5ydd Gynhadledd Dysgu ac Addysgu

 5th Annual Learning and Teaching Conference

10 Mis Gorffennaf – 12 Mis Gorffennaf| 8 July – 10 July 2017

# Crynoldebau / abstracts

Poster Session

Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University (TPAU)

Annette Edwards and Ian Archer

This is a new programme for Postgraduate Research Students which started in September 2016 at Aberystwyth University. The aim is to develop the teaching and learning skills of postgraduate students who already teach in their department. This programme gives students a grounding in the good practice of teaching and expands their knowledge and expertise in a range of core teaching areas. It also gives them practical advice, on their own teaching, through peer observations of teaching. The programme is accredited through the Higher Education Academy (HEA) at Associate Fellowship level.

To support postgraduate research students who are engaged in teaching at Aberystwyth University, we have developed a teacher training programme, which provides them with a range of teaching skills, ranging from tutorials to lectures and assessment. The Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice and the Graduate School, Aberystwyth University worked in partnership on this programme https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/cdsap/tpau/. The strategic aim of this programme is to develop the teaching skills of PGRs who are teaching in their departments and is accredited by the UK Higher Education Academy (HEA) and those who complete the programme will become an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). It was designed for those in their 2nd or 3rd year of the PhD. It also aligns to the University’s commitment to the Postgraduate Employment Charter.

ORBYTS: Using Media to engage school students in research.

Maire Gorman

ORBYTS (Original Research By Young Twinkle Scientists) is a program in which A-level students undertake research in the field of exoplanet atmosphere characterization under the supervision of a PhD or Postdoc tutor with the ultimate aim of producing results which can be published in peer-review journals. Twinkle is a satellite which is been developed and is due for launch within the next few years.

Since January 2017, an ORBYTS project has been run remotely with St Brendan’s' College, Bristol using digital media as a medium. This project has nine students who are split into three teams of three.

Panopto recordings alongside their respective transcripts have been used to communicate tasks. These videos include feedback on previous tasks, live-demos of new tasks and also explanation of the motivation behind doing them. Several videos explaining the science of the Twinkle satellite, how the peer-review process works and what a typical research cycle looks like have also been created.

Within this particular ORBYTS project the emphasis has been on the development of transferable research skills. For example, the students have learned how to use the type-setting LaTeX system using free-online software and have received feedback through this as the software allows for version control. More generally, all tasks have involved free online open source software making the project accessible.

Skype and email have also been used as a means to provide both oral and written feedback with the aid of edited screenshots to enable technical understanding of how to perform tasks in, for example Excel.

In this presentation, results from this project will be discussed as well as the challenges faced with communicating often quite complex tasks via distance with A-level students.

Possible solutions for future projects will also be presented.

Brilliant Club: Teaching Opportunities for PhD and PostDocs

Maire Gorman and Greg Scannell

The Brilliant Club is an award-winning charity which aims to directly address educational inequity by placing PhD students and Postdocs in state schools to deliver a series of bespoke tutorials as a means of raising aspirations.

Prior to coming to Aberystwyth University, I tutored on this program within two primary schools in East London. Since last year, progress has been made on bringing the Brilliant Club to Aberystwyth. An information meeting and subsequent assessment centre for PhDs and Postdocs has taken place. The Brilliant Club now has a national program officer for Wales in place whom I've been working with. In this presentation I will also discuss my experiences of tutoring in East London for the Brilliant Club and also outline the future recruitment events scheduled over the next academic year.

Within a Brilliant Club placement, the tutorials are designed by the tutor and are based on their own research, hence all placements are unique and are deliberately designed at a Key Stage above the current level of the students. Hence pupils from low-income communities in which a lower than average proportion of people attend university are challenged, but more importantly invigorated by exposure to new topics at the cutting edge of research.

The benefits of the Brilliant Club are not just limited to the schools involved. The Brilliant Club offers an opportunity for researchers to showcase and disseminate their research whilst gaining valuable and unique teaching experience. Prior to every placement there is a training weekend for tutors at which they all benefit from been part of a community of around 600 researchers spread throughout the UK. It is becoming increasingly common that research grants are awarded on the condition of public engagement work been undertaken: hence Brilliant Club is a means of achieving this for individual research groups, departments and Institutes. It is also in line with Aberystwyth policies of fair access recruitment and diversity.

