

Reflective report

Part 1 Essay

What is behaviour management and effective learner engagement?

Behaviour management (hereafter: BM) within the post-16 educational sector refers to a specific part of the educator role, which includes the application of strategies to ensure that the conduct of learners within the learning environment meets the requirements of the educational institution (e.g.) Coleg Sir Gar's Positive Behaviour Policy (20205) in addition to the conventions and wider pivotal culture of their own particular classroom (Swartz, 2012, p. 2). At the most obvious level, BM involves the knowledge and application of de-escalation/diffusion strategies in situations where there is clear disruptive behaviour (the most common scenarios highlighted in the post-16 textbook literature include: overtalking with peers and making loud noises, use of rude or inappropriate language and questioning and engaging in leisure-based activities on digital devices (Tummons, 2020, p. 99). However, it also involves a sensitive and covert approach pertaining to compliance related behaviour (e.g.) such as dealing with and trying to determine the underlying reasons for poor attendance and/or the frequent incompleteness of homework (Sikubwabo et al, 2024, p.1). More subtle yet, the application of BM skills may also be needed to tackle behaviour which is often well-intentioned or oblivious to the individual, but still problematic - such as one learner contributing excessively to class discussions/answering questions at any and every opportunity in pursuit of recognition and praise (Sathy and Hogan, 2019, p. 7). **Effective learner engagement** (hereafter: ELE) within the same context specifically refers to the institution and teacher's desired attitude, behaviour and compliance of their learners – usually as a result of these BM strategies. It should be noted however, that strong learner engagement may be present in some naturally compliant students (such as in those with high self-efficacy, internal locus of control, growth mindset) with very little intervention or prompting from teachers (Arsini and Rusmana, 2023, p. 396).

What does legislation and academia say about BM and ELE?

The Human Rights Act (1998) and the Equality Act (2010) are core pieces of legislation in which their stipulations pertaining to safeguarding have extended implications for teachers in the post-16 sector - since these teachers are defined as educational professionals working directly with young people and adults. As such, there is not just a moral duty on educators to take appropriate steps where there is cause for concern, but a legal one – in which taking the

wrong course of action, or at worst - taking no action at all, often leads to mandatory additional training or disciplinary action (CJ Law, 2026). Although the precise wording of policies and guidance will vary from institution to institution, the fundamental idea of individuals having the 'right to life' and a 'right to be free from discrimination and violence' (The Human Rights Act, 1998), alongside the more general right of access to further education in the first instance (Skills and Post-16 Education Act, 2022) remains the same across the board. Crucially, it is the professional's duty to notice and take steps as and when needed.

In applying this stipulation to BM and ELE, and most importantly, to the hypothetical context of a classroom situation, such as if a student became verbally abusive and/or physically threatening/violent in class, the role of the teacher transforms from an imparter of knowledge (Walshaw, 2012, p. 181) to one in which a dynamic (in-action) risk assessment needs to be made to ensure their own safety, that of their students and quite often, the safety of the individual displaying aggression (Scorțan, 2025, p. 116). The expected response to such an incident would involve attempting to de-escalate the charged student if the teacher was confident in their ability to do so (such as through maturely and calmly asking them to calm down or take a few moments to themselves; using boundary based but non-challenging body language) and as a last resort - to alert security/call 999 (crisis plan). However, the correct course of action is not always clear for teachers, especially where emotions are almost certainly heightened in difficult situations, as explored by Chang and Taxer (2021).

Fortunately, such serious instances within classrooms requiring both urgent (in the event) and legal (post-event) intervention are relatively infrequent (Mervyn, 2017, p. 13; Estyn, 2025). Indeed, the most common of problematic situations within classrooms requiring the teacher's immediate intervention are often akin in type and severity to the three scenarios listed in this essay's introduction (peers overtalking, use of inappropriate language/questioning and non-productive use of digital devices). Due to the word count restrictions of this essay, the focus here is limited to these three 'common' behaviours. Most importantly, and unlike the use of the abusive/violent scenario referred to previously - these behaviours are not criminal offences, but rather breaches in the institution's codes of conduct/positive behaviour policy in which repercussions at the highest level would mean suspension or expulsion from the institution in which they occupy (Positive Behaviour Policy, 2024). However, the first interventional stage taken by teachers in these three scenarios would usually involve:

