

The Impact of Staff Professional Development on Teaching Practice and Student Learning and Performance

Case Studies

October 2024



This document is available in English and Welsh

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Introduction

The Welsh Government's ambition is for greater integration across the post-16 sector, with a clear focus on demonstrating the impact of tertiary learning experience for student, society and economic development. There is a clear recognition of the role of staff across the higher and further education sector, and therefore of the role of professional development for staff within those institutions in enabling this ambition. The case studies in this resource evidence a strong commitment of staff across higher and further education providers in Wales to professional development, along with a determination to improve student outcomes. As Wales moves forward with an integrated tertiary system committed to high quality in learning and teaching, which emphasises collaboration to drive and enable continuous improvement, these examples of practice will be a valuable resource, driving innovation and enhancement of the learner experience across the sector. With this clear, learner-centred approach and a focus on the development of innovative learning and teaching initiatives, it aligns closely with the vision and strategic priorities of the newly-formed tertiary body - the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr).

The case studies, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW),¹ are intended to support learning transfer across staff in different providers. It is intended that they encourage dialogue on learning, teaching and quality, both within and across providers. Several of the case studies were presented in the QAA Cymru *Together Stronger: Collaboration and sharing of practice across tertiary education in Wales* HEFCW-funded conference in September 2024.

A collaborative approach

A call for draft case studies was put out to all further and higher education providers in Wales in December 2023 and was also promoted in the QAA Cymru newsletter, and various events and meetings with providers. Professional development can take many forms - from informal, brief and individual activities to more formal institution-led programmes - and therefore, for the purposes of this document, professional development is defined as any activity which could evidence positive change or development in relation to learning and teaching from a staff and learner perspective.

On receipt of the draft submissions, QAA collaborated closely with the contributors over the coming months to refine the case studies. Professional development can be valuable in shaping professional identity as well as influencing practice and developing confidence, and the impact of the various initiatives on the contributors themselves became increasingly clear through the discussions with them. The ultimate goal of any professional development initiative, however, is to provide an effective way of transferring knowledge and skills to improve student learning outcomes (Zeggelaar et al, 2022).² Along with the impact on contributor self-efficacy, therefore, student learning and outcomes are emphasised and evidenced in all case studies, thereby ensuring a consistent approach across this resource. The impact on students is sometimes non-cognitive - for example, enhanced engagement and motivation, and expressed through qualitative data such as quotations from students and staff. Quantitative data such as retention statistics, examination results and questionnaire responses are also cited as indications of improved learning outcomes, following on from a particular professional development activity.

¹ HEFCW's roles and responsibilities in relation to the funding, regulation and quality of higher education transferred to Medr on 1 August 2024.

² Zeggelaar, A; Vermeulen, M and Jochems, W (2022) Evaluating effective professional development, *Professional Development in Education* 48:5

Case study summaries

Short summaries of the 13 case studies in this resource are included below. Case studies on a similar theme have been deliberately placed together for convenience - for example, institutional professional learning programmes for targeted staff or initiatives considering various aspects of Welsh-medium teaching. Contact details of contributors are included in the Annex. Some of the initiatives outlined in the case studies were funded by the Welsh Government as part of the Professional Learning Fund (PLF).

Case Study 1: Supporting hourly-paid lecturers to enhance student learning

Dr John Deane details how the University of Wales Trinity Saint David supports hourly-paid lecturers (HPLs) through professional learning sessions. The University employs over 150 HPLs teaching between four and 20 hours per week in their Institute of Inner-City Learning based in London and Birmingham. The positive impact of the initiative on student outcomes, such as retention and attainment, is highlighted through quantitative data and quotes from staff and students.

Case Study 2: The professional development of postgraduate students

Annette Edwards outlines the Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University programme (TPAU) which is designed for those new to teaching or who are employed as Graduate Teaching Assistants. The programme is integrated into most departmental teaching strategies and 14 of the TPAU alumni working in academic posts at Aberystwyth have contributed to teaching on it while others have become mentors. A range of quotations highlight its positive impact on teaching and learning across the institution.

Case Study 3: A culture of curiosity: Embedding action research

Bryony Evett Hackfort discusses the Culture of Curiosity and Action Research programme launched at Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion in 2019-20, to give staff a secure and supportive network in order to engage with practice-based research. Staff from across the institution apply for a funded position in order to conduct bespoke action research in an area of their choice. Specific examples of action research undertaken are provided, together with their impact on the individuals' professional development and the learners they teach.

Case Study 4: Using action research to develop effective teaching and learning

Dr Mary Jacob discusses the impact of Action Research Projects (ARPs). ARPs are part of the assessed coursework for the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE) at Aberystwyth University. She outlines how ARPs are developed and provides examples of how participants have disseminated their learning, while participants themselves provide quantitative and qualitative data to evidence the impact of their ARPs on student learning.