Using online booking software for tutor meetings

Gareth Norris

Being available for students is a key factor in satisfaction, but making appointments with students is not always so easy. Using online booking software can make this process simpler, ‘empower’ the student with a sense of ‘connection’ and save staff time. Using a free online service (10to8.com) over the past year has been shown to be an excellent way of arranging appointments and managing time. This session will cover setting up an account, placing links on Blackboard, and using QR codes.

Improving student perceptions of employability skills development via online tasks and feedback

Les Tumilty and Simon Payne

Introduction

Students often have difficulty contextualising and communicating skills developed on academic modules to employment (HEA, 2012; CBI, 2011). We wanted to:

• Measure the effect of an intervention on students’ awareness of employability skills.

• Integrate employability skills development into students’ conception of undergraduate study.

• Prompt students to consider skills development and career planning.

We expected students’ employability skills to develop across a semester, with greater improvement in those engaging fully with the intervention.

Methods

Forty-two students provided data within three modules on the BSc (Hons.) Sport & Exercise Science programme at Aberystwyth University. They self-rated nine employability skills (CBI, 2009) from 1, extremely poor, to 6, extremely strong, in weeks 1 (baseline) and 10 (post-intervention). Students provided perceptions of employability skills development via three activities in weeks 1 (Act1), 5 (Act2) and 9 (Act3), via Blackboard VLE (Act1 and Act3) or email (Act2). Act1 and Act3 required short answer responses on career goals, skills development and strategies, and using skills to secure employment. Act2 was a mindmap exercise where students visualised their impressions of employability skills development. Semi-structured feedback was provided on completed activities within 7 days in weeks 5 and 9, a summary slide was shown identifying examples of employability skills development on the module to date.

Results

Post-intervention business & customer awareness decreased (P = 0.038), numeracy increased (P = 0.031) and positive attitude tended to increase (P = 0.132), compared to baseline. The number of activities engaged with tended to influence self-management (P = 0.159). Numeracy increased more in engagers versus non-engagers (P = 0.041). There was no relationship between time spent on activities and change in employability skills (P > 0.05). Analysis of student responses identified four themes for non-engagement: time or priority constraints, motivational barriers, cognitive barriers, and emotional barriers. Engagement with feedback ranged from “Not much” to “Fully”. The tasks contributed to personal development including, “Improved my problem-solving skills”.

Discussion

Summary slides can enhance awareness of employability skills development. The intervention encouraged students’ reflection on skills development. Addressing barriers may improve engagement in future cohorts. The absence of a true control group limits interpretation of results.

Digging a little deeper: Further insights from module- and course-level student feedback

Victoria Wright

Feedback is integral to higher education. As educators, we emphasise to students the importance of absorbing feedback from module assessments, of building improvements into future coursework submissions and of seeking further guidance when students are unsure how to go about applying feedback. Similarly, within the university-context, and particularly at Aberystwyth, students provide a great deal of feedback on their modules (via Tell Us Now (TUN) and Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ)), and on their overall student and scheme experiences (National Student Survey; NSS). Whilst extensive analysis and use is made of the quantitative findings of these surveys, the qualitative, free text elements of these feedback methods have typically received less consideration. In particular, to date, there has been little attempt within Psychology to consider the type, pattern and frequency of student free text comments, nor what they tell us about students’ perceptions of our provision across time. To this end, this paper presents the results of a novel set of descriptive and qualitative analyses that shed further light on the existing well-used quantitative student satisfaction metrics. Data were gathered from the NSS (2013-2016) and from TUN/MEQ (2014- 2016). Qualitative free text comments were decomposed into unitary statements, then coded for valency (positive/negative). The data sets for NSS and TUN/MEQ were then subjected separately to a form of thematic analysis, such that a set of common themes and sub-themes emerged from each dataset. The results of this exercise suggest that there can be a disconnect between quantitative and qualitative comments in student feedback surveys that can be very informative in determining areas for improvement. In conclusion, we argue that the analysis of the qualitative elements of student feedback surveys at departmental – and even institutional – levels may offer significant potential for further improving the quality of our teaching and learning provision and better understanding students’ experiences.