



University of
Reading

Issue 23 | March 2024

InForm

A journal for International Foundation Programme professionals

Integrating prior
learning for
academic success

Assessing the changes
in international
students' EDI
awareness

Let's not talk about
ChatGPT. Let's talk
about people

Recalibrating
educators'
expectations on
students and student
learning in the era
of generative AI

This issue:

**The changing nature and expectations
of students in a changing world:
transforming and being transformed**



Engagement

We are pleased to announce that the InForm 2024 Conference will be held at the University of Leeds. This will be a face to face event only.

The aim of this conference is to bring together a collection of research and ideas related to the international foundation and pathway programmes (IFP) as well as providing an opportunity for interacting and sharing practice with colleagues from the wider IFP community.

Saturday 8 June 2024

Venue: **University of Leeds**

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We welcome presentations and proposals related to the theme:

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Transferability of skills | Reflective practice



To submit a proposal, please use the [speaker proposal form](#), or to register please email Rachel Robinson/Nancy Woods at inform@leeds.ac.uk.

Proposal deadline:
09:00 Monday, 25 March 2024

InForm

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WELCOME



Matthew Tolley

Chair of the InForm
Editorial Board

From the editorial board...

Issue 23 of *InForm* continues from the 2023 InForm Conference, 'The changing nature and expectations of students in a changing world: transforming and being transformed', which was hosted by the University of Bristol on 3 June.

During the plenary session, Tansy Jessop, Bristol's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students, led discussions around designing and engaging students in meaningful assessment at both programme and module level. A number of articles in this issue were presented at the conference, once again showing the opportunities the conference provides for publication. Discussions around Artificial Intelligence featured heavily at the conference, and this is continued throughout this issue, providing food for thought on how it might impact assessment, communication and definitions of learning. We also see papers on a range of other topics such as a 'return to normality' following the global pandemic, students' prior learning and strategies, and engaging students in formative assessment.

The issue begins with papers which place the students at the centre and focus on developing their existing skills and knowledge. The first paper, written by **Amy Stickels, Miriam Schwiening, Anna Tranter, Isaskun Culebras, Yutong Liu and Fatemah Azimi Taraghdari**, showcases a student-staff partnership which investigated the challenges many international students face when studying in the UK and sheds light on strategies students already use to navigate them. Suggestions are also given for staff on how international students could be further supported at university. Next, **Paul Robertson** discusses the importance of developing students' Digital Literacy and demonstrates the most relevant competencies for IFP students. This notion of building on students' existing skills and experiences is also explored by **Judith Gorham** and **Diana Adjei Nyarko** in relation to a Business Management course, following an inclusive pedagogies model. This first section is rounded off by **Daniel Devane** and **Vicky Collins** who present changes to students' equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) practices, through a newly developed English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course.

The focus in this section then shifts towards assessment. **Chris Massell** presents contract-cheating interventions following the shift to greater use of online learning; these interventions not only focused on raising students' awareness, but also the upskilling of staff. Reducing academic misconduct is also explored by **Dr Rehana Bari** and **Dr James Firoze Appleby**, who present data

on a Mathematics module following the move to online assessment in 2020. Next, **Michael Marcinkowski** and **Kathleen Burrows** focus on the fundamental differences between generative AI and human intelligence and argue that authentic assessment design and purpose can guide assessment writers. Recent years have seen an increase in reflective writing as assessment, and **Maggie Boswell's** case study highlights students' perceptions towards reflection and offers suggestions on how to increase engagement with such tasks. Similarly, **Sophia Vanttinen-Newton** reflects on changes to formative assessment design on an EAP module, having gathered data from both students and staff. The main section concludes with **Nick Pearce, Saul Jones** and **Sora Zushi's** reflections on blended learning at Kings College London. While many institutions have returned solely to face-to-face teaching, they highlight some of the lessons learned from online learning and the opportunities it can bring.

The InForm Exchange section brings together five shorter articles which describe ongoing practice, reflections and opinions of IFP practitioners. We continue with blended learning with **Zainab Abedali Teraif** reflecting on her experiences with it at Bahrain Polytechnic. Next, **Jamie Emerson** echoes Michael and Kathleen in recommending authentic assessment as a means to counter challenges posed by AI. Following this, 'textscrolling', an alternative method of developing students' awareness of genre and structure, is presented by **Cleo Tilley** and **Joanne Raynor**. The penultimate article, by **Michael Elliott**, argues for fundamentally 'rethinking' foundation Economics programmes to reflect changes recently made at undergraduate level and better prepare them. Finally, **Margherita de Candia** shares a recent exchange with three students and encourages us to avoid assuming that students want to use AI – what about those who don't?

We hope you will enjoy reading the selection of articles in this issue and we thank the authors for contributing and sharing their work with *InForm*.

Additionally, we are happy to announce that this year's InForm Conference will be hosted by the University of Leeds on 8 June 2024. The theme of the conference is simply "Engagement". We invite you to register either as a presenter or participant. For more information, please see the enclosed advert on page ii.

To submit an article for the next *InForm* issue, please email inform@reading.ac.uk.

Informing pedagogy:

Learning from international students

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By working with, and listening to, our international students, we are able to better understand what supports their learning. We can then make informed changes to the pedagogy within our classrooms. And in doing so, our students will feel they belong and have the agency to contribute to the development of the pedagogy.

Through a co-creation project, international students researched the challenges and strategies used to succeed. Our findings suggest that, far from the deficit model often portrayed, international students are proactive and resourceful at navigating their studies and offer sound advice to tutors of ways to improve our pedagogy.

Introduction

Whilst both home and international students face academic and social transition issues, there are distinct differences and studies show that international students have greater difficulty adapting than domestic students (Andrade, 2006). Alshafi & Shin (2017) noted that academic cultural differences in learning and teaching approaches impact upon how international students adapt to their new academic settings. This co-created study, a collaboration between staff and students, focused on working with international students to understand the learning strategies that students adopt to navigate these changes. Through listening to students' narratives and using these to inform our teaching pedagogies, we are placing the student at the centre of what we do and validating their cultural capacity (Bourdieu, 2011). We are also recognising the value of students' navigational capital, defined by Bai & Wang (2022) as the 'ability to manoeuvre through institutions whose cultural norms are incongruent with those that minority students are familiar with' and incorporating it into our teaching practices.

The research

The co-created qualitative study was a partnership of three teachers and four international students, including foundation year alumni, undergraduate students and postgraduates, funded by Warwick International Higher Education Academy. The co-created project included students designing, gaining ethics approval for, and running six focus groups involving 44 of their

international peers, across a range of academic subjects and levels of study to collect information on:

- The students' perspectives of challenges they face in their studies.
- Examples of pedagogical practices students use within lectures, seminars and assessments to navigate their studies.
- Suggestions of pedagogical practices their teachers could use to better support their learning.

Following this, the student researchers undertook seven semi-structured, hour long, interviews with volunteers from the focus groups. The findings are derived from both the interviews and the focus groups.

Findings and comments

Lectures

Respondents highlighted several variables during the lecture which impacted on their ability to understand and follow content including the pace of the lecture, large group sizes, limited lecture time, general language barrier and familiarity with key concepts.

Students commented on the cognitive load when dealing with new lexis alongside new academic concepts:

"As a non-native speaker, you not only need to comprehend the literal meaning of the words, but also understand the deeper academic concepts being discussed. It requires additional cognitive effort to integrate both aspects effectively."

Student feedback suggested that there is an argument for a scaffolded approach to lectures, especially in the pre-lecture stages. Students recommended that lecturers distribute glossaries and lecture slides prior to the lecture giving the students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the topic and unknown words and concepts (Schwiening & Tranter, 2019). Respondents pointed out that presentation slides were, however, only useful when they contain sufficient text or supplementary notes, rather than slides simply displaying pictures and key words. There is a case for two forms of the lecture slides; one pre-lecture with additional information and one during-lecture with minimal text which do not require our students to decipher spoken and written input simultaneously. The issue for our students is that the same slides are often used to serve two different functions with opposing requirements; the issue for the teacher is in developing two different sets of slides.

Students proposed changes to lecture structure, building in time for student-focused work, including pauses into the lectures for student reflection, providing time for mini group discussions, or inviting students to post questions to an online forum during the lecture. Focus group participants noted that they find it useful when lecturers use suprasegmental aspects of the speech, such as intonation, to draw students' attention to key content.

Seminars

Student noted that barriers to participating in seminars include insufficient time to formulate ideas, a perception that one should only offer ideas considered valuable, and not fully understanding culturally dependent key concepts. Students also lose confidence if they ask questions, or make observations, which tutors do not understand. Some respondents felt that their oral communication should be grammatically correct and delivered fluently, a view prevalent among Chinese students in our study.

"... sometimes you may feel hesitant and uncertain about how to express your ideas when the time comes. This can lead to a longer thinking process and hesitation, ultimately resulting in not raising your hand or missing the opportunity to contribute."

In order to gain the confidence to participate, students make use of a variety of strategies. They ask classmates to explain terms to them, check words on their phones, attempt to deduce the meaning of unknown lexis, and try to focus on the communication of a message rather than the linguistic accuracy. To do this successfully, students need the teachers to facilitate this with time. However, whilst students are being resourceful, there is a danger of misunderstandings occurring. This may be mitigated by giving students the opportunity to check meanings in their first language (L1), where possible/appropriate, and by the lecturer checking understanding of concepts and the significance of these. In considering how staff can support students, proposals included the planned use of thinking time and paired work. For example, staff could use think-pair-share or snowball discussion methods before elicitation. One student in the focus group suggested that foreknowledge of the seminar topic would encourage participation as students could conduct additional research. This requires greater transparency with students on the content of their classes. Students felt tutors could consider students' familiarity with key cultural issues. This can be achieved in dialogue with students to better understand which ideas are culturally dependent and to find either alternative explanations or ensure time is given to fully explain the concept, which, in the long-term, would also build a student's cultural understanding too.

Assessments

Completing assessment types which do not exist in their home countries was problematic for some students in our study. For example, experimental activities and reflective journals, commonly used in UK HE institutions, may not be used in other educational systems. Challenges when completing assessments arise from unfamiliarity with conventions of academic writing, for example, knowing when it is appropriate to cite or to use your own viewpoint. Cultural differences in academic writing styles may result in a lack of coherence,

"Indeed, it is possible that despite writing in English, your thinking may still be inclined towards a Chinese mindset. (...) This can potentially affect the logical flow of your paper, leading to certain issues."

Students felt that low grades for structure and coherence criteria in assignments could be partly due to vague assignment briefs. This is an opportunity for teachers to co-create with students to improve the assignment briefs to be more useful for students. Students also acknowledged that academic cultural differences around the grading of assessments can lead to a mismatch between expectations and actual grades awarded, affecting confidence levels. This, coupled with the previous points, speaks to the importance of formative assessment in helping students to understand assignment briefs and marking procedures/criteria and, in the spirit of this research, the use of self and peer assessment using exemplars. Some staff are hesitant in sharing marked work fearing a limit to creativity or students mimicking what they see, but, much like creating flatpack furniture without an knowing what the final product looks like (and with limited, poor quality instructions), it is hard to know how to create the final product successfully if you are unfamiliar with the assessment type and its conventions. Providing extracts for class analysis is a helpful step for international students to become more familiar and confident in assessment. Students reported that they find it useful when tutors spend time explaining academic expectations and schedule dedicated sessions for tutors to answer questions around assignment briefs. Our research found that international students are often reluctant to use traditional "office hours" as the purpose of them is unclear. Rebranding them as "student support" places students at the centre of this.

Conclusion

International students have independently developed strategies to thrive in HE, however, academics may not be aware of these strategies. Our research demonstrates that in many cases students are also aware of the changes that could be made to help them manoeuvre successfully through their academic studies – they now need to be given a platform allowing them to become agents of these changes.

Students have suggested a number of ways we can support them with their learning to succeed as undergraduates:

- Use of academic tutorials, where students can share their skills with one another. Many

students have developed their own skills but would benefit from hearing how others approach the same tasks.

- Opportunities for students to provide teachers with valuable feedback on how we can better support their learning. For example, by working with students to co-create assignment briefs or rewriting mark schemes in "student speak" so that students feel that these are support materials rather than obstacles to their academic progress.
- A focus on developing academic skills and less on the quantity of academic content. This may be a challenge for teachers, as we are often fixated on delivery of content, however there is little point in delivery of a large quantity of content if students have not understood it. Surely, we would be better reducing the content but supporting students to develop the skills to understand the content.

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Digital Competence – student and staff perceptions

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Digital Competence, the ability to effectively use technology, is increasingly essential to successfully participate in Higher Education programmes permeated with technology. Although equipping students with Digital Competence is crucial for IFY programmes, there is little research into student needs, their existing competence levels and how to help students develop competence. This study uses the EU's DigComp 2.2 Framework (Vuorikari et al., 2022) to investigate student and staff perceptions of these issues and fill this gap by identifying which competencies they consider most relevant, students' current abilities, which activities help students develop competencies and makes recommendations for future IFY programmes.

Introduction

Technology is increasingly prevalent in Higher Education and now mediates many learning activities and assessments (Ahmed & Roche, 2021), a trend which the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated. Therefore, Digital Competence, the ability to use technology confidently, critically, and responsibly (Vuorikari et al., 2022), is increasingly important for students. International Foundation Year (IFY) programmes help students to meet the academic expectations of transitioning to university and develop confidence in facing other challenges. While many IFY programmes help students develop Digital Competence, there is little research into the area, and it is not always clear what is expected of students, what existing skills they possess, or how IFY practitioners can best help them improve. Therefore, this study investigates student and staff perceptions of Digital Competence to fill this gap by identifying which competencies are considered most relevant, students' perceived competence, which activities develop competence and make recommendations for future IFY programmes.

This qualitative study focused on the Academic English Skills (AES) course at Holland ISC in the Study Group network during the 2022–2023 academic year. The course prepared students from all around the world for undergraduate programmes at Dutch universities, with students streamed into three pathways: economics, business, and social sciences.

Methodology

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to explore different stakeholders' perceptions of Digital Competence. Students, teachers, and curriculum developers were purposefully selected for interview as they could provide the most insight into how Digital Competence was experienced on this specific AES course. Two interview protocols were used, one for staff and one for students, asking comparable questions. Staff were also asked additional questions about curriculum design, which would not have been relevant for students.

Due to time restraints a small number of interviews were conducted, with eight participants in total. Three of the fifty-two students were recruited, with one from each pathway (economics, business, and social sciences), and each coming from differing cultural and geographic backgrounds. All relevant staff were invited to participate, and two AES teachers and three curriculum designers participated, including the local curriculum designer and two from the Study Group network.

The EU's DigComp 2.2 Framework (Vuorikari et al., 2022) was chosen for this study because it provides a comprehensive framework describing Digital Competence. Furthermore, it is increasingly used to define, conceptualise, and assess Digital Competence (Spante et al., 2018). It comprises five overlapping areas with 21 competencies (Figure 1) and expands on each competency by describing eight proficiency levels and appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. For full details see Vuorikari et al. (2022).

Results and discussion

A reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020) of the data identified several key themes relating to the relative importance of various competencies, the formal and informal ways in which students learnt Digital Competence, barriers to developing competence and issues around incorporating competency training into curricula. These themes were then analysed in relation to the study's four research questions:

1. What do students and staff perceive to be the most relevant digital competencies for English-Medium international foundation students?
2. What are staff and students' perceptions of the degree of Digital Competence that these students possess?
3. Which areas of Digital Competence does the current Academic English Skills course aim to help students to develop?
4. What implications do the findings have for how this and other similar courses are designed and delivered in future?