Case Study 5: 'Basic, Better, Best': Supporting bilingual delivery in FE

Helen Griffith outlines the development of a visual prescriptive tool to support bilingual delivery across all courses in Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion. As part of the Colleges' bespoke Professional Learning Framework, a Bilingual Pathway, which is a staff development pathway, was created around the needs of a number of 'Basic, Better, Best' criteria. Tutor and learner quotes reinforce the effectiveness of the tool, which continues to be refined further.

Case Study 6: Improving Welsh language confidence and competence through bilingual delivery

Amy Lewis outlines her experiences learning Welsh as a tutor working in the health and social care sector in Bridgend College. She undertook professional learning as part of a Welsh Government initiative to ensure all working in health and social services have a minimum level of 'courtesy Welsh', in order to be able to offer services through Welsh and English. She discusses how, following her experiences, she delivered an Access to HE module bilingually. Data from student questionnaires shows the positive impact of the initiative on students' linguistic skills and confidence levels.

Case Study 7: Work Welsh+ in higher education

Dr Owen Thomas details the Work Welsh+ scheme run by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. This scheme supports staff in HE who are comparatively fluent in Welsh, to strengthen their linguistic skills, so they are able to teach through the medium of Welsh. Two staff from Cardiff University and two from Bangor University detail the impact this scheme has had on them personally, and how they have been able to support and strengthen Welsh-medium opportunities for students in their respective workplaces.

Case Study 8: Becoming a trauma and adverse childhood experiences (TrACE)-informed university

Dr Caroline Hughes explains how Wrexham University is working to become a Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experience (TrACE)-informed institution - one of the first in the UK. Being TrACE-informed means developing a better understanding of trauma and the impact of adversity. A network of engaged staff, students and partners has been established with 20 students now registered as TrACE champions. A range of professional learning opportunities have been presented - for example, to personal tutors. Practical initiatives to positively impact student outcomes include the development of policy guidance through a TrACE-informed lens.

Case Study 9: Resilience: Should we be teaching this as a study skill?

Sadie Thackaberry from Coleg Cambria outlines the establishment and ongoing development of resilience workshops among HND Animal Management students, following professional learning opportunities she undertook in this field. The initiative has now also been adopted by another department in the College. Supporting the growth of resilience among learners is seen as supporting inclusivity in terms of helping enable educational opportunity and success, and this is reflected in learner observations.

Case Study 10: Errors by design: Using AI to enhance student learning

Pete Dunford from Bridgend College discusses whether new generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies could offer a pathway to more engaging and effective learning experiences. Following professional learning in this field, he undertook a number of initiatives to empower students to be critical users of generative AI, while also embracing its potential as a learning tool. These are outlined in detail, and quantitative data along with qualitative data obtained through student focus groups, demonstrates the positive impact of the initiatives on student learning.

Case Study 11: Seeing the way forwards: The impact of progress tracking and providing exemplars in flexible delivery rollout

Elizabeth Jones discusses the development of flexible delivery models at the University of South Wales. 13 pilot modules were introduced during the summer of 2023 ahead of delivery in 2023-24, and various professional learning initiatives were undertaken which are outlined in detail, along with the challenges that arose. An exemplar module was well received, and brought the professional learning to life, as indicated by pilot participants. Students similarly comment positively on the impact of the flexible learning model on their learning.

Case Study 12: Improving student feedback literacy and engagement

Steven Kehoe and Samantha Ellis from Grŵp Llandrillo Menai discuss a recent intervention undertaken by select staff following a professional development session on improving student feedback literacy. The intervention centred on the use of an assessment front sheet to be completed by the students asking them to indicate an aspect of feedback from a previous assignment acted upon in the current assignment, and to note a specific aspect of the current assignment on which they wished to receive feedback. Qualitative and quantitative data are presented showing the impact of this initiative on student performance.

Case Study 13: The Welsh Collective: A professional development network

Steph Tindall outlines how the sector network group on immersive learning, established as part of the 2022-23 HEFCW-funded QAA Cymru Collaborative Enhancement Project - The Welsh Collective: Digital Learning and Teaching Enhancement - has developed and expanded during 2023-24. The Network consists of nine HE institutions in Wales and 12 FE colleges. Quotes and examples from three of these are included in the case study, highlighting the benefits of collaboration across the tertiary sector and how learning from the Network has been taken back to individual providers, and had a positive impact on staff professional development and student outcomes internally.

