbal feedback comments are clearly more personalised, and pitched closer to the level of vocabulary frequently used within the classroom environment.

Nicol & Macfarlene-Dick (2006) highlight the need that "more recognition should be given to the role of feedback on learners motivational beliefs and self-esteem". In using the verbal feedback all staff commented on their ability to use intonation in order to praise or chastise individuals who deserved some rewarded for effort, or context; or for others who were capable of a higher level of critical engagement than the assessment criteria provided. The necessary pace of written assessment feedback however often negates this subtlety, or provides little opportunity for staff to engage in a dialogue with learners that is of benefit to both parties.

One common observation made by staff upon reflection was the lower numbers of requests made by students for further tutorials or discussion about the assessment feedback in comparison to their usual experience. This observation would suggest that this method of assessment feedback provides an improved experience for students who were not only more satisfied with the quantity of feedback received, but

also were able to better see the relationship between the comments and assignment grades, such that comments were appropriately justified and explained.

All academic staff commented on how rewarding the project had been for their own morale, not only in that the quantity of assessment had been completed far more efficiently, but that staff had confidence in that they had successfully explained their assessment decisions, and felt 'less guilty' about the quantity of feedback they had been able to offer.

In conclusion, based on this project, recorded verbal assessment feedback clearly provides an opportunity to improve the student experience of learning, and to reconnect the process of assessment feedback. Further research is now required to develop models of good practice appropriate to the new method of delivery and increasing pressure of current and future assignment workloads.

Specific challenges/opportunities created by this initiative:

Some logistical issues regarding file management were incurred during the first trial of this initiative. However, these were dealt with by the staff involved.

The greater challenge was to introduce this process to a wider range of staff, many of whom had a wealth of assessment experience, but who were also guilty of providing formulaic feedback responses.

As a whole this project provided the opportunity to engage with assessment feedback as a learning experience for students, rather than a judgemental one. Feedback could be easily personalised, and assessors were able to use intonation to praise students in their comments if appropriate.

Reflection/impact:

There is significant evidence to demonstrate that this initiative used technology to improve the student learning experience. However, on reflection, it is very reliant upon a number of key staff acting as ambassadors for the project, and consistently demonstrating the success of the project. Without such advocates, assessment feedback systems developed by universities continue to prioritise the need for administrative efficiencies rather than supporting student learning.

Project outcomes featured at a HEA Wales seminar entitled "Improving Assessment Experience" conference held at City Campus in July 2012 with 120 delegates. The project has been used as a case study for innovation in teaching by both the University of Lincoln, and Oxford Brookes University, and presented as part of a staff development programme at Nottingham Trent University, where it was subsequently embedded in their own assessment practice.

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Providing pedagogical guidelines

Each founding institution had realised that a useful resource for staff would be guidance on the use of technology for particular pedagogical purposes. Each institutional team had started from the principle that pedagogy, not technology, should lead TEL and had recognised that teaching staff would more readily adopt technology if they could see immediately its applicability to a perceived pedagogical need.

Each institution adopted a different approach. At SMU the approach adopted was to compile a compendium of learning needs that might arise and suggested technological approaches. This was uploaded onto the collaborative academic network where it remains to this day almost entirely unmolested.

At University of Wales Trinity Saint David a different approach was taken: instead of writing up scenarios and solutions in a single document a web site was developed that allowed access to a range of materials, offered advice and guidance, was easy to add to, update and revise.

In both cases it was found that the offer of help was not readily taken up. Further investigation showed that staff, sometimes initially enthusiastic, came to recognise that the adoption of the tool they acknowledged would offer them an advantage would take them more time and effort than they were willing to expend upon it when a simpler approach lay to hand.

Of course there is no advantage in adopting technology when a simpler solution is just as effective but there are two reasons for pressing the case for TEL: one, that the technological solution is often better because, though the advantage may not be immediately obvious, the tool does offer, in the medium to long term, extension of capability; secondly because the University wishes to extend its capability, especially with regard to developing flexible provision, and the recruitment of more staff to the regular use of TEL will help to enable this development.

It is recognised that there has been a considerable development since the initial project and that the longer-term impact of the Gwella and BCP projects, and thus of the Council's TEL strategy, has been to mainstream TEL such that a majority of staff in the merged institution are familiar with at least some aspects of TEL. That affords a platform on which to re-introduce the principle of a pedagogical guidelines resource

and it is intended to put together what was done at each of the founding institutions to re-launch the project.