- politely asking the students to stop talking (scenario 1: overtalking with peers);
- telling the student that their question or response is inappropriate, either in the moment or after taking the student privately to one side (scenario 2: asking inappropriate questions/giving inappropriate response) and
- asking the student to put the digital device away or reminding them to limit the use of the digital device to class related tasks (scenario 3: non-productive use of digital devices)

In particularly trying cases - such as in where the behaviour is repeated even after the first interventional stage, it may also prove effective to remind the learner of the institution's code of conduct/positive behaviour policy (essentially what they have agreed and signed to during enrolment), pinpoint what they are not adhering to and what the repercussions may be if they continually breach it. This assertive and non-patronising type of approach/use of language aligns to Berne's adult-adult communicative ego state which is highly advised in the post-16 sector (Tiron, 2020, p. 60), primarily due to the relatively mature age of all students and a desire to be treated as such. Striving for this communication style can also play a crucial role in **preventing** behavioural and engagement issues from happening, consequently leading to a reduction in the frequency in which teachers have to take what many find as uncomfortable **reactive** steps. This idea of preparation and prevention is particularly emphasised by the behavioural theories of Fred Jones (2007), Harry Wong (2009) and Mendler and Curwin (2008) showing consistency across both legislative and academic perspectives.

It is important to note however, that relatively recent emphases on trauma informed practice has led to the expectation for teachers to not only become more vigilant to signs of hardship in their students which may be contributing to undesired behaviour and/or engagement issues (this could include anything from domestic abuse, hidden disabilities or financial concerns), but to take steps in aiding such students through signposting to support services or reporting concerns to the institution's safeguarding team (Safeguarding Policy, 2026, p. 8). In doing so, the teacher confidently fulfils their own technical role responsibilities, in addition to gaining valuable knowledge on the needs of certain students which they can then use, if need be, to positively modify the content of lessons and classroom culture, thus accommodating the specific needs of the particularly vulnerable individual. By extension, this practice sees teachers approach BM and ELE on a case-by-case basis, taking into account (so far as possible) the student's personality, preferred learning style, academic and personal background, additional learning needs or, as Gorghiu, Santi and Pribeanu (2024) put it, the

intersectionality of ‘personal, social and contextual factors’ (p. 2). These factors have been found to be instrumental in the learner’s levels of motivation and resilience which subsequently affects how they behave and engage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has summarised what BM and ELE is and looks like within the post-16 sector, and why being in receipt of the skills to tackle problematic situations is important for all teachers. It is evident that for practitioners, ascertaining the source of problematic behaviour and/or engagement is equally as important as it is to calling it out in the first instance. Ideally, getting to know as much as possible about learners (whilst respecting their privacy) and taking a preventative approach towards problematic behaviour and/or engagement should be aimed for. Consequently, teachers can foster a classroom culture that is comfortable, consistent, humorous and appropriately challenging for all those who occupy it (to include the teacher) whilst also being confident to take the right and stringent courses of action in the event of clear and repeated institutional breaches (e.g.) code of conduct and, at worst, criminal activity (e.g.) safeguarding.

Part 2 Reflective account

Observation 1: Psychology AS Level class at Graig College, Llanelli

Throughout the 1-hour lesson, the teacher successfully used a wide range of teaching strategies that generated a varying level of engagement from the class, supporting the concept that level of engagement is dependent on the approach taken by the educator (Singh, 2025, p. 106). Exemplified, when the teacher adopted a lecture style delivery to transfer large amounts of theoretical information – aided by the PowerPoint, all learners seemed familiar with and able to understand the convention of remaining quiet, though it was clear that this by no means equated to disengagement. Most showed visible signs of engagement, primarily through utilising various tools that they had ready removed from their bags and placed on the table. Specifically, some made traditional use of pen and paper/notebooks whilst others typed onto their laptop word documents. Prior to the lesson, the teacher had distributed stapled booklets that summarised key information for that particular psychological debate which allowed them to read many of the same points that were being verbalised by the teacher. As such, the teacher showed an awareness of and fairness towards different learning styles, with her voice catering to auditory learners, the identical information in the booklets catering to

visual learners and the blended approach working for multimodal learners (Maxmudovna, 2019, p. 157).