Most relevant competencies

Although students and staff considered all five areas of the DigComp 2.2 Framework relevant for students, all groups considered the most relevant to be *information and data literacy* (hereafter *information literacy*), *communication and collaboration* (hereafter *communication*), and *problem solving*. *Information literacy* was deemed extremely important because of its connection to university studies and assessments where students must identify, evaluate, and integrate online content. Discussion of *communication* focused on the importance of effectively communicating in emails, forums, discussion boards and online collaborative groupwork. It was noted that COVID restrictions on face-to-face communication had increased the importance of effective digital communication. Furthermore, staff emphasised netiquette and how poor pragmatic communication could negatively impact students. *Problem solving* was also prioritised by all groups and one student explained that they solved many technical problems during the pandemic, suggesting that the need for autonomous problem solving became more widespread.

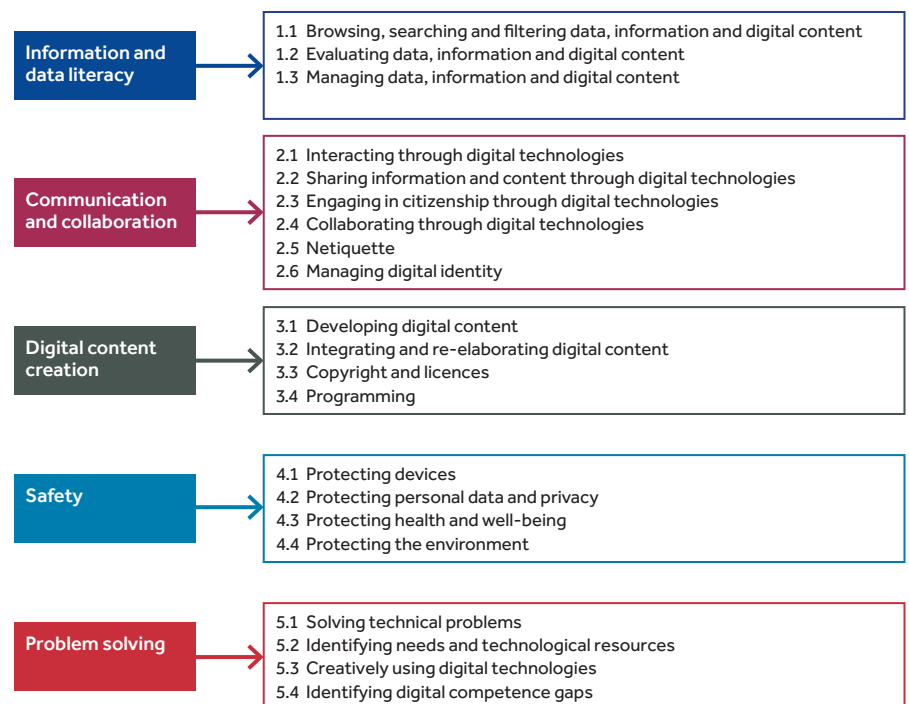


Figure 1: The DigComp 2.2 Framework (Vuorikari et al., 2022, p.4)

While *safety* was generally considered relevant, students prioritised it more, perhaps reflecting their own experience with technology and familiarity with messaging about online safety and technology and mental health. They emphasised the need to protect devices and data to prevent work being stolen. They also discussed the negative impacts of technology on mental and physical health but expressed an inability to disengage and this concern was echoed by staff, who further discussed the impact of mental health on academic performance. *Digital content creation* was deemed less relevant than other competencies because of the disciplines these students were studying. However, staff identified the need to create digital documents, presentations, and videos for assessments, as well as connecting copyright with academic misconduct and referencing.

Existing student competence levels

In general, students were relatively confident in their abilities, especially in *information literacy*, *communication* and *problem solving*. They focused on how their informal learning outside of education had helped them develop their Digital Competence. However, they mainly reported confidence in less complex competencies. For example, in terms of

communication students felt confident in interacting and sharing information through digital technologies, but less confident in netiquette, citizenship and managing identity. Indeed, students raised doubts about their own abilities, particularly regarding the area of *safety*. Despite discussing effective means of protecting devices and data, all students expressed concerns, and some discussed the damaging mental health implications of their relationship with technology.

Staff presented a more mixed interpretation of student competence. They acknowledged that informal technology use developed some transferable skills and believed that students could be considered "fluent" in quickly grasping the basics of new tools. However, staff noted that competence in informal and social technology, e.g. mobile phone use, did not make students academically competent. One participant labelled this 'narrow competence', a term which encapsulates a concept recognised in the literature (Ahmed & Roche, 2021), giving an example of students producing videos for social media, but struggling with more traditional forms of content creation such as PowerPoint.

How Academic English Skills (AES) helped students develop Digital Competence

Students and staff noted that the AES course helped students develop Digital Competence in *information literacy*, *communication* and *problem solving* by requiring the use of technology to complete formative and summative assessments and through a group writing project.

A piece of reading coursework was reported to help students to develop *information literacy*, through developing and assessing students' ability to identify evidence for an essay by finding, evaluating, and reading appropriate academic sources. Students were instructed in the use of academic search engines and evaluative criteria, which built on existing skills in using search engines acquired through informal technology use. This supports Ahmed and Roche's (2021) argument that educators should leverage and enhance students' current abilities to transfer them to academic situations.

A formative group writing project using shared documents was seen as helping students to develop *communication* competencies as they worked collaboratively online. Students also noted that the project indirectly improved *problem solving* because "sometimes we can struggle" and work to solve the problems. Both staff and students noted that encountering issues and helping students develop skills to address them helped students to develop *problem solving* throughout the course.

Implications and recommendations for course development

This research into the AES course confirms the following recommendations:

1. Explicitly addressing Digital Competence in foundation and university preparation programs helps to better prepare students for undergraduate studies (Roche, 2017).
2. Project and task-based approaches are appropriate for building Digital Competence (Fedorova & Nikiforova, 2022).
3. Authentic task design, mirroring what students need to do at university, encourages genuine learning (Morgen, 2018).
4. Programmes and curricula should be proactively reviewed to minimise gaps and respond to developments such as the emergence of generative AI.
5. Digital Competence should be included in curriculum design, e.g. using frameworks such as DigComp 2.2 (Vuorikari et al., 2022) to ensure that competencies are mapped to subject content and needs through an interdisciplinary approach (Fedorova & Nikiforova, 2022).
6. Students' digital competency should be diagnostically assessed on entry to IFY programmes using tools such as the EU's Europass Digital Skills Assessment Tool (European Union, 2023) in order to ascertain their existing competency levels.

Conclusion

Although this is a small-scale study, responses highlight that Digital Competence is a high priority for both the staff and students interviewed. It is important for everyone in Higher Education, but even more so for IFY programmes helping students with little experience of Higher Education while transitioning to a different academic context and language of instruction. Digital Competence Frameworks can help practitioners to understand students' needs. However, there is little research in IFY contexts and there are almost no studies that investigate pedagogical issues (Zhao et al., 2021). For example, which Digital Competencies are most important, and which activities best help students to develop them. This could be an important and rich area of research and IFY practitioners are well positioned to conduct classroom-based research and begin answering these questions, as shown by the list of recommendations formed and confirmed by this study.

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Integrating prior learning for academic success

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Foundation courses are key in widening access to UK higher education. The students they attract bring diverse types of prior learning experiences, which create challenges as well as possibilities for them to connect with subject knowledge on foundation courses. This case study of 4 students on a Business Management course argues that greater understanding of students' prior knowledge is needed so that they can be scaffolded appropriately to make connections with current subject knowledge, following an inclusive pedagogies model (as outlined by Sanger, 2020).

Introduction

All UK governments recognise the need to widen access to higher education, so that student cohorts better represent the diversity found across the wider population (Connell-Smith & Hubble, 2018; Scottish Government, 2014). UK Universities respond by offering different ways into higher education, including contextualised admissions and college routes. They may also offer a Foundation year as another pathway to a first degree.

The new Heriot-Watt University Foundation is inclusive in the widest sense, with a mix of home students and international students. All of them attend an 'accelerator' Foundation, meaning that successful completion of a STEM or Business pathway takes them to the second of a four-year bachelor's degree. The study discussed here concerns the Business pathway and the September entry cohort (mainly home students) and January entry cohort (mainly international students). Both had similar difficulty in understanding course requirements and the level of engagement required, but more striking were the contrasts between them, including familiarity with technology and experience with collaborative working. This led us to question how effective learning and teaching could happen if the two groups were mixed in one class, as was expected in the future.

Inclusive pedagogy and prior learning

Inclusive pedagogy (Sanger, 2020) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Sleeter, 2012) provide strategies to support inclusion in diverse educational contexts. Both embed equitable access within mainstream activity.

This means that support is not an extra activity that a certain few need to find time for (a deficit construction), but rather an approach that helps all students feel included and invested in their learning. Both pedagogies emphasise finding out about students' prior learning. This can mean languages known and their previous educational system (Sanger, 2020) but also their communities, cultural background and identities (Sleeter, 2012). Such investigation can indicate absences or lack of certain types of experience (Sanger, 2020) and students' own perceived strengths and weaknesses. All further steps, such as shaping a curriculum that students can connect with and identifying what is non-intuitive for students in classroom instructions, depend on this initial information gathering and understanding.

The significance of prior experience is central to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, meaning a disposition or way of being that has been structured over time and in turn structures experiences in the present (Maton, 2014b). The student on a foundation course has a current disposition formed from a complex web of experiences, modified as new learning develops. There is scope for connecting with prior learning but there is also the risk of failing to connect, actually reinforcing the absence of basic knowledge. The student who arrives with no digital skills and finds only activities that require quite advanced digital skills (because the presupposition is that all young people are already digitally literate) is unlikely to learn effectively. It is therefore essential to be aware of what the student brings (their complex *habitus*) and connect this to the diverse knowledge types the student is expected to build on a particular course. It is to this knowledge that we now turn.

Knowledge in business management

Business Management learning outcomes span different types of knowledge, from the basics of finance and accounting to cultural awareness and networking skills in a Business context. To make sense of this diversity, the types of knowledge were mapped according to their epistemic relations (ER+/-) and social relations (SR+/-), seen in figure 1 (Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) Specialisation Coding, Maton, 2014a). For example, financial knowledge (top left quadrant) requires specialised knowledge but not social relations, whereas cultural awareness and networking skills (bottom right quadrant) are the opposite, relying heavily on social relations, being a particular type of 'knower'. Marketing (top right) combines specialised knowledge with an understanding of social relations, and other components of Business Management such as digital literacy (bottom left) incorporate neither specialised knowledge nor social relations.

To understand how prior learning could help or hinder from engaging with this Business Management learning, ethical approval was granted to interview four students in depth (see figure 2). The interviews lasted 45 minutes each.

Impact of prior learning experiences on academic performance

Only one student had studied Business before, with the other three changing pathways on beginning Foundation. Some prior knowledge was undoubtedly an advantage. The UAE international school enforced English from both staff and pupils but the public school in Pakistan was flexible about students using English, and this student struggled with oral communication on Business Management.

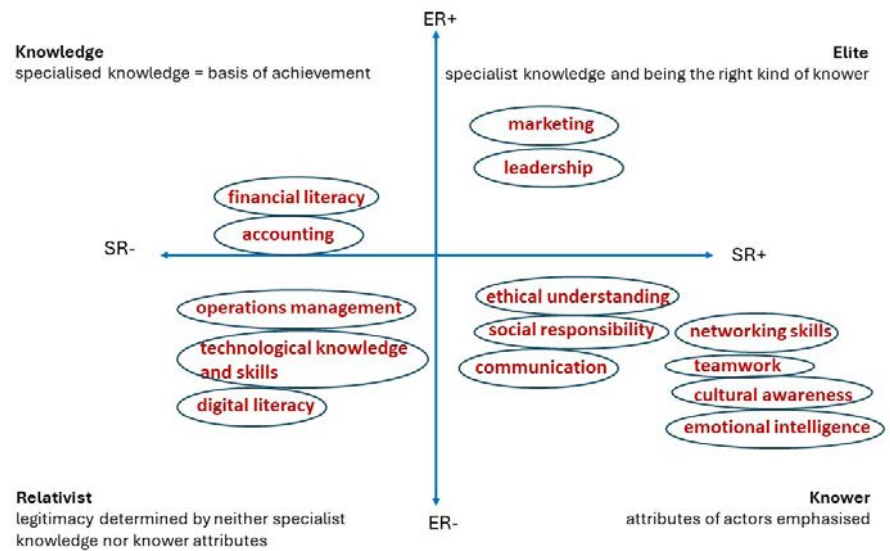


Figure 1: Knowledge in Business Management mapped using LCT Specialisation Codes (adapted from Maton, 2014a)

The home students were more used to working with peers through discussion, which had a positive impact on their teamworking in Business Management.

The two international students had experienced a more teacher-centred approach, with explanations followed by questions to test student understanding. The international school classroom had been very intense, with frequent assessments. Only one student had experience of producing slides to support a presentation. There had been little or no expectation that the other students would develop the computer skills to be able to either create texts/slides or access learning through an online platform, and this low digital literacy had a wide impact across the Business Management course. All students' prior experience had provided very limited understanding of academic skills such

as selecting sources and note-taking, and this had a wide impact on their knowledge building.

Discussion and implications

All students were challenged by expectations on Business Management. For each individual the challenge was different and complex; what might be an obvious lack of competence in one area, would sometimes mask relevant competence or experience in another area. For example, the international student whose technology skills were weak (low digital literacy in Business Management terms in figure1) had experience leading a cricket team (high leadership competence) and was strong in the more specialised knowledge of accounting. Students who sometimes struggled to contribute to discussion in English (low networking skills, communication skills) had another language in which to develop ideas and think critically (cultural awareness).

Name + gender	Amy (F)	Cindy (F)	Salwa (F)	Balaj (M)
Status + languages used	Home English	Home English	International (UAE) English/Bangla/Arabic	International (Pakistan) English/Urdu
School attended	State high school/FE college	State high school	International school	Public school

Figure 2: The four interviewees from Foundation Business Management (with names changed)

This complexity is not recognised when students are simply offered extra technology classes or extra English classes. What serves them better is a teacher who is prepared to shape their pedagogy according to the diverse members of the group (Sanger, 2020; Sleeter, 2012), who is aware of the knowledge types within their subject and is prepared to look for ways to help students connect with that knowledge. One way of doing this is to use students' interests and experience in choices of topic, text or case study. Brookfield (2017) suggests building on an initial understanding of past learning through regularly checking in with students to find out how they are managing. This could be through subject tutorial time or perhaps questionnaires, but it needs to be *ongoing*.

Assessment design needs to mirror a more flexible approach, allowing students to respond to tasks in different ways, using different modes (Archer & Price, 2021). One idea is to allow for student selection of work to showcase their achievements through Portfolio Assessment. This fosters a sense of ownership and connection to the assessment process. Project-Based Assessment or Authentic Assessment (Frey, 2014) emphasize the application of knowledge in contexts beyond the classroom and recognize the value of students' real-world experiences and skills.

As the students following Foundation programmes become more culturally diverse, it is increasingly important to know who these students are and what experiences they bring, but unfeasible to provide *extra* support to match every unique set of experiences. This indicates a need for a different approach to programme design, for a genuinely inclusive curriculum, creating benefits to all students (Sanger, 2020). It requires not just occasional or partial implementation but collaborative planning across programmes to create the environment to support all students to cumulatively build their study strategies and subject knowledge.

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Assessing the changes in international students' EDI awareness: a transformation or small shift?

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This article reports on the impact of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) materials on international students' awareness of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) concepts. The module, delivered to students progressing to undergraduate study, unpacks EDI concepts, and the implications in the workplace. Most students come from countries sometimes referred to as 'closed contexts,' (Koch, 2013) and this brings challenges in how to incorporate EDI in a culturally sensitive way, whilst developing their academic English language skills. Students' EDI awareness was tracked through a pre- and post-questionnaire, revealing changes not only in their EDI perceptions, but also awareness of discrimination and individual versus collective responsibility.

Introduction

Given its importance within UK Higher Education, and as a key societal concern, addressing diversity and inclusion as a content area within EAP curricula is of intrinsic value. Through raising awareness, it also increases opportunities for students to identify inconsistencies in, and between, practice and policy and build their own confidence in challenging the status quo. It further prepares students for more diversity than they may previously have experienced.