Case Study 1: Supporting hourly-paid lecturers to enhance student learning

Dr John Deane, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Context and background

In 2021, the Institute of Inner-City Learning (IICL), University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) identified a need to improve student outcomes in terms of retention, progression and attainment. In addition, IICL had identified levels of academic misconduct that were above the University benchmarks. Inconsistency in staff feedback and marking were also identified by the Programme Managers among certain hourly-paid lecturers (HPLs). The IICL has three intakes of students per year and recruits new HPLs throughout the academic year. IICL employs over 150 HPLs to support the delivery of programmes across its campuses in Birmingham and London. IICL HPLs normally teach anywhere between four and 20 hours per week.

The nature of using HPLs in delivering academic programmes is that some move on to other opportunities on a regular basis. Others choose to stay and work with the University for several years. IICL advertises for new HPLs three times per year. All prospective HPLs are interviewed and must prepare a 10-minute mini-lecture. A review of engagement with HPLs included interviewing HPLs and interviewing all stakeholders with whom HPLs engaged, including Programme Managers, Professional Services and students.

A major outcome from this HPL review was a recommendation to develop a formal induction programme for HPLs together with a continuing professional development (CPD) programme that covered all aspects of their engagement with the University. A mandatory induction programme was established with a focus on all university regulations, processes and systems, and includes time for them to meet their programme manager. All HPLs are asked to complete an evaluation form following their induction.

In August 2021, following the HPL Review, a CPD programme was designed and launched to HPL staff at the Institute. This HPL CPD Programme incorporated feedback from HPLs from the outset. The HPL CPD Programme has developed year-on-year, acting on feedback from all relevant stakeholders. All HPL workshops are delivered via Microsoft Teams. HPLs are paid for attending this training and their attendance is monitored.

HPL CPD workshops run two to three times a year and include, for example:

- Understanding the Academic Misconduct Policy
- Good Practice in Marking, Feedback and Moderation
- Best Practice in Formative Feedback
- Behavioural Management.

There is ongoing discussion with the HR department in the University about how one can make engagement in these CPD workshops mandatory for all new HPLs who wish to teach at the IICL. Attendance at HPL training is discussed at the IICL Senior Management Team meetings.

Impact on participants' teaching practices

The feedback from HPLs who have attended the CPD workshops has been positive in terms of the impact it has had on their ability to engage with the University's systems and processes, and thus support students more effectively. Their feedback has been particularly positive on the sessions that directly impact on their practice with students. For example:

Behavioural Management workshop

“ The workshops provide space for attendees to share good practice, and address practice that may be considered as not fully meeting the student and policy requirements. ”

“ A very good refresher, this I believe would be useful on a regular basis. ”

Best Practice in Formative Feedback workshop

“ My student outcomes have improved since engaging in this session. ”

“ I attended the formative feedback workshop, (because I was already thinking about it) and in my role as module leader I have introduced specific formative feedback activities that are directly linked to the assessment brief. ”

Good Practice in Marking and Feedback workshop

“ Great to be able to share practice with colleagues. ”

Impact on student outcomes and performance

While it is naturally difficult to point specifically to a direct correlation between the introduction of the CPD programme and HPL engagement in it, student outcomes have clearly improved across a range of key areas since it was introduced. As indicated below, the IICL has seen a definite improvement in academic misconduct rates, retention and good degrees, together with improved attendance metrics, since commencement of the workshops.

IICL	2021-22	2022-23
Academic misconduct rate	16.81%	12.03%
Retention	50.04%	78.95%
Attendance numbers	378	489
Attainment of good degrees	68.36%	71.29%

The HPL workshops in the IICL have been welcomed by the University and a new cross-university HPL training programme is now under development.

Case Study 2: The professional development of postgraduate students

Annette Edwards, Aberystwyth University

Context and background

Aberystwyth University has run a [Teaching for Postgraduates programme](#) (TPAU) for several years. The programme has been designed to be a scaffold and support for those who are new to teaching or who are Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) already teaching in their departments. It is also a transferable qualification that participants can take forward in their future careers. The programme is available through the medium of Welsh and English and is accredited via Advance HE at Associate Fellow (AFHEA) level.

Postgraduate research students (PGRs) on TPAU are required to engage in 20 hours of teaching during the year they undertake the programme. They have three peer observations of their teaching, namely one by their TPAU academic mentor, one by another participant on the programme, and one by the TPAU team. Participants are expected to integrate suggestions from these peer observation sessions and from continuous professional development (CPD) sessions, together with pedagogical literature, into their teaching. All these elements are then reflected upon in their final submission.