The first signs of vocal engagement from the students occurred when the teacher posed a question to the whole class: ‘Can you remember which assumption from the cognitive approach relates to eyewitness testimony?’ This functioned as a successful assessment strategy (with her action verb: ‘relates’ requiring the students to apply knowledge from previous material to a new context). This was answered accurately by a confident male student (note, ‘confident’ is used here since this was not my first observation of this class, meaning that I was familiar with some of its commonalities (e.g.) which students were comfortably vocal and those less so. This illustrated the benefits of trainee teachers, such as myself, conducting multiple observations within the same class, so a bigger picture can be built on its intricacies (Jogan, 2018, p. 75808). The response from the teacher to his answer: ‘Good’ with rising intonation seemed well balanced, as if to acknowledge his answer’s correctness, but not overly praising – likely to carefully manage his confidence and engagement level since he, as aforementioned, was usually vocally in lessons anyway. It was particularly interesting to note that following this initial engagement from the young male, a male peer sitting directly next to him – in which the pair frequently interacted with each other (though not to the point of disruption) also vocalised an answer to a question posed by the teacher shortly afterwards. This perhaps exemplified the benefits of having a relaxed/less stringent seating plan in the post-16 sector, in which peers with shared characteristics who may identify with one another can actually bring about healthy and motivating intellectual competition (Hoekstra et al, 2023, p. 6).

Observation 2: Mental Health self-management class at Adferiad Recovery, Ammanford

During this one-hour class, the teacher managed the engagement of her learners through explaining and supporting individuals to understand the more technical and complex aspects of the chosen topic (self-esteem and self-confidence) which then encouraged vocal engagement from the learners through the open expression of emotions, attitudes and the relaying of life-experiences (Hoque, 2016). This showed consistency with what is typical in mental health self-management settings, where learners with impaired cognitive functioning due to symptoms of a condition or side effects of psychiatric medications (or both) often shine brightest through affective, qualitative based activities. Witnessing the teacher successfully engage the students through a blend of cognitive challenge and open expression

was particularly inspiring, not only because she showed ‘knowledge...of policies and strategies **relevant** to [her] sector’ (EW 2025), but because it is something that I would later try and emulate in my own practice whilst under formal observation (see following section). Generally the vocal engagement was well handled by the teacher throughout, who appeared to welcome participation from any learner – in addition to astutely recognising when a learner showed signs of wanting to say something - such as through level eye contact and thoughtful facial expressions (Discovery Education, 2025) but initially did not proceed: ‘Yes, did you want to say something? Go on.’

However, a common behaviour observed in this observation and the college setting (Observation 1) was the clear need for the teacher to manage the ‘over’ participation of some eager individuals, such as one individual seeking to self-express at any and every opportunity. Specifically, one older male learner’s participation in this session was not just characterised by speaking on numerous occasions, but also in the length of his accounts. Whilst the teacher appeared to give way to the learner in most of these instances, she henceforth adjusted aspects of her delivery by looking directly at other members of the class for contributions, likely in a bid to subtly and politely imply to the highly vocal male that whilst she valued his input, it was only fair to also hear responses from other members of the group. Equally, the teacher showed excellent awareness and respect of those on the opposite end of the vocal engagement scale (those who clearly did not want to speak at all). For these such individuals, just attending the session and nodding occasionally if they agreed with a statement could be viewed as being effectively engaged – even if these would not fit the ‘typical’ behaviours of engaged individuals as defined by the literature (Wisniewski, 2024). Effective engagement then, is a relative term and will vary greatly between individuals and their contexts.

Own teaching practice: Mental Health self-management class at Adferiad Recovery

Following this one-hour session, in which 8 learners were in attendance, the project co-ordinator/manager and my own PCET tutor, I have been drawn to two aspects relating to behaviour management during the class. The first of these relates to one service user interrupting other learners whilst they were vocally contributing to the session. I intervened assertively but politely on each occasion with statements in the form of: ‘Hang on a sec [name], let’s leave [name] finish their point first.’ In having the courage to intervene and to ensure fairness for the other learners, I believe to have ‘Demonstrate[d] leadership, integrity, courtesy and respect towards others’ (EW, 2025). However, the fact that the interruptions

continued sporadically throughout the session may indicate that my interventional strategy could be developed further – where the behaviour is prevented in the first instance, rather than having to be dealt with, albeit with success, repeatedly (Zerzová and Škodová, 2024, p. 10). With this vision, I am ‘Critically reflect[ing] on [my] own values, knowledge and skills to improve [my] learning and leadership’ (EW, 2025).