To avoid a tokenistic approach, it is important to integrate and embed EDI topics that promote dialogue and exploration without distracting from the primary focus of the EAP curriculum: equipping students with the language knowledge and literacy skills required for their academic contexts.

The redevelopment of our existing Pre-session English (PSE) curriculum in 2021–22 led us to incorporate content topics which more closely aligned to the values of the university, replacing academic themes of broader interest commonly found in EGAP materials. Our aim was to involve students in a real-world task that demonstrates application of academic language skills, as well as equipping students with the attributes for participating in a diverse world.

Balancing academic objectives, teachability and topic relevance

Students intending to progress to first-year undergraduate study typically enter the programme with an IELTS level of 5.5 and need to meet the English language conditions of their degree offer on exit. Degree discipline destinations vary, but the majority progress to Business and Finance (71%). Students from China constitute the largest individual nationality (81%) followed by Saudi Arabia (4%). These countries have often been referred to as 'closed contexts' (Koch, 2013). This can include lack of access to information about global politics, economic and cultural knowledge, and connections to the international community.

In designing materials, we therefore had several factors to consider: the students' incoming level of English, the skills and language needed for their academic destination, and how to incorporate a suitable EDI related topic. As we were developing content, China was experiencing a push towards more conservative values, which has been criticised for diminishing space for LGBT and women's rights issues (Roth, 2021). Simultaneously, reforms in Saudi Arabia in 2022 to women's rights, whilst being acknowledged as largely positive, continue to codify some of the practices inherent in the male guardianship system (Amnesty International, 2023). This is not to paint a negative picture of the students on the programme from these countries,

who were extremely keen to learn and responded very positively to a variety of topics. We were, however, aware that the nature of EDI is bounded by the socio-cultural environment and the need to create a safe space to discuss the concepts.

A case study assignment on EDI in the workplace was seen as balancing out issues of relevance, cultural awareness, and teachability. Firstly, as a key pedagogical written genre for academic business students (Nathan, 2013), a case study assignment requires students to analyse a real-world situation or problem, and then to develop recommendations for future action (Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Unlike, a discursive essay, the student writer is less exposed to creating an argument, and instead must use academic knowledge and theory in analysis and problem solving. EDI in the workplace, specifically recruitment and selection, is heavily governed and regulated by EDI policies, processes, and laws (Equality Act, 2010), and of interest to students now or in the future.

Creating the case study

To gently introduce students to EDI and reconcile existing stances around what can be considered the most relatable of the Equality Act's protected characteristics, the case study focused on gender, race, and disability, although the learning materials introduced all protected characteristics.

A SWOT analysis was chosen as the framework for analysis (Nathan, 2013). Students were also encouraged to analyse the case from, ethical, legal, and business perspectives. Introducing perspectives allows students to deepen their analysis, for example, a stipulation in a job advert may make good business sense, but it may not be legal or ethical.

Overall, in the exemplar designed to stimulate a case study report, students have to examine how well a fictitious university library employs new staff. They are required to draw on recruitment and selection and EDI knowledge in their analysis of the case study information whilst considering ethical, business, and legal perspectives. Students were provided with five case study artefacts including:

- University and library profiles for an overview of the institution and facility.
- Job description to identify non-compliance with EDI guidance.

Assessing student's EDI awareness

To evaluate the impact of the materials on students' EDI awareness, we issued a survey at the start of the module and then repeated the same questions at the end i.e., a cohort study.

Nine questions were developed to gain insights into students' understanding and perceptions of the importance of EDI in the workplace. The survey starts with an open-ended question prompting participants to describe the staff in a given image. This allows students to respond in their own voice. Nominal and ranking questions were also incorporated for ease of completion and comparison of pre- and post-

course responses. Alternative responses of 'not sure' and 'none of the above' were added to avoid participants choosing an answer for the sake of completion.

All students signed the school's research consent form with information about the purpose of the study and the intention of using the data in wider dissemination. The study went through all the principles outlined in the university's ethical policy and received approval from the school's ethics committee. The questionnaire was self-completed but administered in class to maximise the response rate. 17/18 students responded to the pre-course survey, and 16/18 students repeated this at the end of the course.

Results

- Survey 1 = the pre-course survey
- Survey 2 = the post-course survey.

There were nine questions in total.



In **Question 1**, participants were asked what they noticed about the staff in the photo above:

In survey 1, although 10/17 respondents (59%) included one or more of the following characteristics (Age, Gender, Race) in their responses, the word 'men' was used most frequently, despite men being in the minority. 7/17 respondents (41%) focussed solely on the activity in the photo rather than on staff characteristics in their response. In survey 2, 75% of responses mentioned a protected characteristic (Age, Gender, Race, Disability), with the word 'race' replacing 'men' as most

frequently used. Responses focussing solely on the activity in the photos decreased (13%).

Questions 2 and 3 asked students if they could identify a person's non-visible differences. In survey 1, 9 said 'yes', compared with 13 in survey 2. The majority were able to include the protected characteristics introduced in the module, and some were able to include others such as non-visible illnesses and difference educational experiences. In survey 1, 'differences' was the most frequent word in responses, whilst in survey 2 this was replaced by greater specificity with 'religion'.

Question 4 asked respondents to decide which of the protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) would be covered by EDI policies. Interestingly, the results saw a general shift towards inclusion for most characteristics between the two surveys. The levels of uncertainty fluctuate over the individual aspects, notably for religion and gender reassignment/identity. By survey 2, both characteristics received greater 'no' responses on whether it is included in EDI policies, despite having been introduced to all of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act within the module. This may be a result of the assessment focussing on only three (Gender, Race, Disability) of the protected characteristics. Despite this uncertainty, the general trend shows a reduction in 'not sure' responses across the majority of the listed characteristics.

Question 5 asked students to rank the benefits of EDI in the workplace in relation to ethical, business, and legal perspectives.

	Survey 1 average rank	Survey 2 average rank
Widens the talent pool for recruitment	5	4
Drives creativity, change and innovation	1	3
Improves self-confidence, well-being, a sense of identity and belonging	2	1
Leads to a better public image and increased sales	2	4
Makes the business more attractive to larger, and more international, consumer markets	2	1
Helps reduce the number of staff hired and fired	6	4

Responses were largely inconclusive as the averages were within 0.1% of each other, with many responses achieving the same average rank. This could be a result of the 'ranking' question design, however, there is evidence that students view EDI benefits from multiple perspectives, both before and after the module. Overall, there was a shift in which benefit they prioritised from a more ethical to business perspective, possibly influenced by 72% of the cohort intending to progress to business-related degrees.

Questions 6 and 7 assessed students' understanding of different forms of discrimination and their legality within the UK and their home country. Respondents were asked which scenarios provided were illegal e.g. "An employee who speaks English as a second language is not allowed to speak to native English-speaking clients on the telephone".

There was a significant shift in students' ability to identify different forms of illegal discrimination, not only in the UK but also for their home countries. In survey 1, only 37% of responses identified examples of discrimination classified as illegal within the UK, compared to 72% in Survey 2. Although legality would vary depending on their home country, respondents were able to shift their understanding of what

could, or should, be considered illegal discrimination by 10%. When considering both countries, the greatest increase was the identification of LGBTQ+ discrimination.

Question 8 asked students to consider who is ultimately responsible for making a workplace diverse and inclusive by ranking key actors.

In survey 1, respondents awarded the greatest responsibility to 'society' in general. Interestingly, they thought the 'company/organisation' itself was least responsible. Survey 1 also clearly shows how respondents placed greater emphasis on a clearer hierarchy of independent actors. Survey 2 revealed a shift towards collective responsibility as shown by minimal difference in average rank, with responses either averaging the same or varying no more than 0.5, with the majority being ranked '2' on average.

	Survey 1 average rank	Survey 2 average rank
Society	1 (3.4)	4 (3.3)
The Government	2 (3.7)	1 (2.8)
You (the employee)	3 (4.2)	2 (2.9)
Leaders and managers in business	5 (4.6)	2 (2.9)
The Law	3 (4.2)	2 (2.9)
Colleagues	4 (4.5)	1 (2.8)
The company/organisation	5 (4.6)	3 (3.0)

Lastly, **question 9** returned to the protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) prompting students to rank their importance.

In survey 1, a clear hierarchy of importance can be seen, with very few characteristics being classified of equal importance. Survey 2 shows a significant shift with all characteristics being awarded greater importance on average. More characteristics were considered of equal, and high, importance by respondents. The greatest changes in perception were towards 'marriage and civil partnership,' and 'sexual orientation.'

	Survey 1 average rank	Survey 2 average rank
Religion	5 (3.2)	4 (3.6)
Age	4 (3.5)	2 (3.8)
Ethnicity	3 (3.6)	5 (3.5)
Disability	2 (3.7)	1 (3.9)
Pregnancy and maternity	1 (3.9)	1 (3.9)
Sexual orientation	6 (3.1)	4 (3.6)
Gender reassignment/identity	4 (3.5)	3 (3.7)
Marriage and civil partnership	5 (3.2)	1 (3.9)
Sex	4 (3.5)	4 (3.6)

Conclusion

Overall, these students changed their perception of the importance of EDI characteristics and their protection. Most significantly, respondents' perceptions shifted positively towards LGBTQ+ inclusion and in relation to an awareness of what constitutes illegal discrimination. Furthermore, awareness of which characteristics should be protected, and who is responsible for ensuring inclusion and diversity has also been broadened. The students' understanding has transformed from that of an individualistic hierarchal perception towards one more of collective responsibility and equitable inclusion. Although a change in perception has been quantitatively demonstrated, how far this can be evaluated as a 'transformation' requires further investigation to better understand the impact on students' application going forward. Nevertheless, it is clear that carefully designed EAP materials can bring about shifts in student attitudes to topics of societal concern.

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Elephant in the room: departmental approaches to reduce academic misconduct in a foundation course

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This article details a case study on a foundation course after assessment moved online in the pandemic. Programme-wide interventions were implemented to tackle increasing academic misconduct offences and a small-scale research study was conducted the first academic year when on-campus teaching and live invigilated assessments were restored. Subject lecturers and support tutors were surveyed to gauge perceived efficacy of specific interventions to upskill staff and raise student awareness about academic integrity. Findings reveal a general sense of optimism and perception that the interventions were useful, which influenced module amendments for 2023/24.

Introduction

Between March 2020–July 2022, there was a sharp increase in academic misconduct penalties awarded within a foundation course, particularly for contract cheating, where students are investigated for outsourcing assignments to third parties. Historical offences on the course typically involved plagiarism, but whole-scale movement to online assessment coincided with increasing doubts about legitimate authorship of coursework. This trend was not isolated to one institution; Janke et al. (2021) recently conducted the first large-scale study into online assessment and found strong correlation with contract cheating across the Higher Education (HE) sector. Such a trend aligned with Newton's (2018) determination that historically low self-reporting rates of contract cheating had steadily risen according to 65 surveys between 1978–2014. Such findings place the changing educational conditions into sharp relief, notwithstanding long-term implications for institutional risk and an erosion of workplace ethics and skills (Hill et al., 2021). On a local level, misconduct investigations have been burdensome, as staff flagging issues must collate evidence and investigate. Students implicated in offences also experienced delays in grade confirmation, primarily because most allegations occurred on summative assessments: online exams and coursework.

Although this foundation course had extensively prioritised input on good academic

practice, referencing conventions and skills development, the previous approach was proving increasingly insufficient for deterrence. This became clear as students returned on campus in 2021/22; on-campus teaching was helpful to directly monitor and support formative writing tasks, but with some online assessment remaining for tests/exams, this necessitated a new approach for 2022/23 and research study to gauge efficacy.

Overview of 2022/23 programme-wide intervention

Several initiatives were implemented at programme level to aspire towards the following outcomes: a reduction in contract cheating to pre-Covid levels; establishment of a culture steeped in awareness about misconduct procedures and an upskilled teaching team familiar with textual and technological tools to spot contract cheating. The rationale was that staff could intervene earlier to help students avoid offences before summative submissions.

Interventions were research-informed by other successful approaches in HE. Meetings were first organised between teaching staff and the Academic Misconduct Team to acquire widespread support and raise awareness of the emergent issue at programme and school level, which secured agreement to allow reversion to live invigilated tests/exams. Influenced by Dawson & Sutherland-Smith's recommendation to raise awareness through training (2019), staff were upskilled to detect

misconduct and review assessment design before September, and the core module was amended so that viva voce became a weighted assessment to confirm authorship of final summative coursework – both of which are deemed particularly strong deterrents to cheating (Roe et al., 2020). While the curriculum already emphasised other features shown to discourage misconduct such as process-writing, drafting and portfolio submissions with reflective and personalised content (Bretag et al., 2019), staff began explicitly alerting students that authenticated written samples could function as comparators to confirm coursework authorship – another beneficial approach for transparency (TEQSA, 2017).

Concerted efforts were also made to enhance student awareness of good academic practice and incorporate messaging about misconduct regulations within materials and through targeted events. Consistent with Belter and du Pre's support for frequently involving students in awareness-raising activities (2009), all students completed a mandatory short course on academic integrity during Welcome Week and workshops familiarised students with sample misconduct in anonymised case studies. Short videos from Academic Misconduct Officers also explained associated procedures and penalties for offences.

Small-scale research design and aims

It was important to evaluate success of this approach according to both number of misconduct cases and perceived efficacy. A multiple-choice quantitative survey was disseminated to 15 subject and support staff to gauge utility of interventions and their overall familiarity with various measures to identify offences. The response rate of 66% yielded five males and five females across the subject teaching spectrum, with HE experience ranging from less than five years to more than 25 years.

To identify trends, the questionnaire first probed experience reporting academic offences: pre-pandemic (pre-2019/20); during peak online assessment (2020–2022); and current academic year under targeted initiatives (2022/23). Data would ascertain how online assessment may have impacted their propensity to initiate misconduct allegations.

The second part of the questionnaire used Likert-styled questions to gauge perceived effectiveness of initiatives for discouraging misconduct. Findings could indicate a pessimistic or optimistic outlook towards changes implemented.

The final section gauged awareness and perceived impact of strategies for spotting textual and technological features associated with contract cheating, including very high/low Turnitin similarity, document properties (author, editing time) and linguistic consistency/sophistication. Results would inform future training sessions to boost proficiency in these tools and indicate which were most salient for reinforcing academic integrity.

Key findings

As noted in the introduction, the total number of misconduct cases sharply rose in March 2020, coinciding with moves to online assessment. The timing is significant and supported by questionnaire findings that all respondents except 1 individual had initiated academic misconduct investigations during the same period. In contrast, only half the respondents made an allegation before the pandemic, which aligns with Janke et al.'s (2021) finding that online assessment is positively correlated with academic misconduct, thereby supporting decisions to move away from this mode.

In relation to the second and third questionnaire sections, it is useful to divide respondents into two groups: those who first reported misconduct after the pandemic started ('post-2019 group'), and those who had prior experience reporting it ('pre-2019 group').

With the exception of two respondents, one of whom had never reported any offences before

or after 2019, all respondents were pessimistic about any potential mitigating influence of their efforts to raise awareness about integrity.

Despite the pessimism, all 'post-2019 group' respondents felt more confident identifying misconduct by checking for textual or technological signals of potential offences. This may suggest likelihood of reporting incidents was influenced by greater familiarity with signs of an offence after 2019, so it is difficult to determine if previous total offences before the current year might have been impacted if staff were trained sooner.

All respondents in the 'pre-2019 group' observed the same category of offences both before and after the pandemic, casting doubt on overall efficacy of interventions and awareness-raising strategies for deterring misconduct. Nevertheless, the 'pre-2019 group' unanimously reported greater confidence in identifying misconduct after targeted training for textual or technological signals of potential offences. As such, if propensity for individuals to detect and report misconduct increased, the overall drop in cases still showcases some success.

