

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

PGCert Teaching in Higher Education

**Teaching in Higher Education 2
(UNHE7006)**

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Teaching intervention cycle in the form of a reflective report

For many of us teaching, the last year has turned our lives upside down. Not only personally, but also academically. In February 2020, there were news reports of a virus in China that was spreading its way through Europe and in March 2020, it made the UK government enforce a lockdown. This lockdown meant that instantly on-campus teaching was not able to take place and had to move online. This impacted those of us who had only taught on-campus and for many, including me, did not have any idea of what it meant to teach online. At the London Campus of UWTSD, we moved everything online within a week. Luckily, we already had access to the software Microsoft Teams. However, it used to be seen as an annoying pop up that would start when your PC on campus started. Now, it is the lifeline to our students. Within days we had to teach ourselves how to navigate this software, and even more so, ensure that our students knew how to access it and make use of it too.

I have always been interested in technology; how it works and how it can work to facilitate teaching and learning. However, the sudden necessity to use the technology was disarming. I had the core knowledge of the subject material, but now students turned to me to know and understand what was going on, whereas I knew as much or sometimes less than the students in terms of how to use the software. Although initially apprehensive and unsure, with more exposure to the software and possibilities it brought with it more excitement. Through engaging in professional development, research, and evaluating professional practices, I have learnt more and how to incorporate this software into blended delivery if/when we are to return to campus. It has been a tragic experience for many friends and families who have sadly lost loved ones. However, it has been a catalyst for change. Personally, I found the traditional mode of preparing a slideshow to present to students (with handouts) and perhaps a few extra resources which were made available online to be stagnant and boring. Now, we have been forced to look again at the way in which we design and plan learning activities. Previously, due to the fast pace of our operational model, there was not much opportunity to reflect on what worked and what did not work, as well as thinking of new ways to change things. Now, I have been invigorated with the learning that I am not only a person delivering content, but I am someone who is seen as a guide, a curator for the content that is already readily available online to all students. It is imperative for me to develop effective learning environments and tailor my approach to student support and guidance.

Overall, the experience has been tiring, but good. Sitting in front of a PC for hours on end is exhausting. In addition, teaching four-hour classes is hard work. Although in terms of the students, I believe it has engaged students who were previously disengaged, even though at times it proves difficult. Especially given the other commitments and responsibilities that students have in their lives such as family and work. The University has conducted surveys and found that what is missing most for students is the social environment of a classroom, and I believe this is also echoed by staff members. The technology prohibits the dynamic energy of a classroom and the sense of belonging. In addition, it is difficult to engage with students due to the variety of laptops, tablets, mobile phones being used as well as the range of broadband connections. Moreover, the number of times of saying “you’re on mute” has become farcical. Although the experience has been interesting and a great opportunity to reflect, it has also meant that we need to improve upon the content and the way in which we deliver it. By understanding how students learn, both generally and within their subject areas, I believe that when we return to campus, there will be a new and improved “normal”. The pandemic has given us an opportunity to reflect on the methods that we use to evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching, as well as the methods we use for teaching, learning and assessing our students.

As this is a phenomenon that has been experienced by the whole education sector, there has been a plethora of websites and University pages dedicated to teaching and learning online. The once perhaps forgotten technology enhanced learning teams have now been catapulted to the forefront and are as busy as ever. We are beginning to understand the usefulness and value of learning technologies.

As Fergus (2020) shares that “the adjustment to remote university life was challenging for some students. The lack of direct social interactions caused some to feel isolated. A select group had additional caring responsibilities with reduced availability during the daytime due to childcare, school closures and COVID-related health issues. This impacted their engagement with synchronous live online sessions. The university’s library provided a focused learning environment where students can dedicate specific study time. Students missed dropping in to speak with their lecturers. Some students found studying at home more challenging as a quiet dedicated study space was not guaranteed. Homes were busy environments with high demands on technology use. Internet connectivity caused issues for some and this impacted synchronous live sessions”. In a short amount of time, what we had previously taken for granted had changed. Therefore, it was important to try our best to tailor our teaching to the temporary

measures, but this instantly had implications in terms of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice.

As I have previously mentioned, the return to campus will bring with it a new normal which has been long overdue. We are now looking at active learning which is a broad term that includes different models of instruction and places learners as responsible partners in the learning process (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). This is true of adult learners, especially as Biggs and Tang (2007: 32) state that there are two factors that make students want to learn and that is “it has to be important; it must have some *value* to the learner” and “the learner needs to *expect success* when engaging the learning task”. Therefore, it is important to consider when revamping the curriculum, the need for the student to be integral, understanding its value and the opportunity for success.

At the London Campus, we decided to go with synchronous teaching where the students still had a timetable and were expected to be in class as if there were on-campus. With this idea, we believed that it would not disrupt the students’ usual way of working. However, this can be difficult especially in terms of other commitments from studying from home such as childcare. A blended approach I believe would work better with synchronous and asynchronous teaching as Lagerstrom, Johanes and Ponsukcharoen (2015) state, “based on an analysis of 6.9 million MOOC video viewing episodes, the median engagement time was six minutes, so academics should consider shorter video segments with online delivery”. It is not engaging for the students to sit in front of their PCs for hours. Therefore, we must adopt a blended approach as we are beginning to acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates in terms of other commitments. In addition, it is important to understand and recognise the implications these commitments have on our professional practice.

When we moved online in March 2020, we did not know how long the lockdown would be for and we were hoping that it would be a temporary measure. Therefore, our practice was to adapt the content to be delivered online. However, with perhaps a blended delivery pattern taking place in the future or the development of more fully online programmes, it is important to now look beyond temporary measures and “it is essential to go beyond emergency online practices and develop quality online teaching and learning that result from careful instructional design and planning” (Carrillo and Flores, 2020). We have learnt that programmes cannot be simply modified to take place online. We must start from scratch in building a blended delivery

programme. As previously mentioned, this approach must emphasise heavily the social and collaborative components of learning as a starting point (Carrillo and Flores, 2020).