The feedback obtained from my tutor following the session has also informed this reflective piece to a great extent, as she had picked up on aspects of my strategy that I had overlooked. Specifically, she praised the fact that I stopped the interrupting individual (perhaps since many trainee teachers, especially in the presence of their hierarchies, would find it difficult to intervene in an assertive way), but however stated that I had not returned to the interrupter (after the initial speaker had finished) as so he could subsequently get his point across. Following this valuable observation from my tutor, which illustrates the necessity and benefits of these such formal observations (Laska, 2016, 377), I determined that not returning to the interrupter was the result of simply forgetting (human error) rather than a deliberate attempt to punish him for repeatedly interjecting others – in which the latter would be a clear example of not ‘Demonstrat[ing] [a] commitment to [my] learners, their learning, safety and **well-being**’ (EW, 2025). It may be that my quest for ‘perfection’ in this case, such as the fixation to cover everything outlined on the lesson plan and to finish ‘on the dot’ may have detracted from the attention I gave to the group, hence not returning to the interrupting learner. In moving forward, I will endeavour to find a healthier balance between technical requirements (such as time management and loyalty to the information on my lesson plans) and reading and responding to the behavioural dynamics of the class as they play out.

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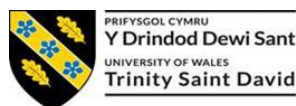
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Appendices

Appendix A - Teacher observation forms for the two observations undertaken

Teacher Observation Form



Teacher	Carley Turner
Date	01/05/2026
Group	AS Level Psychology class at Graig College, Llanelli
Topic/Context	Contemporary Debates: The Reliability of Eyewitness Testimony
Notes on the lesson:	
- Majority of students arrived outside the classroom on time and did not enter until instructed to do so by the teacher - Students sat down fairly quietly and pulled out their tools and resources (pens, notepads, laptops), suggesting a 'readiness to learn' - Teacher began the session by recapping what had been covered in the previous lesson which seemed to function as a good recall strategy for the learners - Male student in the second row from the front answered fairly frequently throughout the lesson when a question was posed to the whole class, praised by teacher but not overly so (confidence management/ensuring others did not feel like imposters?)	

- Input from the above student seemed to prompt a response from a peer/friend sitting directly next to him – suggesting a relaxed seating plan for learners in post-16 can be beneficial (friendly competition)
- Two individuals arrived late but did not disrupt the flow of the lesson, acknowledge by the teacher and sat down
- Teacher moved around at some points as if to target the vocal engagement of a group of female students the back of the class who were predominantly silent when a question was posed to the class (although all four appeared productive with taking notes)
- Teacher was serious/professional 90% of the time but did allow room for humour (e.g.) 'The x (topic) came up in the exam last year so it's unlikely it'll come up again this year...but watch it come up now that I've said that!'

What I have learned:

- Orderliness and behavior management starts even before the lesson itself (students queuing up outside the class and waiting for teacher to arrive – traditional and nice to see)
- Students appear to be more relaxed and engaged when the teacher 'drops' the professional mask every now and again – shows a more relatable/normal human side
- Application/use of teaching strategies can be fluid/not always rigidly fixed in a lesson plan – teacher seemed to do many things at hand/off cuff without planning

Targets to improve my own practice (mapped to professional standards):

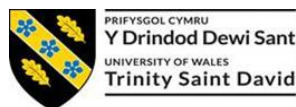
Ensure that I gain the right knowledge and develop the right skillset to manage the 'over-participation' of confident individuals. Duty to manage their confidence and ensure others feel worthy of their place in the same classroom - **Value and promote diversity, equality of opportunity & inclusion and Demonstrate commitment to learners, their learning, safety and well-being**

Show a humorous and less professional side from time to time– this will allow me to relax along with my learners
Build positive and collaborative relationships