Institutional impact of the programme

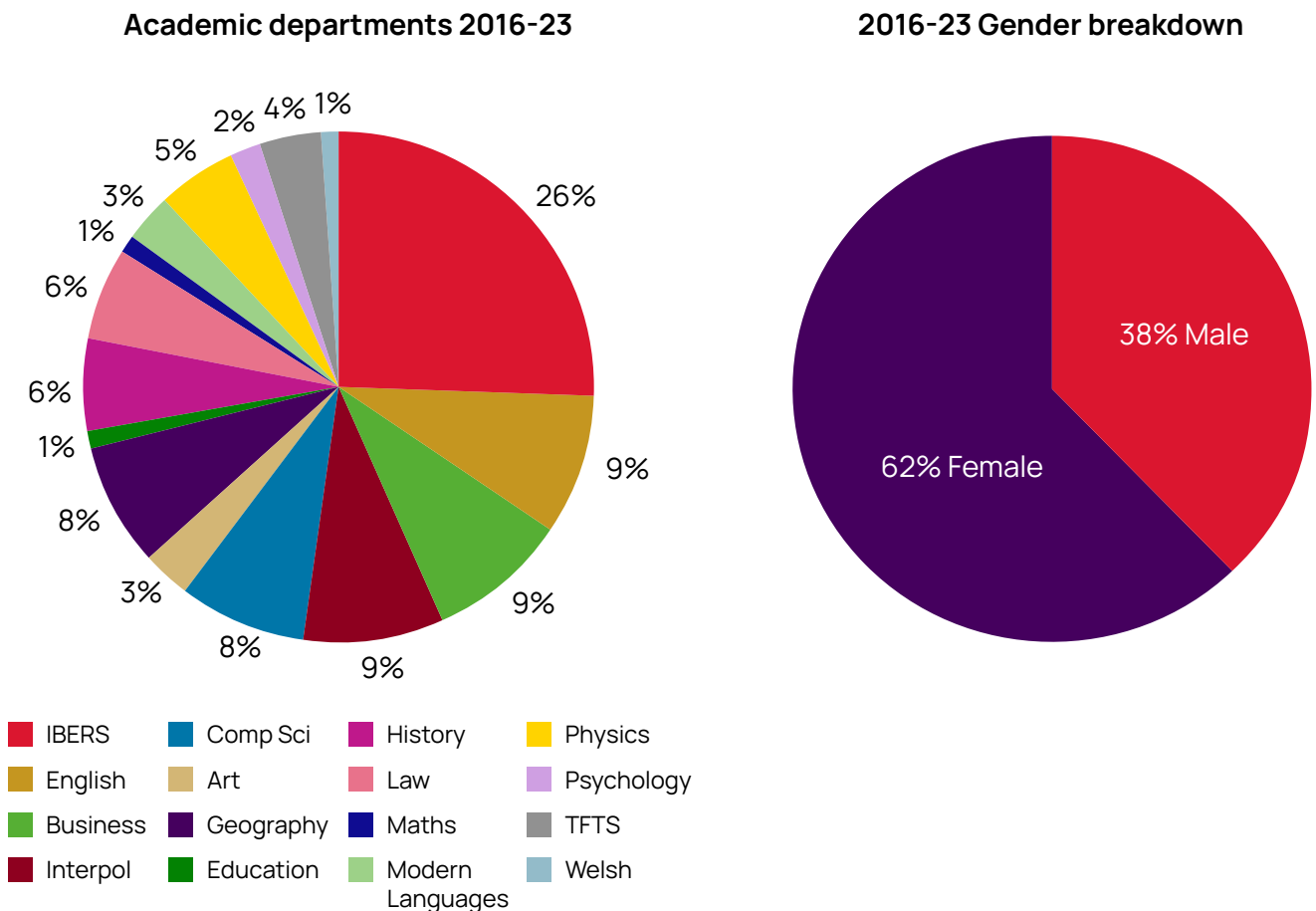
Since the introduction of the TPAU programme, it has been completed by over 150 PGRs, from the majority of academic departments in the University. The programme is now integrated fully into the teaching plans of most departments, and they actively encourage their postgraduate research students to apply for TPAU. All applications must be signed off by the individual academic departments, so there is a clear support mechanism in place in terms of ensuring participants have the opportunity to undertake the required amount of teaching.

Before TPAU, certain departments were reluctant to allow PGRs to engage in teaching activities. Due to the trust they now have in TPAU, both from a teaching and support perspective, these same departments now actively encourage their PGRs to submit an application.