A key learning from the pandemic and teaching online is the digital inequality. It was eye-opening to see the number of students who did not have access to digital equipment or appropriate bandwidth connections. As Carrillo and Flores (2020) highlight that there are many issues of digital inequality emerging due to the move to online teaching and learning, from access to technology as well as differences in digital literacy that are deeply embedded in social, economic, and cultural context. Within the context of UWTSD, the University now has in place Digital Connectivity Bursaries where students are able to apply to get the right technological equipment and broadband connections to help them succeed. However, we must also have in mind the inequalities that can be encountered by many of our students. We must remember to respect individual learners and the diverse learning communities. It is more important than ever to promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for all learners.

In conclusion, although the COVID-19 pandemic has been a tragedy for many families, it has also brought with it a catalyst for change within the education sector. It has forced the sector to review its practices and re-evaluate what works and what does not work. It has also opened eyes to inequalities experienced by students, as well as the other commitments that students may have in their lives apart from their studies. The pandemic has forced us to reflect on our humanity and the necessity to be kind, caring and compassionate.

As we hopefully return to on-campus teaching in the not-so-distant future, we can take what we have learned and realise that effective teaching does not necessarily only happen in a face-to-face situation and that it may be beneficial for some parts to be online. However, as previously mentioned, what was missing for students and staff alike is the social environment of the classroom. Therefore, this must not be forgotten, as Biasuttie states, “the ability of learners and teachers to interact, collaborate and build relationships with other members [is] a source of satisfaction for students” (2011 as quoted in Carrillo and Flores, 2020).

Finally, it is vital now to embed technology within our teaching and learning practices; a way to develop a new offering that combines the best of face-to-face and online learning. As Carrillo and Flores (2020) state, “technology as an inherent part of the online teaching and learning

process and take into account the pedagogical possibilities associated with online tools, i.e., the suitability and affordances of the various technologies or online resources (e.g., blogs promote discussions and facilitate reflective practice; videos help develop practical knowledge about the profession and connect educational theory with practice; online forums enable the sharing of narratives that enhance the skill of noticing; breakout or chat rooms foster belongingness and high levels of support and cooperation among group members) to make sure that the chosen tools or resources help learners achieve the desired results”. The tools and pedagogy are now available to enhance the student experience. We must now use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development when thinking about our teaching and learning within the new “normal”.

Teaching intervention cycle in the form of a poster

Please see Appendix A.

Teaching Observation 1

On 15th April 2021, Sylvia Hoffmann (CertHE Programme Manager) observed me supporting student learning within a speaking practice session for our English Language Support seminars. The English Language Support came from the students requesting additional support in terms of improving their English language skills. The Programme Manager for the CertHE programme, Sylvia Hoffmann, as she has a background in teaching English took on the support. As a native speaker, she asked me to assist her in delivering speaking practice sessions. The sessions are attended by students studying level 4 programme CertHE to level 7 students studying an MBA. Therefore, there is a wide range of academic backgrounds of the students as well as their levels of English. I designed and planned learning activities focussing the one-hour session on speaking about achievements and then look at interview questions. I decided to start the session with students speaking about their achievements as this was an easy topic that would hopefully get students engaged. I then went on to talk about more relevant language topics such as interviews as I believed this would be relevant to the students in upcoming or future interview situations.

Giving that it was a speaking practice session, there were many opportunities for me to assess the students' English language levels and give feedback. It was important to me to develop an effective learning environment as I knew that there would be some students who did not want to participate. Therefore, I had to ensure that the environment was comfortable for the students. I did this by sharing my own thoughts and experiences as a language learner. It was difficult at times as there was one particular student who was very engaged. However, I did not want to discourage his enthusiasm, so I amended my approach to him and the students in order to support them and provide them with guidance.

Prior to the session, I engaged in continuous professional development in subjects/disciplines and the pedagogy by incorporating research and scholarship regarding English for Academic Purposes and especially lessons that focused on speaking practice. Therefore, using an evidence-informed approach using outcomes from research, I used evidence and research from websites such as Monster.co.uk and Prospects.ac.uk. However, I also have professional experience in terms of conducting interviews and being part of an interview panel. Likewise, I believe I have sufficient knowledge in the subject material and therefore used my experience within the session.

I believe I used appropriate methods for teaching, learning, and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme. Although admittedly, it was quite difficult to gauge the level to use as it was completely dependent on the students that attended. For example, there were some students from level 4 programmes as well as level 7. Therefore, I attempted to go over the vocabulary that was appropriate for the various levels.

It is important within language learning sessions to understand how students learn, both generally and within their subject/disciplinary area(s). As a previous languages' student, I understand the importance of speaking practice and the best way to improve speaking ability, which is to speak. In addition, I understand that for adult learners they must understand the value and the real-world implications for what they are learning. Hence, why I focussed on interview practice. It is important to understand the implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice, especially with a particular focus on teaching. If the students did not feel the value of the session, it would impact on their overall student experience.

Given the current pandemic, I used and valued appropriate learning technologies such as Microsoft Teams and PowerPoint. Although if we were on-campus, I would have perhaps used a role play technique in order to engage the students more. However, this is difficult within an online environment.

I believe I have developed methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching by directly asking the students whether they found the session useful and if they had learnt something that they could take on. I believe in the future I will ensure that I engage the students in summarising what they have learnt after each session.

For non-native English speakers, it is important to respect individual learners and diverse learning communities, as well as promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners from all linguistic backgrounds. Finally, I acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice. It is important to not only teach the students, but to help them place their learning into real-world and practical situations.