To illustrate two salient findings discussed above, select figures are presented below.

Figure 1 illustrates the extent to which respondents noticed change in occurrence of academic misconduct in their modules since the pandemic started. Responses captured in the 'Other' category contained short responses showing uncertainty.

Almost all respondents (one respondent did not reply to this questionnaire item) perception that they felt more capable of identifying misconduct using textual and technological tools. As noted before, it is reasonable to theorise this capability increased likelihood they would report offences.

Compared to the past two academic years (2020/21 and 2021/22, have you noticed any change in the number of academic offences in a module you teach this year (2022/23)?

More details

● An increase in offences	3
● A decrease in offences	3
● No change in the number of offences	2
● Other	2

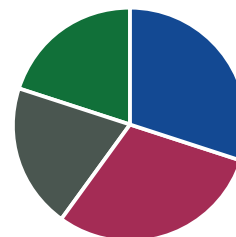


Figure 1: A comparison of academic offences in 2020–22 and 2022/23

Discussion and implications

Questionnaire findings were compared against overall cases in 2022/23 to assess impact of the programme-wide approach. Numerous decisions followed.

Misconduct was largely reduced on both live tests/exams and coursework, with only one incident in the former. The latter benefitted from inclusion of weighted viva voce to carry a more effective deterrent quality for contract cheating, compared to solely using vivas during misconduct investigations in the previous three years. This strongly influenced programme-wide consultation for assessment review, alongside rising popularity of Artificial Intelligence (AI) including Chat GPT.

Since invigilated conditions are impracticable for all assessments, the module amendment consultation process concluded with several compromises for 2023/24, effectively targeting coursework (essays and portfolios) vulnerable to misconduct:

1. Substantially weighted portfolios were removed. 50% of module weighting would comprise live invigilated handwritten tests; weighted viva voce, oral presentations or live seminar skills tasks incorporating both audience participation and leadership roles. Tests would provide comparators for other assessments vulnerable to misconduct.
2. Essays became 'projects', requiring formative submissions, assessed within the marking criteria ('Planning and Organisation'). This would render assessments less susceptible to ghost-writing, as essays could be marked down for incomplete formative tasks.

These changes would effectively lessen the possibility of students achieving high pass marks without legitimately engaging in module content and completion of assessments.

As a departmental exercise, the consultation and overall approach instilled optimism towards embracing varied approaches to identify misconduct; collaboration was also increased between subject lecturers and support staff by virtue of sharing written comparators and enhancing discussion about means to discourage misconduct.

Finally, the programme assessment consultation period led to sustained dialogue with destination schools the foundation course serves in the faculty. This was important for continued alignment with ever-adapting curricular planning, particularly with new threats posed by AI. The rapidly-growing significance of the latter will undoubtedly drive research and continued innovation against cheating.

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A case study in the transformative journey of assessment in foundation maths from 2019 to 2023

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In this paper, we explore a case study of the Foundation Mathematics module of Reading University's International Foundation Programme. We look at the changing forms of assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and the impact that these changes to assessment had on academic misconduct and student performance.

Introduction

COVID-19 restrictions in the UK from March 2020 had a significant impact on teaching, assessment, and all other aspects of the student experience during the last part of the 2019/20 academic year. Adapting to online teaching and assessment for this pandemic was an abrupt change with plenty of difficulties. However, for mathematics and statistics, it presented some unique challenges.

This paper will explore:

- Assessment during COVID-19 for the Foundation Mathematics (then known as Mathematics for Finance, Economics and Business) module.
- Exploring the notion of academic misconduct during COVID-19 with data from the case study above.
- Adopting assessments to address COVID-19 anomaly via introduction of timing and exploring how this worked in our case study.
- Indicating if a return to in-person exams is really a return to "normality".

Throughout this paper we will refer to cohorts based on the year they completed the programme, for example the cohort of 2019–2020 would be referred to as the cohort of 2020. Variable names are used throughout this paper and can be found in the appendix.

Changes in assessment from 2019–2023

During the first lockdown in 2020, thus impacting the 2020 cohort, the University decided to have a 23-hour time submission period for the final exam to facilitate the students around the world. Within the brief period of time, it was not possible

to implement take home exams with modified questions for study programmes in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. This helped foster an exam environment containing an increased risk of academic misconduct and contract cheating. Although academic misconduct or cheating has been an alarming problem in many universities around the world (Ahmed, 2018; Bowers, 1964), during the COVID-19 pandemic, online examinations without proctoring raised serious concerns (Bilen & Matros, 2021; Hosseini et al., 2021; Holden et al., 2021), indeed, academic irregularities in online exams were 40% more than the previous year (Hebebcı & Yilmaz, 2022).

The move to online teaching during the cohort of 2021, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in a complete rethink for assessments which were traditionally done on paper. Instead of having four homework tasks, a midterm and end-of-term test, we replaced these by introducing online tests every two weeks to assess student's progress throughout the term (five per term, with a total of 10 during the course) and an online end-of-term test each term (total of two) with 40% multiple choice questions. However, the final exam was take-home with 23hrs given to attempt the paper; once started standard exam time was applied, and a 30-minute window was given at the end to upload answers. A study by Portolese et al. (2016) indicated that 'more time on [online] tests had no influence on student scores [on midterm and final exams]', and from this we can certainly infer that a difference between scores in these two modes of examination would be of interest, as it might suggest that a reduction in academic misconduct was obtained.

The 2022 cohort shared identical assessment methods with the 2021 cohort. However, 2022 saw a partial return to in person classes, with hybrid lessons being a common occurrence. Whether this transition has an impact or not is beyond the reach of current literature, and beyond the scope of this paper. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that students were under-prepared to begin studies in mathematics in the 2022 cohort, even in comparison with the 2021 cohort (Mark, 2023).

The cohort of 2019 forms our pre-COVID group, and the 2023 cohort demonstrates the return to in-person teaching and in-person assessment. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the assessment types discussed in the paragraphs above and the weighting for the last five years for later reference.

Cohort	Class Test/Coursework (30% of module mark)	Final Exam (70% of module mark)
2019	In-person exam	In-person timed with standard exam timing
2020	In-person timed with standard exam timing, except for end of semester 2 which was timed online.	Take home 23-hour time exam
2021	Online with standard exam timing	Take home 23 hours with standard exam time once started + 30 mins to submit
2022	Online with standard exam timing	Take home 23 hours with standard exam time once started + 30 mins to submit
2023	In-person exam	In-person exam

Table 1: Assessment types for Foundation Mathematics

Analysis and findings of student results from 2019 to 2023

Impact of COVID's assessment on grades over the past five years

During the year 2020, as mentioned in the previous section, there was a strong suspicion of academic misconduct, as 93% students got more than 70% marks in this module.

Figure 1 shows the grade distributions of overall module marks for Foundation Mathematics for the cohorts in our study.

We can clearly see a sharp increase in high (70+) marks in the 2020 cohort. The grade distributions do fluctuate over the following years, with lower grades making a steady return.

Impact on Average Module Marks after Moving Assessment Online due to COVID

Figure 2 suggests a sharp increase of average module marks in 2020 (Take home 23-hour time exam) and decreasing in subsequent years with exception in 2023.

Performing a median comparison (one-tailed Wilcoxon signed rank test with continuity correction) on 2020's average in-class test mark vs average final exam marks returned a $p < 0.001$. This suggests that the average mark in the class test was significantly lower than in the final exam, and from this, we can infer that moving from in-person to online

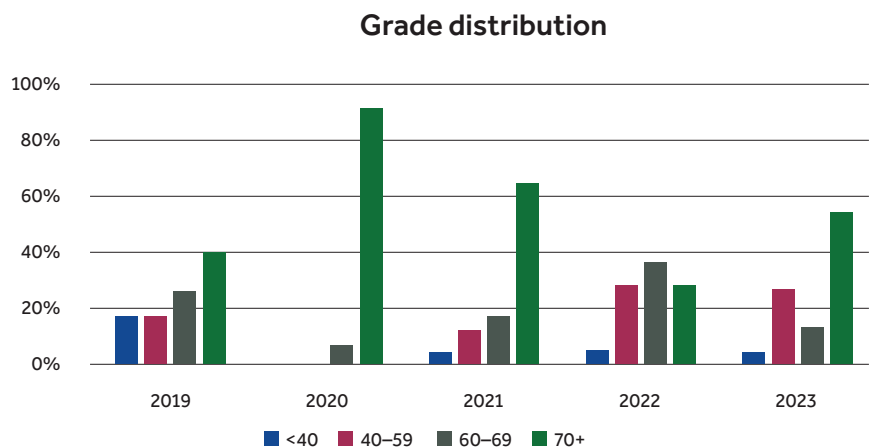


Figure 1: Distribution of module marks from 2019–2023

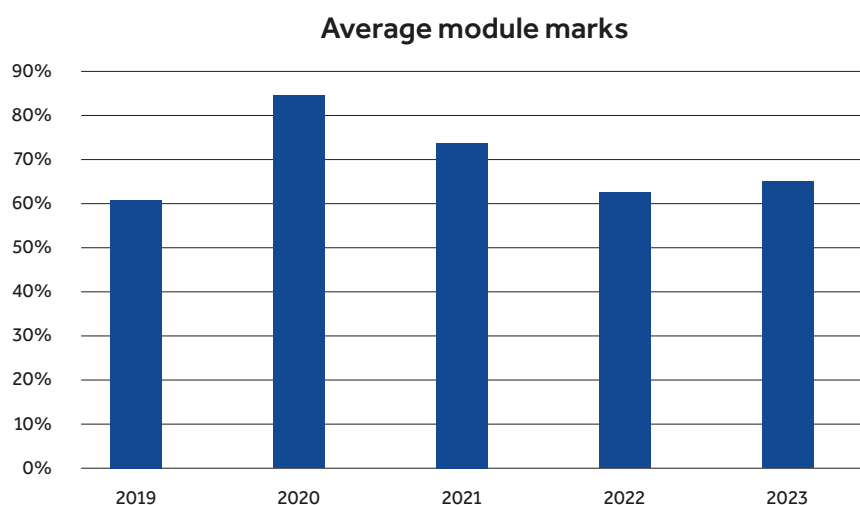


Figure 2: Average module marks from 2019–2023

Year	Class test marks	Exam marks	Overall marks	Sample size (n)
2019	68	69	66	23
2020	78 (p=0.005)	89 (p<0.001)	86 (p<0.001)	27
2021	77 (p=0.040)	80 (p=0.005)	80 (p=0.005)	23
2022	65 (p=0.470)	66 (p=0.634)	64 (p=0.611)	38
2023	64 (p=0.745)	72 (p=0.138)	72 (p=0.251)	22

Table 2: Comparison of median marks with 2019

introduced a noticeable change in score during the first COVID-19 lockdown. This ties in with the idea that there was a large amount of academic misconduct during COVID-19 year discussed earlier.

We performed a median comparison (One-tail Wilcoxon rank sum test with continuity correction) on class test marks, exam marks and overall marks to investigate whether on average the marks increased significantly from those of 2019. Table 2 summarises the results.

Table 2 clearly shows statistically significant difference (via a one-tail Wilcoxon rank sum test) between the median marks of 2019 and 2020/2021. This suggests that the grade did increase compared to pre-COVID. We did not expect a significant difference between the 2019 and 2020 class tests, however this may well have been because one end of term test in 2020 was online because of first lockdown in March 2020, thus introducing some uncertainty upon student veracity. The median marks of 2019 vs 2022/2023 does suggest that the median grade may have returned to pre-covid levels with a reasonable degree of certainty, which is interesting as 2022's exams were still online.

Impact on average module marks after implementing Timed Online Assessment

For the summer 2021 final exam, the university introduced Gradescope for timed online exams. Performing a median comparison (Wilcoxon rank sum test with continuity correction) on exam marks in 2020 vs 2021 (with ties removed) returned a p value <0.001. This suggests there was a significant difference between the median exam marks of 2020 and 2021, which likely indicates that the introduction of a timed component did

reduce academic misconduct as suggested by Curtise & Cheung (2020). It was also found (via a one-tail Wilcoxon rank sum test) that the 2022 median exam mark was significantly (p=0.002) lower than that of 2021, although the 2022 cohort were assessed in exactly the same way as the 2021 cohort. This could be explained by the findings of Mark (2023), indicating that students were weaker upon entry post-COVID, though there is still a good degree of uncertainty beyond the anecdotal here.

A mean comparison (Two Sample t-test) between final grades of students in 2022 vs 2023 returned a p-value of 0.4606, suggesting the move back to in person exams did not offer any significant difference in average mark, further supporting the argument that academic misconduct had been neutralised in 2022, to a reasonable degree. Figure 1 did throw some doubt on the normality of 2023's final grade; thus, we also checked with a median comparison (Wilcoxon) which gave p=0.256 confirming the above conclusion. Indeed, from Figure 1 we can see that there are substantial differences in the grade distribution of 2022 vs 2023, with 55% of students in 2023 obtaining a mark of 70+.

The cohorts of 2022 and 2023 shared a similar percentage of <40 and 40-59 grades, but 2023 had a higher rate of 70+s taken from the 60-69 category. Comparing these to 2019, we can see that weaker students are failing less, and stronger students are getting higher grades, but what is causing this is a mystery. Our hypothesis is that the shift to fully in-person teaching offered a better place to grow for the mid-level students, and the presence of staff on campus offered better support opportunities for the weaker students. The improvements to the VLE throughout the COVID period also offered additional resources

to typically absentee students, offering an additional way to catch up with missed content and avoid failing.

Conclusion

Using the results from the Foundation Mathematics module of the University of Reading, the analysis above suggests the following conclusions:

- There was highly likely academic misconduct on this module during the pandemic, which could well be the case for similar modules.
- Timing did appear to reduce academic misconduct in this case, and a return to in-person exams did not reduce average grades.
- The post-COVID distribution of results is vastly different, with student outcomes being much improved, and this is a matter for further study.

This suggests that the addition of a timed component to online examinations may help in reducing academic misconduct, further supporting other exhortations in the literature for this measure. The implied presence of heightened academic misconduct also suggests a greater degree of vigilance when dealing with online assessment. Finally, we recommend attempts to replicate these findings with similar datasets to better explore the possible confounding factors.

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Let's not talk about ChatGPT

Let's talk about people

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Addressing the challenge to assessment posed by artificial intelligence (AI), this article explores the fundamental differences between generative AI and human intelligence. Rather than resisting the use of generative AI in an adversarial manner, we argue that reinvestment in the authenticity of learning and in human relationships should drive education's rearticulation of assessment today.

Introduction

The rise of large language models (LLMs) such as OpenAI's ChatGPT transforms assessment in international foundation programmes (IFPs). Able to produce human-sounding text based on a simple natural language prompt, LLMs have the potential to disrupt traditional modes of academic assessment, leaving assessors unable to distinguish between texts written by students or those generated by a machine and therefore unable to assess students' own abilities.

Much of the discourse around the impact of LLMs on assessment has been focused on ways to protect assessment from the threat of generative AI. AI-detection tools (Chaka, 2023), AI-proof assessments (Pirrone, 2023), and alternative modes of assessment (Hamayan, 1995) have all been put forward as possible solutions to the threat of AI. Aimed at preventing cheating by students, these preventative strategies situate educators and students as adversaries in an attempt to preserve academic integrity. With AI tools sure to become integrated into everyday life, these oppositional strategies designed to keep LLMs out of student assessment work seem doomed to failure. The challenge for dealing with generative AI is not how to prevent their use in assessment, but how to welcome their use while still being able to get a clear sight of student learning and progress.

What we want to do in this paper is to offer an alternate conceptualisation of generative AI and LLMs, one which focuses on the essential differences between the function of LLMs and human students. By focusing on students' specifically human contributions to assessments, we will offer a conceptual framing for thinking about the use of LLMs in assessment.