Professor Tim Woods, former Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, outlines its impact:

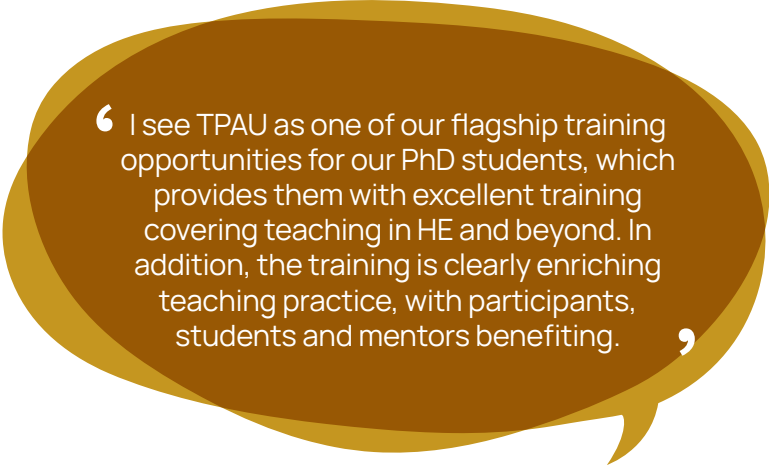
“The programme combines theoretical and pedagogical reading with practical experience; and having undertaken the role of mentor to a number of these participants over the years, I am acutely aware of their dedication, commitment, and responsible approach as they gain confidence and self-assurance through the programme. Gaining AFHEA status as a result, the programme establishes successful postgraduates as readily employable in the HE sector as tutors, and well-qualified and experienced to begin the full Postgraduate Certificate Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE) programme in an institution upon appointment. In turn, TPAU gives the University assurance that the undergraduate students are taught by a cadre of professional and trained junior staff.”

Figure 1: Statistical breakdown of TPAU departmental and demographic data



Impact on participants' further professional development

As indicated above, TPAU is a recognised professional learning pathway for PGRs to start their journey into academia. This is echoed by Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar, Head of the Graduate School:



“ I see TPAU as one of our flagship training opportunities for our PhD students, which provides them with excellent training covering teaching in HE and beyond. In addition, the training is clearly enriching teaching practice, with participants, students and mentors benefiting. ”

Many go on after the programme, to achieve HEA Fellowship status (FHEA), either through the University's direct route, the ARCHE scheme, or the Postgraduate Certificate Teaching in HE programme [see Case Study 4]. Of those that have remained at Aberystwyth University, 20% are now at FHEA level. A sizeable number now have permanent teaching roles at the University, and many more have gone on to permanent roles at other universities. Those participants who go on to get permanent teaching roles at Aberystwyth, frequently act as mentors for new cohorts, as well as contributing workshops at Induction or aspects of the CPD programme. To date, 14 TPAU alumni have contributed to workshops or the induction programme, and five have gone on to become mentors, after achieving FHEA status.

The positive impact of the programme can also be seen in internal module evaluations and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey with peer observation frequently cited as one of the most useful elements of the programme. Participants value the practical and constructive feedback they receive on their teaching practice, while mentors have also fed back to say they benefit a great deal professionally from contributing to the programme, especially seeing models for integrating technology into teaching, together with seeing how teaching happens in different disciplines.

Impact on participant and student learning

Prior to compiling this case study, a call was put out to TPAU alumni for their feedback on the programme. The impact TPAU has had on their teaching and, in turn, the learning experiences of their own students can be clearly seen through their comments - a selection of which have been included below.

“ TPAU massively improved my pedagogical practice by teaching me to honestly reflect on what I was doing in the classroom. It turned my approach to teaching on its head and helped me to design and execute innovative and theoretically grounded teaching activities, which greatly improved my own professional confidence and which my students love. ”

“ TPAU ... helped me to explore various methods of delivering content and taught me how to engage with students on a more meaningful level. This contributed significantly to my professional growth. ”

“ TPAU was great for my confidence as a teacher. This confidence, in turn, allowed me to take more risks and accommodate greater flexibility in the classroom, which ultimately resulted in more fun and learning for everyone. ”

“ TPAU transformed my approach to teaching. It instilled in me an appreciation for diverse learning styles and the importance of creating an inclusive, engaging classroom environment. The experience has made me a more adaptive, reflective, and effective educator, committed to fostering a dynamic and supportive learning journey for all my students. ”

This small selection of the overwhelmingly positive feedback gathered, shows how TPAU is making a significant contribution to the teaching and learning environment of the University. High levels of student engagement and increased inclusivity are being enabled through targeted professional development.

Case Study 3: A culture of curiosity: Embedding action research

Bryony Evett Hackfort, Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion

Context and background

Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion is a further education provider set across Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion in South West Wales, delivering to learners from 14-19 through to higher education, across several campuses. The College's priorities focus on teaching and learning, the learner experience, sustainable business resilience and partnership working.