Teaching Observation 2

On 15th April 2021, Sylvia Hoffmann (CertHE Programme Manager) observed me supporting learning within a session focused on essay writing for our English Language Support seminars. The essay writing session focused on essay structure, formatting, and essentials such as use of language, spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Prior to the session, I designed and plan the learning activities. Given that it was an interactive session, I assessed the students by eliciting understanding of ideas before presenting. Then I was able to give feedback on their understanding. Before the session began, I was keen to engage in continuous professional development in teaching English for academic purposes and the pedagogy. I incorporated research and scholarship, using images and techniques used by other institutions to explain the structure of a basic academic essay. Using the metaphor of the hamburger which is quite common to explain a standard academic essay structure.

I developed an effective learning environment as Sylvia mentioned, it was a “very relaxed atmosphere which clearly contributed to students actively taking part”. I was conscious of the approach to student support and guidance due to the mixed levels of the students and as Sylvia highlighted that “differences [were] picked up by the lecturer and adequate help provided with encouraging comments”. Given my previous experience as an undergraduate and postgraduate student, I have core knowledge and experience in the subject material such as the ability to write academic essays/reports.

I believe I used appropriate methods for teaching, learning, and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme. As Sylvia highlights that there was a “good clear way of presenting with lots of enthusiasm for the topics” and the “very practical way of helping students understand how to do things (e.g., referencing)”. In addition, given that I have previously taught students on a module called Academic and Employability Skills I could use this experience, as well as my knowledge of how students learn, both generally and within their subject area in order to ensure that there was value in what they were learning. I believe I used and valued appropriate learning technologies such as Microsoft Teams and Microsoft PowerPoint.

I used various methods to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, such as gauging the

interactivity of the session with the students' responses as well as eliciting feedback at the end of the session.

It is important that the sessions are effective as I understand that there is an implication in terms of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching. If the sessions are not useful, then the students will not feel that they are getting what they are paying for.

Within these English Language support sessions, as well as previously having been a student studying a language, I always respect individual learners and diverse learning communities. I am very keen in promoting participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for all learners regardless of their linguistic background.

When I deliver sessions, I use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development. However, I do acknowledge and take into consideration the wider context in which higher education operates and I recognise this implication in terms of professional practice. This is why it is important to focus on academic skills, as most jobs nowadays may require staff to write a report, for example.

Teaching Observation 3

On Thursday 29th April, one of my colleagues and the weekend Academic Co-ordinator, Afzal Munna, observed me deliver an academic support session to a student who wanted feedback and to discuss her assignment for a module she is studying called Digital Skills and Research Methods module. The assignment task was to carry out research into the impact of Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) on students' learning experience. The student had been given a template to follow and wanted to make sure that she was following it and wanted to discuss her ideas. By understanding what it was that she wanted to discuss, I was able to plan learning activities associated to her work. Given my previous experience of assisting students in similar situations, I highlighted the importance and ease of referencing and citations with her. As Afzal mentioned, I guided the student to various academic resources available to enhance the understanding of the topic.

In my role as an academic support tutor, it is important to support her learning. After having listened to her queries and concerns, I was able to assess her work and give her feedback and highlight some areas for improvement.

As the student wanted to discuss her research and research methodology, I had an understanding of the subject material. As Afzal mentioned that, "the staff member has demonstrated a wide and appropriate knowledge in the subject field". In addition, he added, "the staff member highlighted the area of practice and how to reinforce various models into practice from his own master's degree research experience". Given my experience, I have used evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development to assist the student. In addition, I believe I used the appropriate methods for teaching, learning, and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme. I highlighted to the student that, in fact, the discussion of research philosophy for a level 4 programme is uncommon.

I always respect individual learners and diverse learning communities and try my best to develop effective learning environments where the students feel supported and appropriately. This has been evidenced by Afzal's comments when he highlighted, "the staff member managed to create an inclusive teaching and learning environment where the student felt honoured, respected, and was encouraged to perform at their best". As a level 4 programme, for

a student who I assume does not have previous qualifications, I made sure to promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners. As the first person in my family to go to University, I acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates and I recognise this as an implication for professional practice in terms of students' attitudes towards Higher Education.

The 1:1 academic support session has helped me in my understanding of how students learn, both generally and within their subject/disciplinary area, especially by talking to the student directly about her concerns and queries. I have engaged in continuous professional development in the area of personal tutoring and incorporated this research and scholarship to evaluate my own professional practice.

I was happy to use and valued appropriate learning technologies such as Microsoft Teams and Moodle to help me assist the student. I was able to share my screen and show her additional resources.

I believe I have gained knowledge of various methods to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. For example, I asked the student to send me her work for me to go over and see what she understood from our discussion. This gave me a chance to evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching to see if she took on my advice and suggestions. It is important to understand the implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching, as if the student is not happy with the advice and suggestions that I gave her, it would have a negative impact not only for her academically, but also on her learning experience.

CPD Reflection 1

When thinking about opportunities for CPD, FutureLearn.com is a great site to visit. It is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) learning platform. While looking through the courses, I came across “English as a Medium of Instruction for Academics”. The course was delivered by Dr Rob Baird and Mary Page. As someone who is teaching through the medium of English I have a core knowledge of the subject material, yet I thought it would be interesting to find out how this would impact on the students’ and their learning. In fact, the majority of students are from non-native English-speaking backgrounds. Therefore, I thought it would be interesting to learn about some techniques and tips that I could use to aid their learning. Some of the topics of discussion included the following:

Implications of using English as a Medium of Instruction

What kind of English is used in EMI classrooms?

Language use in the EMI classroom

The voice and language

Useful advice for EMI practitioners

Lecturing through EMI

EMI: using presentation slides

Clarity in lecturing style

Communication in seminars or small groups

Managing EMI environments across cultures

I was overwhelmed at the first by the amount of resources on offer and further reading available. However, it was a very interesting and exciting way for me to learn more about teaching with English as the medium of instruction. It was made very clear to me that using English is not a way to teach English, but rather the tool for communication. I previously thought that by using English as a medium of instruction that there would inevitably be a focus on the language, but Dr Rob Baird and Mary Page made it clear that the English language is just the tool of communication.