Whilst being in receipt of BM and ELE strategy knowledge and how to apply them is imperative to me as a teacher – I must also remind the students in this particular context (Psych summer exams) that they are responsible for their own self-directed learning/revision outside of the classroom - **Establish and maintain strategic processes and approaches which enable learners to share responsibility for their own learning and assessment**

After the application of a newly learned strategy relating to BM and ELE, I must try and reflect on its success and ascertain what I can do to improve next time. No two learners are the same in every respect, and so I must accept that an unsuccessful strategy may actually prove successful in another context and with another learner - **Critically reflect on own values, knowledge and skills to improve learning and leadership**

Teacher Observation Form



Teacher	Barbara Cook
Date	26/05/2026
Group	Mental Health Self-Management (hereafter: SM) lesson at Adferiad Recovery, Ammanford
Topic/Context	Building self-esteem and self-confidence
Notes on the lesson:	
- Minor disruption at the start (and later in the middle of the session) with service users making hot beverages. Teacher and the majority of students were seated at 11:00 but some wanted to make tea/coffee. Teacher said that 'We'll wait before everyone's finished before we start' – this is a common occurrence at the centre but the learners do appear to hurry when the teacher says that she and the others are waiting to start - Frequent interruptions from one regular attendee (Learner A) and frequent and long accounts by another (fairly) regular attendee (Learner B) – the teacher gave way in the majority of these instances (likely understanding that these behaviours are a result of lower self-regulation and self-awareness due to chronic mental illness and medication side effects). It should be noted however that whilst often minorly disruptive, Learner B's contributions are often central to the success of sessions – particularly when there are fewer attendees. - The teacher excellently noticed subtle cues of desired/borderline participation in some individuals – either through the individual getting ready to initiate speech but was beaten by the answer of another learner, or through changes in body language/gestures which indicated increased cognition Dealt with the hot beverage disruption in the middle of the session well by saying 'We can go onto the next part of this topic now, or we can take five minutes for coffee and then recommence?'	
What I have learned:	
- Noticing and acting on the micro-behaviour of learners (behaviour that indicates that desired/borderline engagement) is a useful way to get generally quieter but passionate student to participate vocally - Having a balance between rigidity and leeway may lead to more comfortability in the room (e.g.) allowing a coffee break but stressing that we <u>will</u> be recommencing at x time - Whilst long and frequent accounts from one learner can be problematic for the agenda/lesson plan and for the vocal engagement of other learners – they can also serve as to effectively add emotional depth and make up time when the group is smaller	

Targets to improve my own practice (mapped to professional standards):

- Maintain my punctuality with times but also allow learners in this environment to feel comfortable and able to make hot beverages with feeling that they will be scolded - **Demonstrate commitment to learners, their learning, safety and well-being**

- Be more mindful of my approach when interruptions occur amongst the older psychiatric learners – this is almost always not deliberate and a result of decades of hardship and medication intake - **Demonstrate commitment to learners, their learning, safety and well-being; Value and promote diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion & Demonstrate leadership, integrity, courtesy and respect towards others**

Question the teacher (BC) on how she has learnt to notice when others are about to engage or have a desire to engage without giving overt/explicit signs (also research this) - **Know how to use evidence and research to improve my leadership**

Appendix B - Lesson plan for own teaching session

Lesson Plan Template



Lesson Plan

Topic: Crisis management & Mental Health Act (MHA)		Class: Adferiad self-management (Ammanford)
Date: 10/03/2026	Length of lesson: 1 hour	Number of students: between 3 - 12
Resources required: Printed NHS material, pens & paper, phone cameras to take picture of useful resources if desired		
Aim of Lesson To build on existing knowledge of the key points in the MHA		
Learning Outcomes – The Learners Should Be Able To: - recognize the key differences between the previous and most recently revised MHA - show a working knowledge of their own rights (as patients if they approach a mental health crisis and are in hospital), as stipulated in the MHA		
Previous student knowledge required for the session: Previous knowledge desired but not essential. Learners present who were also at the session on 03/03/2026 may have greater knowledge of the subject. However, a recap will be given at the start of the session to bring those who were not present on the 03/03 up to speed.		