Non-human LLMs

Simply described, large language models work by finding statistical patterns in large corpora of text and using those statistical relationships among words to generate 'original' text in response to user prompts. Following these statistical pathways, LLMs are able to reliably produce human sounding text that frequently has an uncanny appearance of intelligence.

The idea that computers are able to mimic human intelligence has been the cornerstone of research in artificial intelligence since the field's inception (McCarthy et al., 1955). At the same time, the very idea of artificial intelligence has been critiqued in numerous ways. Early on in discussions of AI, the philosopher Hubert Dreyfus (1992) developed a critique the idea of artificial intelligence that distinguished between human and machine intelligence. Building on readings of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, Dreyfus argued that because of fundamental differences, computers would never be able to fully replicate human intelligence. For Dreyfus, this argument connects 'intelligent' human activity with learned cultural practices, values, and motivations. Without access to this understanding about the world developed through social interaction, computers were left to be only a faint imitation of human intelligence, a critique common to many social constructivist approaches.

Finding the human

For assessment, LLMs present the specific difficulty of having to distinguish between texts written by students and those produced by LLMs. In evaluating student work, particularly in cases where students might use LLMs for part of their assessment process, the challenge is to see through the haze of computer-

generated text and to be able to see the *student* in the work that is being assessed.

Here, we want to look at two inter-related strategies for assessment that engage students' values, purposes, and histories. First, we will focus on authentic assessment and second, expanding the question of authenticity out, we will explore the role of student relationships in assessment.

Authentic assessment

The idea of authentic assessments (Wiggins, 1989) is focused on assessing student learning directly, rather than via any moderating indicators. A blunt example of this would be that for a course on boat building, instead of giving students an exam on the theories of boat building or having them write an essay on the history of Austronesian edge-dowelling, the authentic assessment would be to have students actually build a boat. The aim is to make assessment inextricably linked to what is to be learned. With authentic assessment, to teach to the assessment is to teach what is to be learned and needed in the real world, in a way that computers cannot understand.

Beyond simply being good pedagogical practice and encouraging constructive alignment between teaching and assessment, authentic assessment gets to the heart of how to think about education in the shadow of AI: teaching and assessment need to focus on the specific skills and knowledge that cannot be easily offloaded to AI systems.

While authentic assessment presents a straightforward proposition, its implications become more difficult when thinking about academic writing. After all, the majority of student writing in education is specifically inauthentic: Students write to demonstrate their knowledge in certain areas or they write to show that they understand a certain genre of writing (the "research report," for example). LLMs can produce coherent, grammatical, and well-structured writing that can explain a topic relatively well. The challenge becomes how to make the assessment of writing authentic.

This means finding writing tasks that, like authentic assessment, serve a purpose and elicit a change in the world or in the students' local community. For example, this year in our IFP Academic Writing unit, students are exploring publicly available data about

our city and writing situation-problem-solution-evaluation papers which could be shared with city officials. In this paradigm, the writing assessments are not done simply for the sake of assessment, but instead play some authentic role in students' lives and communities.

Building relationships through assessment

The power of authentic assessment comes from the way that it encourages an engagement with the world outside of the formal learning environment. There is a recognition of the basic value of what is being assessed: to build a boat is to provide someone either with the necessary conveyance of the boat or the enjoyment of one. The authenticity of any assessment often accords directly with there being a connection to others in the wider world. As Martin Hägglund (2019) argues, meaning only exists in relationship to other people.

The importance of relationships as part of a students' education has been noted well beyond just the theme of assessment. Fostering student relationships (with their peers, teachers, and their broader community) has been shown to have a positive impact on student performance in education (Felten & Lambert, 2020).

By providing students with assessments which, at their core, rely on relationships with those in their community, the process of assessments comes to rely on human-specific abilities and foster meaningful and value-laden relationships. One example of how assessments can foster these connections is through persistent learning groups and two-stage collaborative exams where "students complete a test as individuals and then immediately complete the same, or very similar, test in groups" (Gilley & Clarkston, 2014, p. 83). These opportunities for discussing knowledge can transform both IFP students and teachers understanding of themselves as members of a community.

In this, the assessments themselves become a place for people to connect. Alongside each assessment, educators are engaging students in dialogic feedback practices that strengthen interactions and relationships (Winstone & Carless, 2019). The tasks are

also built into feedback cycles that allow students to experiment on complex tasks, discuss their performance, and develop. Those developments are then witnessed and celebrated by the learning community.

Just as in the case of authentic assessment, the focus on relationships pushes assessment away from a focus on the types of tasks that can be accomplished by AI and toward those more human practices as detailed by Dreyfus (1992) in his critique of AI. By building assessment that relies on human relationships, the door is opened to assessments (and learning) which address the specifically human abilities and values of students. It assumes students to be whole people.

Conclusion

More than just refocusing our understanding of assessment, generative AI provides a moment for the reformulation of the aims of education. Such re-formulation is, of course, a regular historical process – each era redefines what it is necessary to learn – but generative AI prompts a deeper and more fundamental transformation. Both approaches to assessment given here – making assessments more authentic and focusing on building students' relationships – respond to this.

In re-framing assessment in the light of generative AI, we start to frame education along moral and ethical lines: what can education and assessment tell us about how to live? LLMs show us that the use of language is not bound simply to a correct grammar or clear expression – LLMs can do that. Instead, in education, language use is tied to purpose and value. To be able to learn to use language well, really well, is to be able to know how to use it for specific purposes and in service of those around us. Computers can produce language better than many of us. The question facing IFP educators is no longer how can we get students to write better or read better, but how we get them to live better, to imagine better worlds, and how to be able to use language for that authentic purpose of building relationships between people.

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Empowering STEM pathway students as engaged reflective practitioners:

Solution-based activities to counter initial learner hesitation and enhance student motivation

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This paper describes research into causes of initial hesitation towards reflective practice during post-class reflection activities amongst STEM pathway students studying an accelerated English language unit on an International Foundation Programme. It describes the three-phased qualitative research approach adopted using survey questionnaire responses, focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews investigating possible underlying cause for initial reluctance. The findings are presented and the paper proposes the potential for a scaffolded approach that could enhance learner engagement in reflective practice through reflective 'interludes' (Hibbert, 2013), organised within a trusted space that empowers and motivates students.

Introduction

Reflective practice (Dewey, 1933) is integrated into the course design and assessment, of an accelerated English language unit designed for students entering with IELTS 7.0+ level of English on the International Foundation Programme (IFP) at the University of Bristol. Throughout the academic year, all students across the programme are expected, individually, to develop reflective practice skills through written logs that support the development of reflective practice writing skills. Reflective practice questions are embedded at the end of each workshop, and there is an associated final 60% weighted summative assessment 'presentation of claim' designed as a recorded oral delivery where learners reflectively rationalise development of their academic literacy based on detailed self-analysis of their development against the unit intended learning outcomes (ILOs).

Problem

Some STEM students exude initial uncertainty and hesitation towards partaking in reflective practice and reflective practice activities created to extend reflection on learning is often left incomplete (Boswell, 2023). Further,

the final 'presentation of claim' summative assessment can seem formulaic, and performative (Macfarlane & Goulay, 2009).

Literature

Reflective practice in STEM subjects is significant (Blockley, 1992; Dias & Blockley 1995; Prudhomme et al., 2003). It is highly regarded for employment preparation as well as academic study. As Prudhomme et al. (2003) hold, STEM students are expected to grow as reflective practitioners, requiring skills necessary for critical analysis of engineering and engineer design past failures and being prepared for employment (Hains-Wesson & Young, 2017). Yet, not all in Higher Education perceive reflection as desirable and some acknowledge that teaching it does not come without difficulties (Leigh, 2016). Others challenge the 'merits of imposing this form of assessment on students', (Macfarlane and Goulay 2009, p.457) and argue that students schooled to write in 'a more formal and technical manner' (Macfarlane & Goulay, 2009, p.458), while being required to conform to a restricted set of values to fit 'notions of the contemporary citizen' (Macfarlane, 2016, p.92) may be unfamiliar territory to some students.

This is tangent with the need to be 'personal and self-revelatory' (Macfarlane & Gaulay, 2009, p.458), could indicate reasons for the initial reluctance and scepticism. Nonetheless, Hibbert (2013) advocates the application of 'interludes' (p.808), where students undertake reflective tasks even if only for 5–10 mins at key points in the programme. Given these provocations, the investigation sought to extricate students' views and attitudes and illuminate potential reasons for initial hesitation towards reflective practice, amongst STEM pathway students.

Pilot Study: three phase approach

During the first teaching block 2021–2022, a three phased pilot study was designed. The pilot study provided the structure to analyse to what extent potential interventions might emerge. Firstly, a survey questionnaire for phase 1 was disseminated across the STEM pathway unit by colleagues. This yielded a response rate of 13 participants. Secondly, in the second teaching block 2021–2022, these 13 participants were invited to partake in the phase 2 focus group followed by the phase 3 structured one-to-one interviews. Three participants volunteered for phase 2 and phase 3. Thirdly, for each phase, informed consent was attained from each participant to meet ethical standards and one participant was known to the researcher. The participants who took part were essentially pro-topic and it would have been useful to have accrued data and attitudes from anti-topic participants.

Below, a description of the three-phase pilot study is outlined. The pilot study sought to gain STEM pathway participant views and attitudes towards reflective practice.

Phase 1: The survey questionnaire aimed to establish participant experience of reflective practice and to identify what might cause initial uncertainty, if any towards its practice.

Phase 2: The focus groups sought to deepen interpretation of the phase 1 responses and open the way for participants to a wider expression of ideas. A staged approach to the focus group was taken, adopting a framework with opening questions that aimed to evoke contributions from all participants. This was followed by introductory questions surrounding reflective practice then transition

questions that sought greater depth and key questions focussing on the causes of uncertainty surrounding engagement with reflective practice, culminating with ending questions to enable participants to summarise their views and attitudes.

Phase 3: The one-to-one structured interviews intended to deepen contributions from the phase 2 focus group and adopted a similar framework with questions designed to explore in greater depth the participants views.

Both phase 2 and 3 were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams transcription. The transcripts were read, and any auto-type mistakes corrected against the original recordings.

Findings

There are a number of outcomes that the pilot study illuminates. Participants on the whole:

- Do perceive reflective practice leads to improvement, supports development of self-knowledge and independence.
- See the value and transferability of reflective practice in general, and to STEM subjects.
- Initially view reflective practice with uncertainty and scepticism
- Report an attitude of initial reluctance and lack of motivation and engagement.
- Desire to receive accountable class-time opportunities at the start of a session to practice reflection, enhance engagement and feel a sense of motivation to practice reflection.
- Call for greater clarity in reflective questions.
- Perceive the requirement to align individual development against ILOs, as essentially restricting expression of the natural authenticity of the personal learning experience, creating a negative viewpoint and attitude towards the final reflective assessment.
- View reflective practice as being artificial and forced on them.

Implications

The pilot study was successful and produced a number of specific lessons. The main message is that these participants view reflection as being useful while it exposed opportunities for key course development.

The study also found that the attitudes and views of participants towards reflective practice offers the capacity to be reconciled with literature solution-focussed options. For instance, to address the tendency of a formulaic production of the final summative presentation of claim, strategically positioned reflective 'interludes' (Hibbert, 2013), could be incorporated following key formative tasks which could focus on analysis of feedback. This could allow for deepened critical responses and develop greater originality in summative assessment production.

These reflective interludes would best be completed during class for greater overall scaffolding and to cultivate originality and initiate creative independent thought. This would most likely offer students the greater time they call for to assimilate their development, deepen their critical self-assessment and be supported in class where necessary, to establish links between their coursework to their future degree. Producing small-scale reflective artefacts at key points during the academic year would further scaffold learners and further reconcile the desire for more 'entertaining', (researcher interprets as 'engaging'), and accountable reflective practice activities, since this could be produced as shared class artefacts and shared via a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). In turn, this could further stimulate peer feedback and allow for extended community building.

A further key lesson from this pilot study is that while participants call for greater scaffolded practice, they also value a clear link to its theoretical rationale. It could be argued that this in turn could strengthen participant's overall conviction towards reflective practice. Thus, the study illuminates that facilitation should include clear synthesis between practice and assessment, and the course ILOs and that it should be based on a strong theoretical underpinning which could nurture and empower student motivation further. Thus, future programme development may benefit from a rarefication of the ILOs as greater clarity and synthesis to course work, might better guide and scaffold learners in reflective practice. If ILOs were subsequently embedded into teaching sessions, it could strengthen participant perceptions of the final summative oral presentation of claim of development. In other words, greater transparency in terms of

summative assessment output could support learners in making the necessary connections between the course ILOs, and reflective practice tasks.

Finally, the pilot study indicates that should these adjustments be initiated, they could consequently provide a context for reliable reflective practice that stimulates authenticity and deepens critical reflection. Importantly, a future study might explore how this could potentially invite innovative thought and originality in producing a final assessed reflective oral development of claim.

Conclusion

The pilot study finds that while participants view reflective practice in the most part as useful, transferrable and a valuable way to gain self-knowledge, there is also initial scepticism towards its benefits, and the final presentation of claim summative task is viewed as restrictive when constructed against the ILOs. In the pilot study the STEM pathway participants indicate hesitance towards how to approach reflective practice and uncertainty about what is expected of them. Additionally, many students do not complete the reflective practice tasks located at the end of class materials and reflective practice activities would benefit from being brought to the start of class or aligned with course work task submission feedback as reflective 'interludes' and to stimulate engagement. A future impact focussed study could seek to ascertain whether scaffolded support cultivates critical engagement and motivates STEM pathway learners to engage more deeply with reflective practice and ascertain whether it offers students deepened solution centred, critical reflective practice and ultimately enhance learner empowerment and motivation.

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Yes, but does it count?

Understanding and fostering greater engagement with formative tasks

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"Yes, but does it count for credit?" is the question students ask us as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tutors when we introduce formative developmental e-portfolio tasks on the University of Bristol's International Foundation Programme (IFP). In this article I will share the successes and failures over the years 2020–2023 that we have experienced in encouraging students to submit formative tasks across the year for the students' final summative assessments. The article will present the challenges and barriers faced in helping students to draw connections with summative assessments and engage with curation of their formative developmental e-portfolios. Finally, solutions for encouraging greater engagement with formative tasks for this year's IFP delivery will be introduced.

The Bristol context and our principles

Our Centre holds strong beliefs in 'Assessment for Learning' and assessment providing the route by which students develop. Assessment is a developmental process, and this belief underpins the IFP EAP units. We believe in promoting and providing space for sustainable feedback practices (Boud & Soler, 2016) and creating a culture of learner self-regulation of performance. Formal submission of formative tasks via Blackboard allows for dialogic feedback conversations to take place in written form via a feedback and reflection sheet attached to a submission. These conversations are then continued through tutorials and drop-in hours with tutors so students can seek answers to their questions and apply feedback to future assignments. The importance of engaging in and with peer feedback as well as tutor feedback is very much highlighted in the courses via peer feedback training, sessions and peer feedback comments (Carless, 2011).

Our IFP EAP assessments

In order to situate the problem and issues faced with submission of formative work in the academic year 2022–23 some context is provided below on the assessments students submitted on a core unit, Text Response. Our IFP Standard students who have an overall IELTS score of 5.5–7.0 all take this unit, and its aim is to guide students through the process of unpacking meaning from academic reading and listening texts and to improve their reading, listening and speaking skills. The unit intended learning outcomes are included below, alongside the formative and summative tasks for the Text Response 2022–23 delivery:

Text response Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

1. Recognise and recall the meaning of words from the New Academic Word List (Browne et al., 2013)
2. Use a range of strategies for unpacking meaning of academic texts and lectures
3. Distinguish fact from opinion
4. Write critical reviews including description and evaluation
5. Prepare and deliver effective academic presentations and reflect critically on performance

Methods of assessment

1. A **Developmental E-Portfolio (formative)** of six formative tasks including evidence of development of student learning in response to feedback
2. A **Comparative Critical Response (CCR) (summative, 40%)** demonstrating the ability to synthesise two sources (a listening and a reading text) to support a thesis-led argument of a topic of your choice evidencing your development of ILO 4
3. A video file of an individual **Presentation of Claim (summative, 60%)** evidencing student development of four of the intended learning outcomes (ILOs 1, 2, 3 and 5)

(since updated for the academic year 2023–24)

The aim of the developmental e-portfolio tasks is to provide relevant tasks related to the unit intended learning outcomes which students can draw upon as evidence in their final Presentation of Claim summative task. Hence, submission of the formative tasks is key to succeeding in the Presentation of Claim so there is evidence of learning to draw upon.