There is a lot to learn about why English is used as a medium of instruction internationally for many institutions. However, it was also engaging to learn more about teaching or the support of

learning for those who do not have English as a first language and thinking about the ways in which they learn. For example, there were discussions on the type of language used in the classroom, as well as how to use your voice effectively. We also looked at body language and cultural differences, intercultural communication and even presentation slides. In terms of presentation slides, it was important to reflect on the use and value of appropriate learning technologies, especially in terms of assessing students and giving feedback.

Within the MOOC, the team highlighted that when we teach, our communication and treatment of language also transmit particular attitudes, identities and behaviours that can exclude or include our students. Brumfit explains, languages “are used to create solidarity, but also to threaten solidarity, to conceal, but also to reveal, to claim identity both within and outside particular groups” (2001: 138). This is particularly important for diverse linguistic classrooms where students should not feel excluded if they do not have the “right” level of English.

In conclusion, there is a vast array of information in terms of using English as a medium of instruction. As a native English speaker, it was not my intention to learn about the way in which I can deliver content. However, it did help me to reflect on the way in which I do, in fact, deliver content and whether this impedes the learning of students who do not have English as a first language. For example, Mary Page advised to not use idiomatic expressions within the classrooms as students may not understand them.

In the future, when designing and planning learning activities, I will think more about the student as a non-native English speaker and make sure that the content I am delivering is simple enough to be understood. The course has also made me consider my methods for teaching, learning, and assessing the students (and their effectiveness), especially with the knowledge of how students learn, not only generally but within their subject area. In addition, I will take into consideration the need to develop an effective learning environment and consider my approach to student support and guidance.

The course has reminded me in terms of linguistic diversity to respect individual learners and diverse learning communities, as well as to promote participation in higher education regardless of their linguistic background. In essence, it is about providing an equal opportunity for all learners.

For future development, I will continue to engage in professional development within the area of Higher Education, especially for students from non-native English-speaking backgrounds. I will use this research, and evidence to inform my approach to teaching. Moreover, this research will also help in terms of the implication in terms of quality assurance and quality enhancement. By understanding the students, I can recognise the wider context in which higher education operates.

CPD Reflection 2

After having been teaching online for over a year now, as well as being a student. I thought it would be interesting to learn more about the information available for students in order to cope at the moment and whether there are some tips and tricks that I could share with the students to support their learning. I decided to return to FutureLearn.com to see if there were any courses that I could share with students in terms of thinking about the ways in which they work and think in terms of the online learning experience. This could also help me in terms of designing and planning learning activities. I came across a course entitled “A Digital Edge: Essentials for the Online Learner” created by Dublin City University. The course was grouped into four key areas: ways of thinking; ways of working; tools for working; and tools for thriving.

The course has been interesting too for my own studies. It has introduced me to concepts that I have not heard about before, or forgotten such as the Pomodoro technique (Abram, 2011). There are lots of resources that seem overwhelming at first, but a lot to read and consider going forward. I am happy as it has given me a greater foundation in understanding some of the challenges and stresses that may be affecting my students at the moment. By understanding the challenges and stresses, it can help me develop effective learning environment as well as giving me ideas in terms of how to support students and guide them. It has also introduced me to some tools and techniques that can help me with my own learning.

The course was interesting as I was able to look at the content from the eyes of a teacher and think of ways to assist students, but it also helped me with my own thinking in terms of how I learn. The course helped me to develop appropriate methods for teaching, learning, and assessing as I can use the tools provided. Furthermore, it has improved my understanding of how students learn (including myself) within an online context. The course has been vital in terms of exploring tools and techniques that make use of and value appropriate learning technologies.

Ways of Thinking

The first section of the course introduced us to exploring different ways of thinking and getting to know oneself. It took a look at Dr. Edward de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats (2017). It was also interesting to compare myself to an animal in terms of my learning as it was mentioned within the course “think about different animals and their characteristics, take into consideration the

way you see yourself, the way you think about things and how you go about learning”. This is an alternative and innovative way to think about myself. It has also helped me to reflect on respecting individual learners and diverse learning communities in terms of the ways in which they think and view themselves.

In the Crowdsourced Guide to Learning (FutureLearn, 2015), it listed 10 techniques to help you learn. Some interesting techniques included listening carefully, thinking critically, and questioning fearlessly. This was, as the title suggests, a crowdsourced guide to learning. By using this guide, it has given me insight into how learners perceive their own learning which can help me in terms of using evidence-informed approaches and outcomes from research and scholarship in order to guide my teaching. Furthermore, it is a useful way for me to reflect on methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching if I gain a better understanding of how learners learn.

Ways of Working

The course introduced me to the self-determination theory. This is a “theory of human motivation that addresses individuals’ initiation of behaviour” (Grolnick, 2015: 65). In other words, it is a meta-theory of motivation that assumes individual behaviour is an active organism which is determined by three universal Basic Psychological Human Innate Needs (BPHIN) (Noour and Hubbard, 2014). The three needs include autonomy (deciding on how you act and learn), relatedness (connecting with and contributing to people, networks and groups who matter and will matter to you for your studies) and competence (be effective and have an impact in your educational environment). By understanding these basic psychological human needs, we can acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates and recognise its implication for professional practice.

Tools for working

It was interesting to see within the Irish National Digital Experience (INDEX) Survey conducted by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, the weighted word cloud based on student responses to “digital tool or app you find really useful for learning” (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 2020).