The College is committed to inspiring curiosity in all those who work and learn there, and staff are supported to be innovative, creative and to challenge themselves to learn in order to inspire learners to do the same. In order to role model the power of curiosity to learners, staff needed to lead by example. The College's challenge was to develop a way to give practitioners the freedom to do this, while also giving the organisation confidence in a quality and effective process.

Since 2015, the College has developed an approach to professional learning that places an emphasis on individual practitioner reflection to shape tailored learning activity. This effective structure meant that it already had a strong framework within its approach to professional development which could be used to springboard a solution to the above challenge.

In 2019-20, the College launched its Culture of Curiosity and Action Research Programme to give staff a secure and supportive network in order to engage with practice-based research. The programme is designed to last the full academic year with each member of staff released from teaching for two hours a week. The project is supported by Welsh Government funding through the Further Education Professional Learning Fund (PLF).

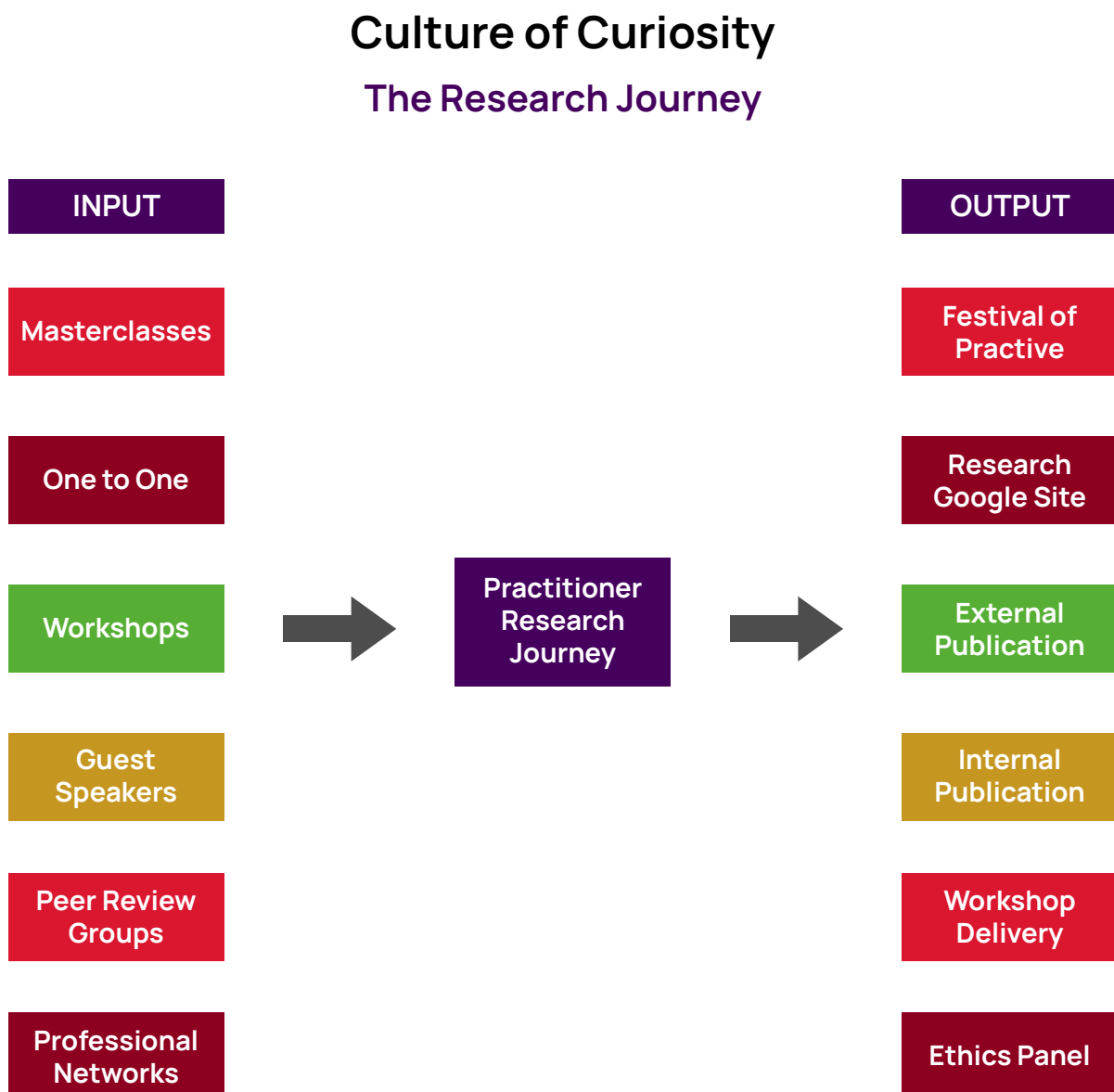
Equality and inclusivity are paramount and so staff from across the whole organisation are invited to apply for a funded position annually, in order to conduct bespoke action research in an area of their choice. This freedom of choice is essential so that staff feel motivated to explore areas of intrigue with dedicated time, supported by Management and the Board of Governors.