Challenges we faced

The academic year 2022–2023 was one in which we experienced many cases of disengagement and attendance issues across the IFP programme due to a variety of reasons: continued transition back to full time face to face teaching; individual student health issues; adjustment to university life; assessment bottlenecks across the IFP to name just several.

Particularly notable patterns became apparent by the second term. These included non-submission of formative tasks early on in the first term, resulting in students having little evidence of learning to discuss in the Presentation of Claim. On Text Response 24% of formative tasks were not submitted in 2022/23. This had the knock-on impact of students not having tutor and peer feedback to implement and learn from. A second phenomenon noticed was a lack of draft submission for summative work with 19% of the IFP Standard cohort not submitting a draft of the Presentation of Claim resulting in no tutor feedback to apply to the final summative submission which accounted for 60% of the final grade for that unit (Cullen & Brearley,

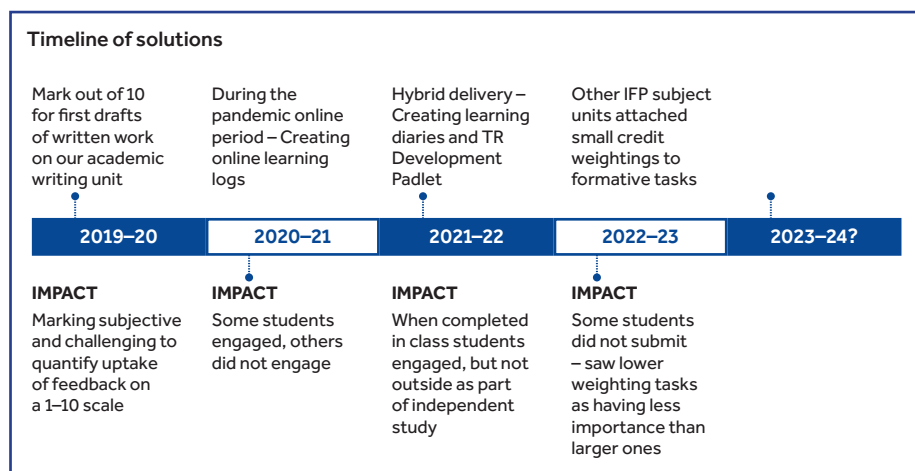


Figure 1: Timeline of Solutions

2015). Finally, as a team we saw students not realising the benefits of peer feedback early in course and requesting tutor feedback as they believed this to be the 'best' answer despite some peer feedback training in the materials and courses.

Solutions

The lack of engagement with formative e-portfolio submissions was also marked in the years preceding 2022–23 and through the pandemic period. Figure 1 above presents the variety of solutions put in place to try to encourage greater motivation and engagement with submissions to the developmental e-portfolio since 2019–20. The impact of each of these solutions is indicated below the timeline.

Action research

Given the impact and high rates of formative task non-submission I decided to perform some action research at the end of the academic year 2022–23 surveying the whole cohort IFP to try to gauge their beliefs and practices regarding formative tasks.

Can you see a connection between the formative tasks and the unit intended learning outcomes (ILO)s?

More details

Yes	19
No	0
Sometimes	13
Other	1

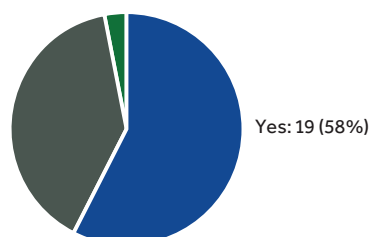


Figure 2: Connections between ILOs and Formative Tasks

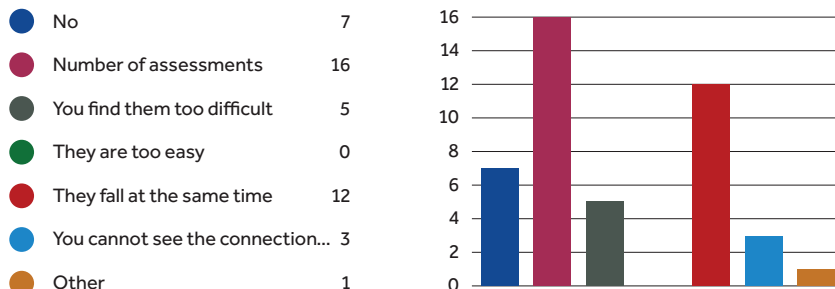
A Microsoft Form asking students about their beliefs and practices surrounding formative work was sent to all students asking them: if they see connections between formative and summative work; what barriers exist to completing this work and for suggestions for encouraging future engagement. Of the entire cohort of 417 students 33 responses from IFP standard and IFP Plus students were received as well as feedback from the student reps at our SSLC meetings. The aim was to then to compare the beliefs and practices of the students with those of the IFP EAP teaching team (42 tutors) and their perceptions of why students did not submit formative work.

Results

The results section will highlight salient points from the qualitative and quantitative data collated. Firstly, Figure 2 shows 19 students recognising a connection between the intended learning outcomes and formative work, no students reporting that they could not, and 13 students reporting that they could sometimes see a connection.

Are there any barriers you face which prevent you from submitting formative work?

More details

**Figure 3:** Barriers to submitting formative work

The bar chart in Figure 3 above highlights two interesting results. The first is that 12 students note that formative assessment submissions fall at the same time suggesting an assessment bottleneck. The second is that 16 students reported that they find the number of assessments a barrier to completing formative work.

Finally, the last result important to include are the constructive suggestions provided by students when asked what we could do to help improve engagement rates with non-summative work and help students to submit formative work. Our cohort responded with the following suggestions:

"Spreading out formative tasks to prevent assessment bottlenecks."

"Having fewer formative tasks across the course."

"Reviewing course ILOs to make them more relevant to the course structure."

"Relate the formatives further to summative tasks."

"Give students more time in class to complete formative work rather than asking them to do it in independent study time."

The student beliefs and practices from the action research were then compared with the tutor beliefs and practices. I asked the tutors the question 'What do you think are the causes or reasons as to why our students are not engaging with formative work?' The most common responses are included below:

"Formatives do not have summative weighting attached to them."

"Students complete tasks based on necessity and passing/achieving a good grade."

"Lack of consequences for not submitting formative work, i.e. they do not fail a course with missing elements of their developmental e-portfolio."

"Students have not completed coursework before (only exams) and do not yet see the benefits of feedback application."

"Loss/lack of opportunity to follow up with students. Prior to covid, typically I would raise the common issues and problems I had seen in their Draft 1 in a 'feedback session', following this up with one-to-one feedback (short – only 5–10 mins per student)."

Course development plans

Consequently, over summer 2023 work began on implementing the student and staff feedback and reflections into our IFP EAP courses. The areas of focus centred around reducing assessment bottlenecks and working across the different IFP units to ensure this across subject units and EAP units. Secondly, both formative assessments and ILOs were revised and better aligned (Biggs, 2014) also reducing the number of formative tasks where there was duplication of the ILOs and skills. Any crucial formative tasks were converted to summative tasks to reward learning with credit for those tasks where students had to perform considerable work. Furthermore, the team designed some of the formative tasks to be completed during class time in direct response to student feedback. Lastly, in our marking criteria across all assessments an 'engagement with feedback and the redrafting process' bullet point has been introduced to encourage students to see that application of feedback is now an intended learning outcome and a fundamental part of the course and

marks are awarded dependent on how they feed forward with feedback. The hope for this academic year 2023–24 is that these changes will help students to recognise stronger connections between the IFP programme and the intended learning outcomes on their courses and their formative and summative work whilst providing students real space in the course to engage with their learning and tasks.

Thank you to the IFP student cohort 2022–2023 and the Centre for Academic Language and Development IFP EAP teaching team for your contributions to this research.

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Offering a blended IFP in 2022/23 and beyond: opportunities and challenges

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The Covid-19 pandemic compelled a rapid shift to online education globally, impacting higher education (HE) and international foundation years (IFYs). Despite challenges, positive aspects of online learning were identified, leading to efforts to integrate them into face-to-face teaching. This article presents the case of the King's International Foundation (KIF) program, which adopted a blended approach during the pandemic and continued offering elements post-pandemic. The study analyzes student and staff feedback, attainment, and the advantages and disadvantages of the blended model. Recommendations for future practices are provided, highlighting the benefits and challenges of incorporating online delivery.

Introduction

The Covid pandemic forced a major shift in the delivery of education, as across the world courses had to be moved online at short notice. This had significant implications for the higher education (HE) sector in general (TASO, 2023) and for international foundation years in particular (Peace, 2020). Despite the challenges and difficulties faced by students and staff, some positive aspects of online learning have also been identified (Davies & Haldane, 2020; Cicero, 2020) and efforts were made to preserve them in the transition back to face-to-face teaching (Beetham & MacNeill, 2023).

In this article, we present the case of the King's International Foundation (KIF) programme, which adopted a blended approach during the pandemic and has continued to offer elements of blended delivery as the impact of the pandemic has decreased. We report on the feedback and attainment of the students and staff who participated in the blended cohort of 2022/23. We also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of our blended model and provide some recommendations for future practice.

The evolution of the KIF blended offering

Like other international pathway programmes one of the challenges faced during the pandemic was how to deliver our International Foundation Programme (IFP) to students from different countries and backgrounds in an uncertain context. For the summers of 2021 and 2022 we did not know if students would

be joining us in London at the start of the year, or how many would be able to come.

The relaxation of the UKVI regulations which facilitated blended and online learning also facilitated some innovation but the uncertainty of when the normal visa regime would return (in the end April 2022) also made the development and delivery of our programme challenging.

We decided to offer both online and on-campus options to accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of our students. Our Extended KIF programme with an August entry and has a lower IELTS entry requirement (5.5 overall with no less than 5.0 in any component), was moved online. This was delivered via MS Teams and students were in the same groups with the same teacher over the 5 weeks of teaching. This enabled close relationships to form between students, their peers and their teachers. The EKIF teachers would continue as their students' personal tutors for the remainder of the programme which further helped foster a close relationship and effective student support.

The delivery of our programme for 2020/21 was planned in a very uncertain environment and we offered online and on-campus options but ultimately most of our students ended up studying online. This evolved the following year into offering the September starts with an online option for Term 1 in 2021/22, which became our blended programme. Our use of the term 'blended delivery' differs from that of UKVI in that since April 2022, we use it to mean online delivery to students based outside of the UK who all then apply for a visa and come to the UK to complete their programme of study.

Students based in the UK are not receiving online learning as part of their programme of study which is the Home Office definition of blended study (Home Office, 2022).

All the students who start our programme online either come to London in September (EKIF non-blended) or January (blended). Splitting the year in this way is made easier for us by the fact that all of our modules are year long, with mostly formative assessments in Term 1 and summatives in Terms 2 and 3 after the New Year. This option was offered only to students on Humanities/Social Science pathways; we decided against continuing to offer the blended option for STEM pathways due to the challenges of preparing students for lab work and online assessments for these subjects. By contrast, we kept the first five weeks of our EKIF offering fully online due to very positive student feedback and attainment outcomes (see later section). Delivery of the blended programme was through a mix of online only groups where possible and the use of HyFlex teaching. This technology enabled the teaching of online and on campus students together and, whilst presenting technical and pedagogical challenges in implementing, offers significant benefits to the students, particularly the online ones (Detyna et al., 2022).

In the next few sections, we will review our online and blended offering for 2022/23 and provide some recommendations for improvement. We had 92 EKIF students who studied the first five weeks of their programme online and 43 students on the blended programme who studied the first 16 weeks of their programme online.

Student feedback and attainment

Student feedback on the online EKIF has been exceptionally positive, with 100% satisfaction for the last two years. For our blended students we have had similar levels of positive feedback with our blended students responding very positively in the first two of our student surveys with 100% satisfaction again. These surveys were when they were online and just after they had arrived in London. The levels of satisfaction dipped towards the end of the year to 85%.

One reason for the positive feedback of the online component was given in an open text comment, "because it could let me have a better focus on the academic subject". Even though these students are not immersed in the academic campus life they clearly see some benefits in starting their studies with us in a familiar and safe environment. Students also were quite positive about their experience of HyFlex: 67% agreed that it gave them opportunities to work with the whole class and that it allowed them to interact with a wider group of students than would otherwise have been possible. In focus groups, students agreed that they were able to learn as much in a HyFlex class as in a single-mode class.

Student satisfaction is of course only one element of successful delivery; we also need to confirm that these students make comparable academic progress. For the EKIF students joining us with lower language levels than the September entry we want to ensure that they have made up the difference and achieved similar language levels at the end of the programme than their non EKIF peers. In fact for the 2022/23 cohort a slightly higher percentage of the EKIF students met their English language requirements than the direct entry.

For the 2022/23 blended cohort we can compare their formative assessments during the online period, and the overall end of year results. In both cases we can compare the outcomes against the non-blended students. The picture was similar with some variation in scores between blended and non-blended and an overall picture of comparable outcomes in final overall marks. Blended students on social science pathways outperformed non-blended while the picture was reversed for blended students on the maths for social science pathways. The size of these differences was small from +2.5% in favour of blended for liberal arts and social sciences students, to -1.2% for business management and maths.

Staff feedback

There was positive feedback from staff involved in the delivery of EKIF. The familiar format and ability to form a good relationship with the students were highlighted. For the

blended programme feedback was more mixed. Staff appreciated the inclusive aspect of the blended programme and some commented positively on the experience of teaching. Teachers were less positive about HyFlex than the students, citing the reliability of the technology for HyFlex, the cognitive load of delivering classes in Hyflex, the additional workload in planning for Hyflex classes and delivering classes in different formats (cf. (Beetham & MacNeill, 2023). These concerns were also raised by Detyna et al. (2022) and underline the extent to which this mode of teaching needs support from departments to be successful.

Conclusion: benefits and challenges

Our continued incorporation of online delivery for EKIF and blended programmes has several benefits, such as:

- To allow us flexibility should the kinds of international restrictions we faced during covid happen again
- To allow us to keep some of the advantages we saw from our blended offering
- To allow us to continue to innovate and target new markets

Challenges

- Numbers/interest
- Making sure mix of pathways offered is the right one
- Regulatory regime (here and overseas)
- Timetabling
- HyFlex delivery

The Covid pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning on our programme and across the sector. Much of the sector has now returned to a similar mode of delivery to pre-pandemic. In this case study we have outlined some elements of online and blended delivery that are currently working for us and shared what we have learned so far.

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InForm

Exchange

Time to blend learning?

A reflective practice on blended learning in an English Foundation Programme at Bahrain Polytechnic

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Blended Learning is a novel approach in our English Foundation Programmes at Bahrain Polytechnic. This article summarises my experience of embracing BL using Driscoll's (1994) model of reflection. I found that BL can complement andragogy, promoting flexibility for adult learners while catering to 21st-century learners. This is a model that can be reconstructed, tailored, and improved to comply with the evolution of education, the advancements in technology, and the nature and expectations of learners in a fast-paced world. Thus, having the potential to be successfully implemented across contexts.

Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 has drastically reshaped the way Higher Education (HE) is delivered worldwide. Consequently, students applying to university programs were introduced to various modes of study (e.g., online, hybrid, blended). In post-pandemic times, however, online education and its technologies are not entirely abandoned by Higher Education Institutions (HEI). Instead, they are integrated with the traditional classroom setting and have evolved to become a customary teaching and learning pedagogy (Saboo-wala & Mishra, 2021). Consequently, Blended Learning (BL) has regained vast popularity in HE contexts. In this article, I will reflect on my practice of implementing BL, introducing my teaching context and blended experience. Then, I will discuss themes generated from my context, and finally, I will provide recommendations for successfully implementing a BL approach. Thus, making these recommendations transferable and useful for education practitioners in similar contexts.

Methodology

Reflective practice is an intentional activity that helps practitioners reflect, analyse, and learn from experiences to improve their practice. It also makes this study purposeful and meaningful for other education practitioners who seek enhancement instead of simply carrying out the routine tasks of everyday teaching practice. I will be adopting a model of reflection developed by Driscoll (1994), which is a reflective cycle that leads to desired results, as it is based on the three questions:

- 1. What?** The experience of the situation.
- 2. So what?** Discussion of themes that make sense of the situation.
- 3. What now?** The implications of the situation/recommendation for future practice.

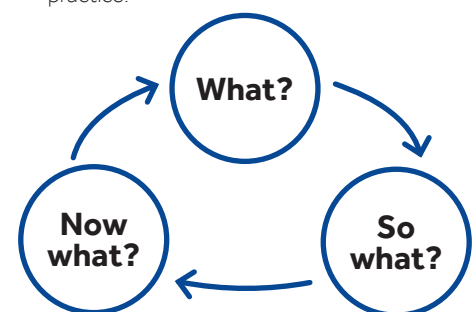


Figure 1: Driscoll's model of reflection (Driscoll, 1994)

Teaching context: What?

I teach English at Bahrain Polytechnic (BP), a government-owned HEI. Towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022, BP transitioned to a blended mode, employing a mix of synchronous **face-to-face** learning and asynchronous **online** learning. In this blended model (Table 1), students are expected to physically attend regular classes on-campus twice a week and to also dedicate self-study hours outside class to complete the asynchronous tasks on Moodle, which includes a lesson (e.g., recorded lectures, readings) followed by activities (e.g., quizzes, assignments, forum submissions).

I noticed that most learners enjoy having access to materials asynchronously at any time of the day; the logs report on Moodle – which records information such as the time students logged into an activity – shows that learners consistently access the materials at least twice a week. It also shows steady activity outside classroom time, which suggests that BL stimulates learner autonomy. In addition, students' academic performance shows slight improvement when compared to the performances during online learning in 2021 (Figure 2); despite the different cohorts, the pass rate increased from 66.33% in 2021 to 77.12% in 2022. Perhaps the reason behind this is that learners are acquiring the necessary study skills from physical attendance, have unrestrained access to the material asynchronously, and are provided with immediate feedback in class, which contributes to students' retention and thus, enhances their academic performance.

Delivery Mode	Duration	Total hours per term
Synchronous Learning On-campus, Face-to-face	4 hours per week, for 15 weeks	60 hours
Asynchronous Learning Online, via Moodle	2 hours per week, for 15 weeks	30 hours

Table 1: The blended model in Bahrain Polytechnic

I feel the biggest challenge in implementing BL was the amount of time and effort it took to prepare the asynchronous study materials. Prior to starting the course, I created asynchronous lessons for 15 weeks of independent learning for students which included downloadable study material, recorded lectures, interactive activities, quizzes, and forums. Nevertheless, asynchronous learning reduced my workload as a teacher during the course because it created opportunities for further practice outside class; learners made use of the materials provided asynchronously to enhance their language skills and acquire new knowledge. I also noticed that learners recall knowledge in class that I know they have acquired from asynchronous lessons, and this has been recurring consistently throughout the blended experience.

Discussion: So what?

BL and andragogy

Andragogy is perhaps the crux for BL because adult learners undertake a course of learning that is different from younger learners in terms of needs and expectations. In educational contexts, adult learners are

prospective students who are pursuing tertiary education for personal or professional development. According to Knowles (1973), adult learners are characterized by their self-directedness and autonomy; they typically seek out learning based on personal needs, and they commonly become intrinsically motivated to learn if their psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Hence, the conceptualisation of adult learners' needs may be crucial in designing learning environments (Isman, 2011). I believe this is the reason for the effectiveness of BL in my context; the teaching and learning responsibility is shared between teachers and learners, which slightly reduces teachers' workload and stimulates learner autonomy. Indeed, adult learners should be encouraged to learn with limited tutor input because most can manage self-directed learning (Kember, 2007).

Flexible learning

BL possesses a valued quality in HE and that is *flexibility*, which may be seen as a solution for adult learners who seek a college degree today in a fast-paced world. The asynchronous feature provides flexibility in learning that adult learners require as the learning is not

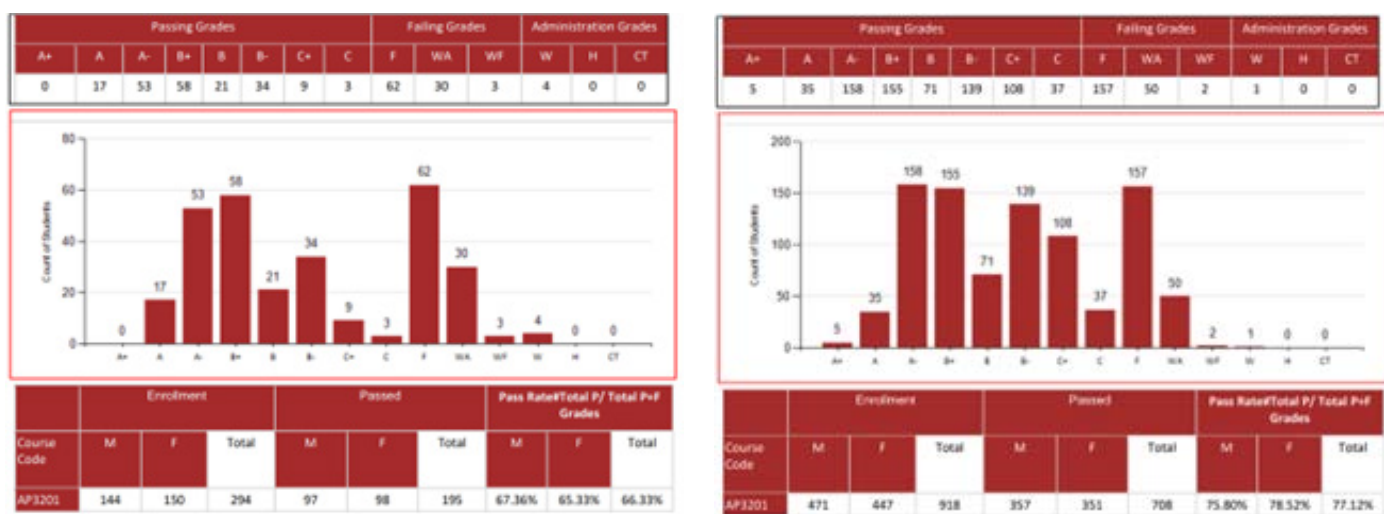


Figure 2: Students' results in Foundation English (2021 on the left, 2022 on the right).

bounded by time and place (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Thus, some adult learners faced with obligations such as work and family would be attracted to the flexibility of BL, and this may be an important factor in determining whether they can complete a degree program (Dziuban et al., 2004).

Technology-mediated teaching and learning

Most HEIs have made the required investment in technology and infrastructure that can support significant blended learning by now, especially after the pandemic. Therefore, traditional learning environments are gradually transforming into those of a technology-mediated nature, which is advantageous for learners today who are relatively used to using technology. However, it may be seen as a strain for educators who are now expected to digitalize their teaching methodology through the integration of technology in their lessons, to cater to these learners. Technology may not necessarily be at the forefront of teacher education, thus creating considerable challenges in implementing BL (Hoang, 2015). To address this, many HEIs provide technological teacher training through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and internal training sessions. Hence, educators should take full advantage of this as they need to progress at the same rate as the advancements in technology and the internet.

Recommendation for future practice: What now?

1. Similar teaching context

Despite the strong evidence base behind BL and its compatibility with andragogy, it is challenging to transfer one's successful teaching experience or research findings to other settings across demographics and cultures. BL can be a positive experience when employed in a similar teaching context to mine and closely to the blended model implemented by my institution, but it also should be executed thoughtfully with pensive consideration of learners' preferences and needs. Moreover, I suggest performing action research to target and aid problems faced in this practice (e.g., lack of engagement).

2. Technological teacher training

BL can work to a much higher standard with a competent teacher who is capable of troubleshooting and resolving problems with complex devices, computers, and software systems. In essence, the 21st-century teacher should have a compendium of skills that allows them to guide students in their technology-assisted learning process. Thus, I highly recommend educators undergo some technological training beforehand and throughout their teaching experience through CPD because it may limit the potential predicaments learners may face during their e-learning experience, and it can also save time in class when teachers optimize the use of technology to ease the teaching and learning process.

3. Establish a good blend

As educators, we know that not all technology is useful for learning, and not all teaching methods are effective in every context. Hence, with our judgment as practitioners, a good blend can be achieved by finding what works for students' learning, which differs in each context, potentially reaching a comfort zone in the classroom where students achieve effective learning. Alijani et al. (2014) claim that 'balance' is a key component of BL: each piece of a BL class needs to be balanced, from the types of technology used to the specific content being addressed. Therefore, meaningful learning is accomplished when learners are engaged in a well-balanced classroom (ibid).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I found BL to be efficacious and complementary to teaching and learning, especially adult learning—despite its relative novelty, especially in certain HE contexts worldwide. BL is not a trend that may recede in the next few years as the educational system recovers from the pandemic; it is the outcome of the evolution in education and technology that we need to embrace.

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Authenticity in exam assessment

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In the response to generative AI such as ChatGPT, a dichotomy has emerged between traditional exams and authentic assessment. This overlooks the benefits of synthesising the two approaches. This article describes and reflects on a project carried out in 2021 to increase the authenticity of an exam used on a pre-master's programme for Humanities students.

An era of AI

Generative AI, which rose to prominence in late 2022 with the launch of ChatGPT, has prompted considerable discussion in higher education because of the challenge it poses to current methods of assessment. Practitioners have responded in various ways. Sims (2023) differentiates between in-person controlled assessments, including traditional pen and paper exams, and other forms of assessment like essays and portfolios, suggesting that traditional oral and written exams have their place, but need complementing with other assessments. These assessments, Sims argues, require rethinking because of generative AI. Verhoeven and Rana (2023) suggest this calls for authentic assessment, based on experiential learning, to make non-traditional assessments fit for purpose in the generative AI age. Meanwhile, Acar (2023) proposes a framework for incorporating generative AI skills within academic assignments.

Notable in the discussion is the perceived division between traditional exams and authentic assessment. So far, little has been written about the possibility of synthesising the two approaches. This is perhaps unsurprising given the speed at which generative AI has moved into the mainstream, but I worry that the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic, another great, recent, shock to HE assessment practices, risk being forgotten. In this article I will give briefly describe an exam I created at Cardiff University International Study Centre (CUISC) which sought to synthesise traditional exams and authentic assessment in response to the pandemic, before reflecting on the authenticity of this assessment and identifying learning which can be applied to the post-ChatGPT era.

My context

CUISC opened in September 2020. As Pathway Lead for Arts, Law, Humanities and Social Sciences I initiated a project to increase the authenticity of our assessments. In this I was profoundly influenced by Sambwell and Brown (2021) and their collection of authentic assessment examples, collated in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the sudden pivot away from traditional in-person exams.

My team and I reviewed our international foundation year and pre-master's programme modules, drafted ideas, and gave peer feedback. Using a technique called a "pre-mortem" (Klein, 2007) we imagined that we were at the end of the academic year, everything had gone wrong, and we worked out what happened. The aim was to foresee problems with our approach and solve them before they occurred. Blogs, video essays, and simulated client interviews were introduced in Globalisation, Introduction to Humanities, and Introduction to Law modules respectively. My pre-master's programme module, Global Perspectives, was due to include an exam, which would have to be a 'take home' exam because of Covid social distancing measures. I decided to incorporate authentic tasks in this assessment to encourage the *application* of knowledge rather than its recitation.

There are clear differences between this context and the current moment: this exam was designed to make the most of the 'take home' format necessitated by Covid-19. In such a format, simply requiring students to remember class content was unproductive, because all students would have to do was locate their class notes or handouts and copy the relevant content. In contrast, given the accessibility of generative AI tools, today the exam would need to be conducted in controlled, invigilated conditions without

access to the likes of ChatGPT. However, it would still prompt students to select relevant knowledge and demonstrate their understanding by applying this to a realistic situation. Moreover, while this exam was created for pre-postgraduate students, pre-undergraduate foundation year programmes could include similar exams.

A (more) authentic exam

Wary of deviating too far from international students' expectations, I divided the exam into sections, keeping a traditional short essay task in the second section. However, in the first section students were given three tasks on three topics, of which they had to choose two. The topic they didn't pick had to be the focus of the essay in the second section. To demonstrate the authentic tasks, the mock exam paper is reproduced on the right.

Reflections

Baines et al. (2023) suggest that when judging the authenticity of an assessment, two aspects can be considered: product and process. In the exam above, the products are reasonably authentic; similar texts exist beyond university exam halls. However, the processes by which students produce them are relatively inauthentic, because controlled situations where other sources of information and collaboration with others are prohibited are rare in the real world. This is not to say that controlled assessments cannot have more authentic processes designed into them. For instance, sources can be given to students in the exam, or exams can be part-writing and part-group discussion, making them more like real life or workplace tasks. Alternatively, perhaps it is best to focus on authentic products in controlled assessments and on authentic processes in coursework assessments (which might involve AI tools for purposes such as idea generation and editing).

Assessment in HE has undergone two great shocks in the last four years. In the pandemic, teachers needed alternatives to traditional, controlled examinations. ChatGPT and its counterparts have made a return to this kind of assessment more attractive, despite the well-established drawbacks that they can be unrealistic, stress-inducing, and focussed on testing superficial knowledge (Compton, 2023). The period of experimentation prompted by

Section 1A: Theoretical perspectives.

You are a political journalist. You have been asked to write part of the article below.

POLITICS TODAY

Senior politician: let's move on Liberalism in foreign policy.

A senior government minister has stated that: "our foreign policy needs to move away from liberalism. Only a realist approach will work in the 21st century".

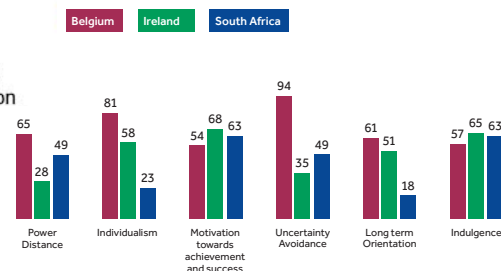
TASK: Write a brief introduction for readers on 'realism', 'liberalism', and other perspectives on foreign policy so they understand what the government minister means.

Section 1C: Leadership.

You are an international business and management consultant. One of your clients is a South Korean tourism company, looking to organise tours of the country for three groups of tourists from: Belgium, Republic of Ireland, and South Africa. The tourism company has planned a 'Highlights' tour, including:

- Day 1: Seoul
- Day 2: The demilitarised zone between South and North Korea
- Day 3: Busan
- Day 4: Gyongju

TASK: Prepare an information sheet with advice for the South Korean tour guides on how to lead the tour group. Use the Hofstede Cultural Dimensions model as any other relevant information. A comparison of the countries based on Hofstede's model is on the right.



Section 1B: The Environment.

You are the leader of your country. Before an international summit on climate change, you have just committed to a target of being carbon neutral by 2060. You are introducing a 'cap and trade' scheme for industry in your country.