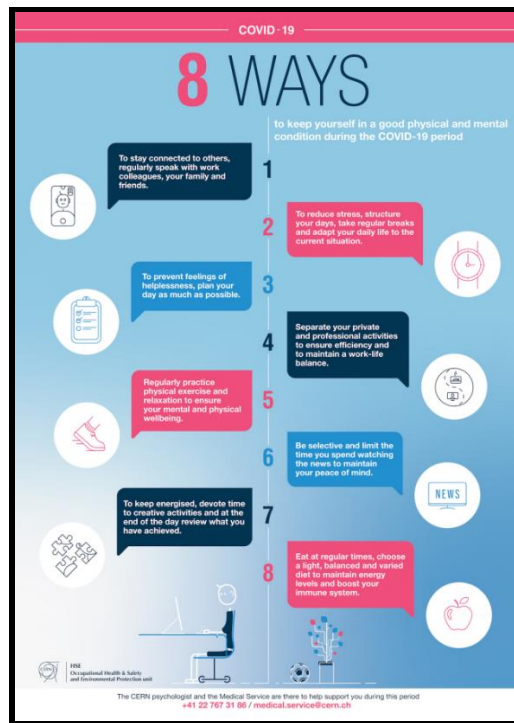
Understanding the digital tools or apps (learning technologies) that students find really useful or valuable for learning adds to the engagement in continuous professional development, especially within specific subject areas and the pedagogy. This can be used for effective teaching and learning by incorporating research and scholarship.

Tools for Thriving

In order to promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners, the OECD Learning Compass 2030 has developed a learning framework that aims to help students navigate towards future well-being. It creates a common language about broad education goals.



The wellbeing of students has implications in terms of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice, especially on teaching. If students are not in a good physical and mental condition, it can have negative effects. CERN (2020) created a great infographic in order to assist students to cope within the COVID-19 period.



In conclusion, it has been informative to understand how students view their learning within the current COVID-19 pandemic and reflect on ways of thinking; ways of working; tools for working; and tools for thriving. It is important within the current context to take time to check in with ourselves in terms of our own mental and physical wellbeing. The course has helped me to take into consideration the current context in terms of assessing and giving feedback to learners. It is important to remember that we are attempting to survive a pandemic and that these are not normal times. Therefore, we must take this into account and show compassion.

CPD Reflection 3

When thinking about learning opportunities, the resources that Advance HE offers are always a great place to start. I was interested when I saw a webinar entitled “Practical Framework for Flexible Learning” as it has been quite a big topic of conversation recently in view of the current pandemic.

The webinar was delivered originally on 30 July 2020 by Professor Stella Jones-Devitt, Professor of Critical Pedagogy at Staffordshire University assisted by Stuart Norton, Senior Adviser at Advance HE. The webinar focused on key features of the Advance HE Guide for Flexible learning, asked some fundamental questions about learning in the present context, discussed the importance of structure and evidence and possibilities for curating and sharing good practice.

The webinar was an interactive session, where Stella asked some questions for participants to reflect on such as:

- what does a successful structured flexibility approach need to contain?
- what are the implications for practitioners?
- how can structured flexibility be sustained successfully in a volatile HE context?
- how are claims of successful flexibility being evidenced and evaluated?

The webinar was interesting to listen to and had some engaging questions in terms of reflecting on the teaching and learning within the current pandemic context. Stella discussed “structured flexibility” and acknowledged the oxymoron. However, it was a curious starting point. It was agreed that having total flexibility would be impractical but having a structure within the realms of flexibility would be beneficial and is something that could be learnt from the pandemic. Especially, with the view of returning to on-campus teaching at some point and which elements could be delivered online and which had to remain on-campus. Generally, the operational model of the London Campus is completely different to the traditional University academic cycle, so this is a major consideration point. However, Stella mentioned this when she says that “flexible learning often involves consideration of institutional agility, personal flexibility, balanced pragmatism, learner choice”.

The webinar was useful in that it showed that many of the concerns and considerations were also felt by other institutions. It was also good to begin to think about the bigger questions in terms of the teaching and learning.

It was very interesting to view and read some of the resources shared by Stella. Such as Professor Lydia Arnold who writes on her personal blog when talking of the role of lecturer in terms of engaging with online content as a “curator, tour guide, archivist, questioner and co-learner, as someone to guide learning” (Arnold, 2020). This is a curious point especially when it comes to designing and planning learning activities. My previous thoughts in terms of teaching have always been about imparting knowledge. I do acknowledge, however, in the context of adult learners that there is a relationship. However, describing teaching online as being a curator, and tour guide is very true. There is a lot of information available to students through the web, but it is our role as educators who have the core knowledge of the subject material to source relevant and pertinent information much like a curator of a museum would do and support learning.

Stella also mentioned Liz Austen who wrote in her article within Wonkhe when discussing principles of effective evaluation of blended delivery that “an evaluation of blended learning should prioritise, through shared ownership, student involvement in the co-design of the evaluation and promotion of participation/feedback” (Austen, 2020). This is again something that I have previously explored in terms of teaching adults. It is a partnership and there must be a relationship there. It is important to understand and explore the various methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. This can be done in a variety of ways including the use and valuing appropriate learning technologies. Most Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) nowadays have the capability to view the students’ engagements with the content. This is especially when considering how students learn, both generally and within the context of their subject area. VLEs are a great way of assessing and giving formative feedback to learners.

Given the flexibility of online learning, as Nerantzi (2020) states, “tutors should pay special attention not just to providing particular resources for self-paced study but to combining these with particular activities to enable deeper engagement with the resources”. It is about developing appropriate methods for teaching, learning, and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme.

Another very important point raised was about “designing and implementing effective teaching strategies that facilitate learning in a supportive environment [...] an environment that progressively develops independence not dependence” (Nerantzi, 2020). Therefore, it is important to develop these effective learning environments where students feel comfortable but are not spoon-fed, where lecturers are showing students support and guidance.

Through acknowledging the wider context in which higher education operates and recognising the implications for professional practice, the Advance HE Flexible Learning Framework (2018) shares that successful flexible learning is “student-centred and empowers students to become independent and autonomous, fostering graduate attributes that will enable them to manage the complexities of 21st century life” (Advance HE Flexible Learning Framework, 2018, as quoted in Jones-Devitt, 2020:7). When developing course content, we should respect individual learners and diverse learning communities as well as promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for all learners regardless of background taking into consideration the wider world.