Anticipated difficulties (if applicable):

- Behaviour of learners – learners who are more prone to MH dips may present challenging behaviour. Though unlikely, learners may also behave disruptively since the co-ordinator who usually conducts the SM sessions will not be present.
- Deviation from main topic – as there is a desire to generate an open discussion, there is a possibility that focus may shift to other topics/areas which hold less relevance

Professional Standards (where are these being met within the session)

Demonstrate commitment to learners, their learning, safety and well-being – Ensured that the topic is relevant to us as a mental health centre and will conduct the session in a way which is understandable for all. Ensure an opportunity is made before session commencement for service users to bring beverages to the table and feel comfortable. Learners will be reassured that the observing tutor is there to judge what I am doing as the session leader and not what they are doing as service users.

Value and promote diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion – encourage input from all service users and not allow one individual to monopolize the session.

Demonstrate leadership, integrity, courtesy and respect towards others – ensure that not too much free reign is given (such as talking excessively) or inappropriate behaviour is done (such as interrupting excessively) – must be firm and convey authority without appearing threatening.

Maintain and update knowledge of policies and strategies relevant to my sector – this is linked to the very topic of the session (rights of individuals under the Mental Health Act). In a wider sense, care will be taken when discussing potentially sensitive information which often arises as part of SM groups and how to manage the behavior of potentially disrupting individuals (this is unlikely but sometimes occurs).

Lesson Detail:

Stage	Focus	Strategy	Time
Introduction	Recap last week's session	Recap, brainstorming,	10 minutes
	Explain what today's session will involve (discussing mental health crises & the rights of mental health patients under the MHA)	Lecture, Q&A, Discussion	
Development	Navigate through the 15 rights of detained patients under the Mental Health Act, expanding on each right		45 minutes
		Lecture, Q&A, Follow-up questioning, Discussion	

	Quiz/Game – read aloud the questions from paper and encourage responses from the group. Announce the correct answer after a decision/answer has been reached by the group Announce learning outcomes – ask learners if these have been achieved Ask the group if they have any information they wish to add, questions or feedback.	Quiz/Game Request for information, questions or feedback.	5 minutes
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Plenary/conclusion			
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Assessment Strategies: when and how are they included within the lesson?

Last session recap at the start: assess the retention of information from the previous week

Q&A throughout the session: will use to assess current knowledge and if new/fresh information delivered as part of the session has been absorbed/attached to previous knowledge

Follow-up questioning: will use for confident individuals to assess depth of knowledge

Quiz/Game at the end of the development phase: a low stakes/formative strategy where everyone can chip in and be interactive – a nice, informal way to end the session.

Informal reflection (to be completed after the session)

- Generally happy and proud to have successfully conducted a full 1-hour lesson under the in-person scrutiny of the project co-ordinator and PCET tutor
- Managed to achieve everything that was set out on my lesson plan, showing structure and commitment to what I had prepared
- Time management skills need to be improved upon – the last 10 minutes of the lesson was a little rushed as I wanted to include a clear assessment strategy (Quiz) whilst also show punctuality to my tutor by finishing at 12:00
- Some excellent observations given as part of my immediate feedback from the tutor – including how I could benefit next time by giving the learners a short break due halfway through (since we were covering a relatively information heavy topic – Mental Health Act stipulations) and refer back to learners who had interrupted initial speakers so they could eventually give their point at the appropriate time

Appendix C: SMART Action plan for professional development in relation to behaviour management/learner engagement.

Action No.	Target/Goal (Specific)	Action Steps (Measurable)	Links to Professional Standards (Attainable)	Resources (Relevant)	Target Date for Completion (Time-framed)	Comments/Progress
1	Gain the knowledge and develop the right skills to manage the excessive participation of confident individuals	Recall activity such as flash cards where I must give a description for a term and vice versa	Value and promote diversity, equality of opportunity & inclusion and Demonstrate commitment to learners, their learning, safety and well-being	Excellent resources are available at Y Fforwm Library and Moodle in addition to peer-reviewed journal articles	Before recommencement at college placement (September 2026)	
2	Ascertain how experienced teachers have learnt to notice when others want to engage without any palpable signs/cues	Once learnt and applied in my own practice, reflect on whether it was successful (yes) or not (no)	Know how to use evidence and research to improve my leadership	In-person conversations with experienced teachers in addition to online and physical academic literature	I can begin to apply this throughout the summer at Adferiad since we do not close as per other institutions (e.g.) college	