TASK: Write a speech to be broadcast to members of the public on television and radio. In your speech, you should:

- explain the decision you have made
- give reasons for the decision
- tell the audience what this is likely to mean for them in their everyday lives

Covid-19 popularised authentic assessment for practitioners like me, but generative AI weakens the case for its use because the likes of ChatGPT can, in seconds, produce coherent, reasonable-quality texts of any genre for any audience for a user entirely lacking in understanding. Although a return to pre-pandemic traditionalism is tempting, this would waste hard-won learning from the pandemic. Similarly, the wholesale integration of AI into all forms of assessment would fundamentally undermine the very

concept of assessment as a measurement of understanding and ability.

Assessing students of the post-ChatGPT generation will require a careful balance between judging what they can do on their own, and what they can do with the generative AI tools. Authenticity in assessment design should not be limited to the latter. Synthesising the two approaches by increasing the authenticity of controlled assessments could be a pragmatic step forward, rather than a dispiriting step backwards for assessment.

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'Textscrolling' – an inclusive approach to academic reading

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Reading academic texts can be challenging. Here we report on an intervention that we used in our International Foundation Programme EAP seminars as part of a peer observation process with the aim of demystifying the academic reading process for international students. 'Textscrolling' is a visual and physical technique to help students understand how information is organised in a reading text and fits in with the EAP knowledge base of Academic Literacies and Genre Analysis. Student feedback indicates that the intervention was successful, and we observed a high level of student engagement in the activity. We plan to use and develop this intervention in future iterations of our courses.

Introduction

Students often report finding academic reading difficult. We report on an intervention we used with International Foundation Programme (IFP) students in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) seminars to help them better navigate research papers they are required to read to prepare for writing and speaking assignments. The intervention, known as 'textscrolling', encourages students to use a visual and physical approach to the understanding of text structure. This inclusive reading approach has been used in other contexts, with widening participation students, and has been described as an 'emancipatory teaching practice' by Abegglen et al. (2019) in the way in which it also helps students gain power and voice.

How it works

We use 'textscrolling' as a preliminary activity for research papers that students are required to read in preparation for seminar discussions or Academic Reading Circles (ARCs) and/or use as a source for a written assignment; IFP students come from a wide range of backgrounds and therefore we cannot expect them to be equally knowledgeable about the way in which research papers in English are structured.

Groups of students are given a paper version which is printed single sided so they can spread the pages out on a flat surface. Using highlighter pens, students are asked to identify the structure of the research paper by marking sections, subsections, diagrams and keywords using a colour key. Once they

have mapped the text using this method the students sellotape the pages to make a scroll. This initial activity can then be followed up with a range of analytical tasks such as identifying and discussing the location of key words; focussing on the most useful content in specific sections, such as the Discussion; and identifying the micro structural features of the Abstract in order to understand its purpose. We also focus on the importance of reading the Abstract first to make them more efficient readers when undertaking their own research.

Why it works

There are several benefits to 'textscrolling'. Firstly, it enables students to see the 'big picture' of the text before focussing on the detail. This is impossible when reading a research paper on a laptop or iPad screen where 'electronic scrolling' involves moving the text up or down within the limits of the screen, giving only a partial vision of the structure and content. Secondly, we are able to highlight the 'chronological' presentation of the research process (using the standard IMRD structure), from background information to the current research and the recommendations for future research (viewing the paper from left to right). This is particularly useful to speakers of languages which are read in a different direction, for example right to left. We can also identify the two 'edges' of the text, e.g., the Introduction (left edge) and the Discussion (right edge), as being the two areas to focus on first, and then 'move inwards' for more detail in the other sections including the methodology, the findings and further detail in tables and other graphical representations. Thirdly, this

is a group activity which shows students how reading can be a social practice where they can discuss their ideas, learn from each other, and collaborate to make decisions on how to mark the text. It also affords physical movement, helping to maintain engagement in the task, and inclusive to different learning styles. In simple terms, it can be fun and enjoyable for both students and teachers who act as 'task facilitators'.

Possible pitfalls

We have discovered that linking the activity to a task is key to student motivation, otherwise students can lose focus and become less engaged where there isn't a clear purpose to the reading task, such as preparation for a seminar or a writing assignment. It is also important not to rush this activity because there is value in the time it takes. We set aside a full hour-long seminar for this activity to give students time and space to engage with the text and their discussion of the reading. Our observations are reinforced by those of Abegglen et al. (2020) and Kimberley & Thursby (2020), who have conducted similar studies of 'textscrolling' in the classroom. Furthermore, we recommend that careful consideration

is given to the choice of text in terms of length and structure. For example, a well-structured research paper can help provide a good reference point for students who may later come across papers with additional sub-sections or sub-genres such as review papers.

Final reflections

'Textscrolling' reveals to us as teachers how individual students read research papers. As students discuss the article, we are able to gain insights into their thinking which we cannot observe when they are reading silently. It is also useful to observe a colleague's class as a part of a peer observation process to gain deeper insights and refine the techniques. For our students, who provided feedback on the activity, it is effective in making academic reading less overwhelming and achievable.

As a practical technique it can be developed and enhanced by teachers in their own contexts and, in our view, aligns well with the principles which inform Genre Analysis and an Academic Literacies approach to reading by revealing the nature of academic discourse to a wider cohort of student readers.

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Questions to discuss

- Which section contains the diagrams?
- Which section would you read to find out HOW the researchers carried out their research?
- What's the purpose of the background section?
- Which part focuses on the future?
- The keyword "food insecurity" appears most frequently in which parts of the text? Why do you think this is?
- If you could only read one part of the text, which would you read?

Figure 1: an example of analytical tasks

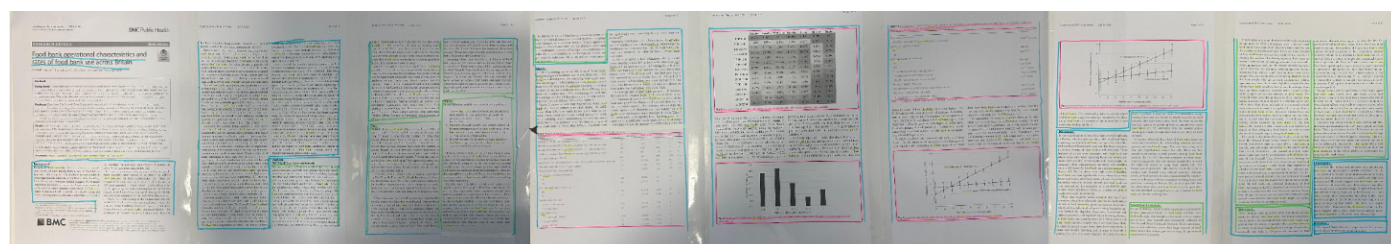


Figure 2: an example of a textscroll

Is it time to rethink IFP economics?

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Recent years have seen a growth in movements towards 'rethinking economics', both on university campuses and in the scholarly literature. The overwhelming focus for these movements to-date, however, has been undergraduate study. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the meaning and implications of a rethinking agenda at other educational levels, including international foundation programmes (IFP). This article seeks to partially address this gap by presenting a case for the basic relevance of 'rethinking' critiques at IFP level too, and the potential benefits that accompany accepting the challenge they pose.

Economics has come in for considerable criticism in recent years. While retaining a position of power in public discourse and attracting more students than ever, the discipline's mainstream stands accused of gross failings. Dominated by a narrow theoretical approach, it is argued, economics has become increasingly insular and technical in form and detached from the most pressing social challenges of the age (Colander et al., 2009; Earle et al., 2017; Reardon et al., 2018; Skidelsky, 2020). Failing to offer any real guidance, and even contributing to an impoverishment of the collective imagination, it is now in urgent need of reform (Raworth, 2017). In particular, educational models must be rethought so as to foster more pluralistic, critical, and socially connected ways of teaching and learning about economics (Earle et al., 2017; Muijnck & Tieleman, 2021).

Reactions to these criticisms have inevitably been mixed. Nevertheless, momentum has grown around a 'rethinking' agenda (see Muijnck & Tieleman, 2021). In response, many universities have sought to expand their economics offering to include more heterodox and interdisciplinary elements. Others have pursued more comprehensive projects of curriculum reform. But while a great deal of attention has been paid to undergraduate study, comparatively little has gone into examining the meaning and implications of a rethinking agenda at other educational levels, including IFP. Addressing this gap is important. We need to ask: To what extent is IFP economics implicated in broader critiques of the discipline? Should (and can) IFP curricula be reimagined in line with transformations happening elsewhere in the university? And if so, what might this look like in practice?

Aside from scepticism for a rethinking agenda in general, there are reasons perhaps to question its extension to IFPs. These include considerations about the level of study, additional language requirements of learners, scarcity of resources for curriculum development, and a lack of existing level-specific scholarship to provide guidance. Notwithstanding the importance of such factors and the challenges they imply, I believe that a strong case can nevertheless be made for extending rethinking initiatives to IFP level.

Part of this is situational. With ongoing changes to the landscape of undergraduate economics provision, IFPs inevitably face pressures – implicit and explicit, from receiving departments and students – to follow suit. In my own university, for instance, economics degrees are now standardly taught across two schools, the Department of Political Economy and Business School, rendering a critical and multiperspectival approach at IFP level consonant with students' future studies. More widely, increasing numbers of universities are adopting alternative models for year one economics, such as CORE Econ (The CORE Team, 2017). It may be, then, that rethinking IFP curricula is increasingly felt as a requirement in some contexts, rather than merely an option.

There is, however, also a more substantive side to the argument. This stems from observation that the educational models that currently prevail at foundation level tend to focus on learning *through* economics to the general neglect of learning also *about* economics. That is, curricula are geared towards familiarising students with a standard set of concepts, models, and analytical techniques but with little or no regard for the complex

of debates and critiques surrounding this. This is a curriculum design choice that not only inhibits a fuller appreciation of modern economics as a rich and diverse discipline but implicitly guides students away from the kinds of criticality that IFPs otherwise aspire to promote.

This is a sizable claim, and it cannot be adequately defended here. Indication of its validity, however, can be found with the question that standardly opens IFP modules: 'What is economics?' While the uninitiated might presume that this serves as a basis for meaningful reflection on the nature of the subject students are being asked to commit to, those familiar with the mainstream curriculum will know that it is in fact no sooner posed than summarily answered. That answer typically follows Lionel Robbins' definition of economics as "the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses" (2013 [1932], p.22). With this posing-and-closing motion, attention quickly shifts towards some basic concepts and models (e.g. scarcity, opportunity cost, PPC). Rarely are students alerted to the fact that this answer emanates from a particular economic tradition – namely, the Neoclassical school – or that it is strongly contested by other perspectives. They do not learn, for instance, that many today prefer a more open definition, construing economics "as a social science concerned with how societies provision", rather than tying it to a particular approach (Reardon et al., 2018, p.1).

At issue here is not the superiority of one answer over another but what is lost when such fundamental contests are obscured as a function of curriculum design. The effect is not only to mischaracterise modern economics in a significant way and establish this as a frame for the curriculum in general. It is also to send an implicit message that students' success depends first and foremost on the acquisition of whatever is put in front of them rather than the development of a reflective, critical attitude towards it.

In my view, the presence of such embedded obstacles to deeper learning and criticality offers indication both of the relevance of rethinking critiques to IFP economics, and the potential importance of the challenge they pose. It is not that critical thought is precluded under conventional IFP curricula

or that deeper learning is rendered impossible through them. It is rather that their design makes these merely optional and more difficult paths to follow, for students and educators alike. Whatever one thinks about the more substantive criticisms levelled against mainstream economics, then, there is reason *as educators* to consider the benefits that a process of rethinking might hold.

Rethinking IFP economics need not mean discarding everything and starting over. Nor does it necessarily entail shifting towards entirely new and radical foundations. The likely need for pragmatism in most cases also means that variation in approaches is not only possible but to be expected. There will be challenges associated with this, not least concerning how to evaluate and maintain educational standards amidst change. However, if rethinking IFP economics means, most fundamentally, a renewed effort to examine our curricula for the learning they inhibit as well as promote, then there is reason to face those challenges. With this comes the prospect of generating more robust assurances that we are equipping our students with the economic learning and broader development as critical, independent thinkers that they need to flourish in undergraduate study.

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Recalibrating educators' expectations on students and student learning in the era of generative AI: a self-reflection on the vital role of a dialogue with students

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Since the arrival in our lives of advanced Generative AI like ChatGPT, a lot of attention has been placed on its impact on students and their learning. Within my network of colleagues and educator friends, one of the initial concerns that surfaced was the fear – for some already a certainty – that students might become over reliant on Generative AI, neglecting their own efforts. After all, “why wouldn’t they want to use a technology that, within just a few clicks and some adjustments, can produce a passable essay?”. The bottom line of these thoughts was that students were the primary beneficiaries (or ‘victims’, depending on the viewpoint) of this technological revolution, as the title of this very InForm issue suggests. And yet it is not just the students’ nature and expectations that are evolving; educators are (and should be) also undergoing transformations.

My perspective on the complex relationship between students and Generative AI underwent a significant shift a few weeks ago when I spoke with three former students of mine who are now in their second- and third-year undergraduate studies. I had intended to show them the concept of a Politics essay assignment I had developed, that incorporated Generative AI based on the **PAIR framework**. I thought they would be enthusiastic about it, seeing me as a forward-thinking teacher who embraces AI rather than opposes it. Certainly, being young, they naturally desired to incorporate Generative AI into their learning – why wouldn't they?

To my surprise, their reaction was sceptical. They raised a fundamental question: What if a student doesn't want to use AI? What if they prefer to be the sole author of the essay they submit, finding satisfaction in “a sense of pride and ownership”? Their unexpected remarks were eye-opening for me. Ever since we, educators, began discussing, and sometimes grumbling about, the rise of Generative AI, the prevailing assumption had been that *all* students were rubbing their hands at the perspective of outsourcing their coursework. Learning about my former students' desire to craft their essays using their own intellectual

tools made me realise how far my expectations regarding students' learning desires has strayed, a feeling that Generative AI had only exacerbated. Sure, the students I spoke with are top-notch, high achieving students, capable of independently writing essays that earn them top grades – it would be naive to think that all students would have reacted the same way to my ideas. Still, that conversation was for me a stark reminder that not long ago I was a student myself, yearning for that sense of accomplishment and self-expression.

The advent of Generative AI has thus forced me to confront the fact that I had become the kind of teacher who was suspicious of their students, presuming they were seeking shortcuts to success, and my role was to catch them in the act – a role that Generative AI had frustratingly made even more complex. Engaging in a direct conversation with the three students, rather than confining my discussions to peers, played a pivotal and revelatory role in my reflective practice. The interaction I had on that afternoon made me confront some of my preexisting biases, some of which predated the emergence of Generative AI, and helped me better calibrate my expectations concerning students and their learning.

What made the discussion even more enlightening was that our discussion didn't merely impact me as the educator: it also, in turns, shaped the three students' expectations regarding Generative AI and how it can be integrated into their learning processes without diminishing the sense of ownership – something that the PAIR framework makes possible. This mutual understanding led us to the decision to collaborate on a project proposal aimed at securing college funding to explore the integration of AI into the essay-writing process.

While we still don't know the outcome of our project bid, I am certain that our discussions on Generative AI and assessment have already provided us with valuable and transformative insights. One of these insights is the necessity for students and educators to collaborate in defining the novel paradigms of learning and teaching that the rise of Generative AI challenges and urges us to create.

I would like to thank Camille Bacha De Carvalho, Duru Karadeniz and Ziti Lei for our engaging discussions and for reminding me of the importance of placing trust in our students.



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This is a call for papers for Issue 24 of *InForm*

The submission of papers is now invited for Issue 24 of *InForm* from members of the academic community associated with International Foundation Programmes. Issue 24 will be published in Spring 2025. We are interested in articles related to the variety of academic disciplines commonly found across international foundation programmes and remind contributors that *InForm* is not predominantly an English language teaching journal. As well as article submissions, we welcome letters in response to articles in the current issue (max 200 words). Submissions should be sent to **inform@reading.ac.uk** by 5pm on Friday 11 October 2024.

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