In terms of engaging in continuous professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, “staff will have to unlearn some of their thinking and practices” (Jones-Devitt, 2020, 8) and will have to incorporate new research and scholarship when evaluating their professional practice. Especially given the implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice, especially with regards to teaching.

However, it is important to remember that students must be engaged fully from the outset in order to trust in the development of flexible learning processes (Jones-Devitt, 2020:9). When developing flexible learning processes, students must be involved, especially with the use of evidence-informed approaches and outcomes from research, scholarship and taking into account continuous professional development.

In conclusion, the webinar has made me think about how flexible “flexible learning” can be. As previously mentioned, the London campus operates differently to the rest of the University and the traditional University academic cycle, but it will be interesting to see how the blended delivery works when we return to campus. It has opened my eyes to development of course content and the need for more involvement with students in curriculum design.

A key learning from flexible learning is digital poverty. Although the idea of flexible learning is interesting and exciting, we must not forget those who may not have the required equipment (e.g., laptops, PCs, etc.) or the broadband connections to facilitate online learning. In addition, we must take into consideration the technical and financial difficulties that teaching staff could also face.

Assessment of Professional Development

My professional development has been monumental throughout this programme. I began this programme in October 2019 when I was still a Student Services Officer. Since then, I have been promoted to the roles of Senior Student Experience Officer, Principal Administrative Officer (Campus Administration) and my current role is as an Operational and Business Development Manager. Due to these promotions, I have now gained a greater understanding of the teaching and learning at the London Campus. Previously my focus was on the contents of one module within one programme. Now, I need to understand the majority of the modules studied at the London Campus.

Throughout the programme, I have gained many more opportunities to design and plan learning activities, for example, within the Academic and Employability Skills module, the English Language Support sessions, as well as the academic tutor support that I offer. Luckily, I continue to teach, but with my role as an Academic Support Tutor, I also get to support learning. This has given me the opportunity to assess and give feedback to learners. Through working with Programme Managers and other academic staff, I am able to develop effective learning environments and improve our approaches to student support and guidance.

I engage in continuous professional development in subjects/disciplines such as education, linguistics, and English for academic purposes and their pedagogies, incorporating research, scholarship, and the evaluation of professional practices. So much so that I will be delivering a session at the University's Nexus conference later in 2021 based upon my work as an Academic Support Tutor looking at the personal tutoring system in a post-covid world. Therefore, I use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development.

I am beginning to gain core knowledge in the areas of academic skills and English language. I have enjoyed the teaching that I have delivered within the English Language support sessions. I am planning to enroll on a CELTA programme so that I can teach English to adults.

I have gained a knowledge of appropriate methods for teaching, learning, and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme. However, I am looking forward to learning more about alternative methods for teaching, learning, and assessing.

I have gained a knowledge of how students learn (especially adults), both generally and within their subject/disciplinary area. This is an area that I would also like to explore further. I would like to use the academic literature that I have read and develop strategies to increase engagement with our mature students.

I have gained a lot of knowledge of the use and value of appropriate learning technologies especially within the last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an exciting area, and I would like to explore this area further. I have begun conversations with our Technology Enhanced Learning team to organise and participate in training sessions in the various learning technologies available to us.

I have gained knowledge of the methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching. I am heavily involved in national surveys such as the National Student, UK Engagement, Postgraduate Taught Engagement and Postgraduate Research surveys. Furthermore, I also take a keen interest in module evaluations and the analysis being developed by the Academic Office.

I have gained knowledge of the implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching. I understand the importance of quality assurance and enhancement in terms of teaching, especially in terms of consistency in areas such as assessments. In addition, I acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates and I recognise these implications in terms of professional practice.

As always, I continue to respect individual learners and diverse learning communities. I actively promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners. So much so that I encourage students to progress onto the next higher programme, for example, postgraduate study.

Finally, in terms of future developmental needs, I would like to continue to combine research in the field of teaching and learning within Higher Education, but I would like to link it to the context of the London Campus, especially with regards to widening access and participation. In addition, I would like to explore English language teaching to adults, English for Academic

Purposes, and the development of academic skills support for students from non-native English-speaking backgrounds. This has been ignited by my work delivering the English Language support sessions and being an Academic Support Tutor. Lastly, I would like to learn more about the learning technologies that the University has access to, and knowledge of, to increase the engagement with students, which in turn, would enhance the student experience.

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Understanding My Role as an Academic Support Tutor (AST)

Introduction to the Role

From June 2020 until present, I have been an AST for Certificate of Higher Education Skills for the Workplace (CertHE) weekend students where I support their learning. Similar to the traditional Personal Tutor, as Yale (2017) explains that the form of and approach towards personal tutoring can depend on numerous factors; for example, some institutions may offer academic support only.

At the London Campus, the role of an AST encompasses assisting students with whatever academic need they may have. Students ask for help in terms of how to understand their assignment, how to structure their assignment, and explanation with regards to key frameworks, models, and theories as well as assess what they have written so far and give feedback. The key difference from the traditional role of a Personal Tutor is that the support is purely academic and not pastoral. The pastoral care is covered by other central and specialised teams, including but not limited to their Programme Manager and the various Professional Services teams.

As an AST, it is important to develop an effective learning environment with a holistic approach to student support and guidance. It is important to engage in continuous professional development in various subjects/disciplines and understand their pedagogy as well as incorporate research, scholarship and evaluate professional practice.

In terms of personal tutoring, Earwalker (1992) proposed three models;

- pastoral,
- professional,
- and curricular.