Staff submit project proposals and constructive feedback is provided by a panel who support the project development from the outset. Creativity is nurtured and staff are able to take their project in the direction they feel is relevant to their practice; they are able to decide the focus, the methodology, and the nature of the outcomes. Through one-to-one support, the staff have ownership over how the project will evolve and adapt as new learning is acquired.

As indicated in Figure 1 below, the programme has a number of distinctive features which include:

- guest speakers
- technique workshops
- one-to-one support
- peer review groups
- support to share and publish the findings.

Figure 1: The practitioner research journey



It culminates in an annual Festival of Practice and a website is produced which gives each practitioner a platform to share their thinking and progress. The festival sessions are workshop driven and staff across the College can select sessions they would like to attend based on their own curiosity. The sessions are interactive and encourage those attending to consider how the ideas explored can be embedded into their own areas of practice.

Project examples

Over the last five years, the action research projects have been varied in their themes and scale but are always consistently driven by each individual teacher and their own sense of curiosity. Projects include minor changes in day-to-day pedagogy, such as approaches to assessment, revision methodologies or digitally-enhanced learning practices, along with wider, sometimes cross-college, themes.

Camera On-Camera Off: Catherine Roberts

March 2020 saw a monumental shift in how practitioners engage with the students. An exclusively online approach was a new, yet exciting prospect for practitioners. Initially, the College policy was that all students followed their normal face-to-face timetable, but on the online platform. The policy outlined rules for engagement, which included staff and students having their cameras on as this could measure engagement. The action research project of Catherine Roberts, entitled 'Camera On-Camera Off', questioned how one measures engagement in online lessons and the effects of screen stress and anxiety on learners. She concluded that 'physical' presence in an online space was a simplistic way to measure engagement and that engagement can be measured in several ways. A camera is not necessarily one of those ways, rather the use of real-time online tools such as the raise hand function, Google Chat, Jamboards and polls were a better indicator of learner understanding and interaction in the session. Catherine presented her research at the Festival of Practice where it was positively received and encouraged individuals to question their own practice.

Her research subsequently supported the College change in policy surrounding online lessons. Learners were encouraged to have their cameras on for an initial check-in, but during delivery, the learners had autonomy to engage with their peers and lecturer in a way that they felt most comfortable - whether that was through speech, emojis or chat functions within the session. Catherine's work encouraged senior leaders, staff and learners to rethink their approach to online lessons and fundamentally changed the College's perspective on how it wanted learners to engage in the online space. The research was crucial in helping develop an understanding of the dynamics of an online environment and ensuring that learners were supported to engage in a way that was comfortable for them and their individual needs.

Catherine also published her research in the national publication *inTuition*, which generated much questioning and discussion on social media.

The Thinking Environment: Vicky Davies

The Thinking Environment is a set of principles and practices that create a safe and supportive space for people to think together effectively. It was developed by Nancy Kline based on her research into the conditions that foster creative and collaborative thinking. The Thinking Environment is based on the idea that everyone has the potential to think creatively and solve problems, but that this potential is often stifled by the way we typically interact with each other. The Thinking Environment encourages individuals to be open-minded, curious and respectful of each other's ideas. Individuals are also encouraged to take risks and experiment with innovative ideas, without fear of judgment.

Vicky Davies used the Thinking Environment within a tutorial context and found it had a positive outcome on attendance and successful completion within Level 3, Year 2 Music Technology learners. Compared to Year 1:

- attendance increased from 83% to 92.9%
- successful completion increased from 88% to 100%.

She felt the use of the Thinking Environment principles and practices increased learner engagement and strengthened confidence levels. The learners confirmed this, with 100% of them stating that they felt their voice was heard and 94% of them confirmed it was a useful tool in tutorials.


Teach the Teacher: Alex Huggett

Teach the Teacher was a research project created originally by Rachel Arnold of Solihull College. The essence of the project is that it is an opportunity for learners to teach their vocational trade to their Mathematics or English teacher, while being assessed in a fun way. The learner becomes the expert, and the teacher becomes the learner.

Alex Huggett undertook a similar project as part of the action research programme at Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion. The feedback she received from her learners was overwhelmingly positive, with learners stating that they felt that they knew Alex better after the session, they felt more confident in asking questions and believed such an activity improved the learner-teacher relationship.