My role as an AST would fall under the “professional” model as Walker (2020) explains: *“students are not assigned a personal tutor but that if they ask their lecturer/instructor for help and/or guidance on a matter that is more pastoral in nature, they are usually referred to centralised, trained specialists. However, the personal tutor would still meet and listen to students in office hours along with providing specific academic guidance on marks/grades and writing references, for example”.*

Therefore, it is vital to have a knowledge of how students learn, both generally and within their subject areas. It is also important to have core knowledge of the subject material as well as the understanding the appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme.

Difficulties of the Role

However, as discussed in Walker (2020), there are factors that inhibit the effectiveness of the personal tutoring system such as:

“difficulties associated with measuring the impact/effect, causal factors, limited confidence (the importance of background/previous employment, pastoral or academic aspect of the role) and limited understanding of role requirements (lack of clarity/consistency and boundary confusion)”.

These are similar thoughts that I have experienced in terms of not being completely sure if the sessions I have had with students are effective, as well as at times not being completely sure of the details of the students’ queries and finally understanding the boundaries and limitations of my role. For example, Academic Liaison Librarians also assist students in terms of writing references. However, this is an important learning curve in order to ensure that I understand the methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Support Session

In terms of understanding the effectiveness of the academic support sessions I have with students, the Higher Education Academy (2017) has suggested, “explore how to best integrate emerging analytics platforms with the role of personal tutoring”. Through using learning analytics, it can create an holistic approach to students’ academic development. Given the relevance of analytics platforms and VLEs, it is good to use and value appropriate learning technologies.

Limited Confidence

With regards to limited confidence, according to a survey by Race (2010, as quoted in McFarlane, 2016:78), “many tutors learn through experience and talking to colleagues”. This is something that is refreshing to read that with more experience, the confidence will grow. Confidence will also grow by designing and planning learning activities. When I’ve met with students and known beforehand what it is they wanted to discuss, I was able to plan the learning activity accordingly.

Understanding the Role Itself

Finally, look at the limited understanding of the role requirements, Thomas (2006:22 as quoted in Stephen, O’Connell and Hall, 2008: 449) explains “personal tutoring can be seen to fulfil a number of roles for students: information about higher education processes, procedures and expectations; academic feedback and development; personal welfare support; referral to further information and support; a relationship with the institution and a sense of belonging”. The personal tutor system is offered as an approach to a student’s holistic development, but what is interesting is the relationship with the institution and a sense of belonging. Therefore, even if there are crossovers in terms of support available, it adds to the student’s sense of belonging.

Conclusion

Walker (2020) explains that the role of a Personal Tutor (or in this case, AST) has a significant impact and gives value in terms of student outcomes, especially with regards to access, retention, and attainment and progression. However, the system of Personal Tutoring does bring with it factors that inhibit its success. In order to overcome these inhibitions, it is necessary to learn from the experience of others and explore its approach in terms of the student’s holistic development. Finally, it is important to remember that the role offers the student a relationship with the institution and an important sense of belonging. By providing individual academic support, it shows respect towards individual learners and diverse learning communities. AST sessions promote and encourage participation in Higher Education and show equality of opportunity for all learners. However, it is important to acknowledge the wider context in which Higher Education operates especially with regards to the AST system and recognise the implications for the professional practice, as well as its implications in terms of quality assurance and quality enhancement. With this newfound knowledge, I will continue to use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development.

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Appendix 3



PGCert tHE STAFF OBSERVATION FORM

Name of Staff member: Matthew Peake

Date: 15.04.2021

Name of Observer: Sylvia Hoffmann

Number in class:

Student level: 4

Location: online

Topic/s: Speaking about achievements,
interview questions

Start Time: 13.00

Finish Time: 14.00

Teaching Characteristics: Preparation, selection and organisation of content. Choice of teaching/learning methods.

Excellent preparation with the session divided into two topics, effective presentation of target language. However, for interview questions, examples of answers could have been better contextualised. There were many useful phrases for students, which were adequately explained, but it would have been clearer for students if they could see them being used in context, e.g. entire sentences.

Presentation: Beginning class, introduction, continuity with other sessions, students' prior knowledge. Clarity of presentation. Pace. Attitude to subject matter. Use of appropriate reinforcement. Ending the session – summary, future work etc.

Good introduction to the session with the lecturer giving examples of his own achievements.

Pace well-adjusted along the way.

Good clear way of presenting with lots of enthusiasm for the topics and ability to connect to real-life stories.

Checking students' prior knowledge, using repetition, clarification and reinforcement.

Technique and Aids: General apparatus – board, data projector, use of handouts. Question and answer technique. Other evaluation procedures, class management, instructions to students.

Using adequate and interesting slides, good management of student questions and finding balance between students who wanted to speak and those who remained less active.

Very clear instructions, which had to be repeated a few times.

Student Responses: General class atmosphere, level of participation, attention and interest. Student attitude and ability to carry out classwork. Were learning problems identified and overcome? Awareness of individual needs. Attitude to students.

Very relaxed atmosphere which clearly contributed to students actively taking part.
Mixed level of students but differences picked up by the lecturer and adequate help provided with encouraging comments.
Very good attitude to students, always thanking them for their contributions.

Encouraging students to use the target language.

General: Was effective communication achieved? Was there good student – teacher rapport? Were the aims/outcomes achieved? Appropriateness of teaching/learning methods

Excellent rapport with the students.
Outcomes achieved in the sense that most students got to use target language during the session with significant success.
Teaching methods appropriate for the type of the session.

Examples of good practice:

Encouraging students to use the target language. Actively choosing the students to help them speak.

Action points:

Provide more context for language/teaching points which might cause particular difficulty for the students. For example, the word 'synthesise' could have been explained better and with more examples of use.

Observer *Sylvia Hoffmann*

Date 15.04.2021

Oberservee

Date

On completion of the peer observation reports for each module, compose a short reflective paragraph on your observation experiences.

Appendix 3



PGCert tHE STAFF OBSERVATION FORM

Name of Staff member: Matthew Peake

Date: 15.04.2021

Name of Observer: Sylvia Hoffmann

Number in class: 5

Student level: 4

Location: online

Topic/s: Essay writing

Start Time: 15.00

Finish Time: 16.00

Teaching Characteristics: Preparation, selection and organisation of content. Choice of teaching/learning methods.

Giving students an idea of what the session will be about and clarifying it at the start.

Content organised logically from the more general to the more specific, with examples.

Presentation: Beginning class, introduction, continuity with other sessions, students' prior knowledge. Clarity of presentation. Pace. Attitude to subject matter. Use of appropriate reinforcement. Ending the session – summary, future work etc.

Eliciting understanding. Clarifying and checking understanding throughout the session.

Pace well-adjusted along the way.

Good clear way of presenting with lots of enthusiasm for the topics.

Checking students' prior knowledge, using repetition, clarification and reinforcement.

Technique and Aids: General apparatus – board, data projector, use of handouts. Question and answer technique. Other evaluation procedures, class management, instructions to students.

Using adequate and interesting slides, metaphors (hamburger to illustrate essay structure), visual examples (table of contents, etc.)

Very practical way of helping students understand how to do things (e.g. referencing)

Student Responses: General class atmosphere, level of participation, attention and interest. Student attitude and ability to carry out classwork. Were learning problems identified and overcome? Awareness of individual needs. Attitude to students.

Very relaxed atmosphere which clearly contributed to students actively taking part.
Mixed level of students but differences picked up by the lecturer and adequate help provided with encouraging comments.
Very good attitude to students, always thanking them for their contributions.

General: Was effective communication achieved? Was there good student – teacher rapport? Were the aims/outcomes achieved? Appropriateness of teaching/learning methods

Excellent rapport with the students.
Teaching methods appropriate for the type of the session.
Outcomes achieved

Examples of good practice:

Eliciting understanding of ideas before presenting them (e.g. the different functions in word)
Clarifying more advanced concepts, e.g. difference between a *citation* and *reference*.
Very practical way of helping students understand how to do things (e.g. referencing)

Action points:

Some items could have been explained in more detail, e.g. *coherent* to mean *understandable* in the context of essay writing is not enough because coherence in writing is the logical bridge between words, sentences, and paragraphs through specific writing devices.

Observer *Sylvia Hoffmann*

Date 15.04.2021

Oberservee

Date

On completion of the peer observation reports for each module, compose a short reflective paragraph on your observation experiences.

Appendix 3



PGCert tHE STAFF OBSERVATION FORM

Name of Staff member: Matthew Peake

Date: 29/04/2021

Name of Observer: Afzal Munna

Number in class: 1

Student level: CertHE Level 4

Location: London (Online)

Topic/s: Research Methods/Methodology

Start Time: 13:35

Finish Time: 14: 15

Teaching Characteristics: Preparation, selection, and organisation of content. Choice of teaching/learning methods.

Teaching characteristics components are not applicable in this session/observation. The staff member was attending an academic support session call with a student (one-to-one) and was explaining and answering the questions related to the topic from the module digital skills and research methods.

Presentation: Beginning class, introduction, continuity with other sessions, students' priorknowledge. Clarity of presentation. Pace. Attitude to subject matter. Use of appropriate reinforcement. Ending the session – summary, future work etc.

The staff member introduces his role in the institution and explained his line of duty towards the students' academic support. In the beginning he allowed the student ample amount of time to explain the concern and support requirements. He then started clarifying the need of business research methods and explained the various methods/methodologies available in academic research field. He also explained the importance and weaknesses of various methods commonly used in higher education and social science research. The staff member has demonstrated a wide and appropriate knowledge in the subject field. The presentation was bold, clear, informative, and fairly targeting towards the student queries. The staff member highlighted the area of practice and how to reinforce various models into practice from his own master's degree research experience.

Technique and Aids: General apparatus – board, data projector, use of handouts. Question and answer technique. Other evaluation procedures, class management, instructions to students.

The session was one-to-one student academic support and thus there were no classroom equipment used to demonstrate the teaching practice. However, there were enough questions and answers situation where the staff member listened to the student and provided targeting solution to each question. There was no requirement of handout distribution in the session however, the staff member has guided the students to various academic resources available to enhance the understanding on the topic and enrich the subject knowledge.

Student Responses: General class atmosphere, level of participation, attention, and interest. Student attitude and ability to carry out classwork. Were learning problems identified and overcome? Awareness of individual needs. Attitude to students.

The student was very attentive, pro-active, and engaged throughout the support session. The student demonstrated a high level of academic knowledge and produced a good quality draft assignment which she produced in the session for formative feedback. The problem area (research methods/methodology) was identified, and appropriate solutions was provided to the student.

General: Was effective communication achieved? Was there good student – teacher rapport? Were the aims/outcomes achieved? Appropriateness of teaching/learning methods

Overall, the session was very engaging, informative, and lively. The staff member managed to create an inclusive teaching and learning environment where the student felt honored, respected, and was encouraged to perform at the best.

Examples of good practice:

- *The session was engaging and informative*
- *The session was inclusive*
- *The staff member has provided detailed descriptive analytical responses towards every questions*
- *The staff member sign-posted to the relevant resources for further improvement*
- *There were appropriate greetings and respectful behaviors representation throughout the support session*

Action points: *Not applicable*

Observer: Afzal Munna

Date: 29/04/2021

Observer:

Date

On completion of the peer observation reports for each module, compose a short reflective paragraph on your observation experiences.



11th May 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The below-named student has completed at least 100 hours of teaching in accordance with the Postgraduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education programme.

Please find details of the student's programme below:

Name of Student:	Matthew James Peake
Student ID Number:	1503893
Course Start Date:	01/Oct/2019
Expected Course End Date:	30/Sept/2021

Please contact me if you require any further information.

Kind Regards,

Sylvia Hoffmann

CertHE Programme Manager

English Lecturer (MA English, MA Spanish, CertTESOL)

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