Impact on programme participants

Three members of staff have, as a result of undertaking action research projects, been part of podcasts including the national Teaching Excellence podcast, while 11 members of staff have had their work published since January 2020. Many staff have presented their action research nationally - for example, at national FE Research Meets and the Edufuturists 'Moving Forward together' event as well as conferences for the National Education Union. All four members of the Teaching and Learning team started as action researchers before moving into central roles. As summarised by one staff member who joined the action research programme:



“ Being part of the action research programme opens you up to reflecting on your practice and how you can make meaningful change in your classroom. It has given me the drive and confidence to conduct interviews, practice reviews and be part of a wider research community where I share my research findings with the wider research community throughout our College and beyond. ”

Case Study 4: Using action research to develop effective teaching and learning

Dr Mary Jacob, Aberystwyth University

Context and background

This case study discusses the impact of Action Research Projects (ARPs) on both the transformation of teaching practice and student learning outcomes. ARPs are part of the assessed coursework for the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE) at Aberystwyth University. The PGCTHE is a 60-credit master's-level qualification consisting of two one-year modules.

The aim of the PGCTHE is to help participants deepen their pedagogical understanding and develop their teaching, bringing theory and practice together to make informed decisions about what is best for them and their students. ARPs form the core of the second module. Through action research, participants assess students' needs, plan a teaching intervention based on sound pedagogical principles, and evaluate the impact on student learning. The projects are written up as reports with evidence. Reflective practice is used throughout.

The focal point of the ARP is for participants to define the changes they wish to bring about in their students. These may be a combination of desired behaviours, cognitive changes such as content mastery, and emotional engagement such as confidence and motivation. The intervention itself is designed to bring about the desired changes, while the evaluation phase measures impact on student learning and experience.

In the PGCTHE, participants are supported in planning and running their ARPs through a series of stages:

- **pre-arrival needs analysis**, a one-to-one meeting where each participant speaks to the coordinator to draw up a customised learning contract including their learning goals for the module; this is the first exploratory discussion of possible ARP topics that meet the needs of that participant's teaching context and prior knowledge
- **a collaborative workshop during induction** where participants begin to create a plan for their projects and share with the course team and peers
- **an assessed presentation of their project plan**, delivered in small groups for feedback from both the course team and peers
- **small-group evaluation question clinics** to support participants in designing and evaluating their projects, including measuring the effectiveness of the teaching intervention
- **one-to-one consultations on request** to support development of their projects.

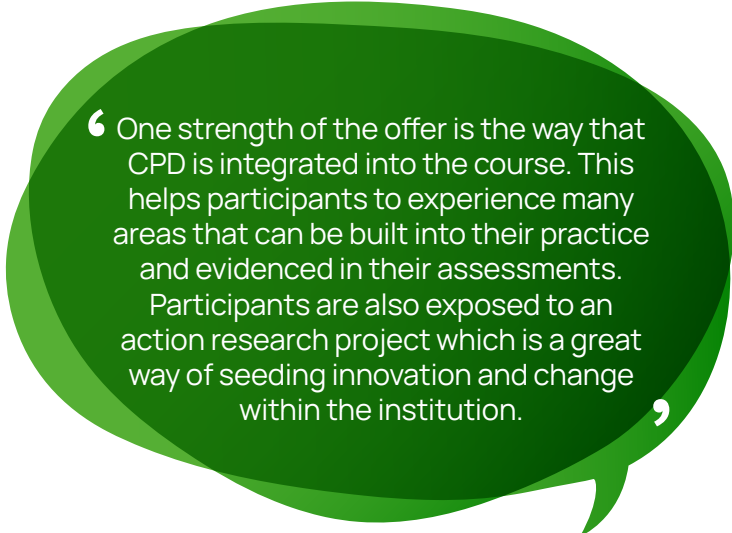
Some PGCTHE participants undertake the Teaching for Postgraduates at Aberystwyth University (TPAU) programme first [see Case Study 2] and then enter the second PGCTHE module to undertake their ARPs. For example, the cohort which started the ARP module in January 2024 comprised 21 participants of whom six had undertaken TPAU previously.

Impact on programme participants

The ARP reports evidence significant impact on the participants' practices and further impact is shown in dissemination events. PGCTHE participants present regularly in the Aberystwyth University Learning and Teaching Conference (AULTC). For example, in 2023, seven participants presented at this conference and two of these individuals also delivered presentations as part of the Vevox Pedagogy series.

Programme participants also often take positions of responsibility in the University. For example, three individuals became Directors of Learning and Teaching in their departments after undertaking the scheme, while another served as an Interim Head of School.

External examiners frequently note the high quality of participants' learning, as suggested in the quotation below, from an external examiner in 2022:

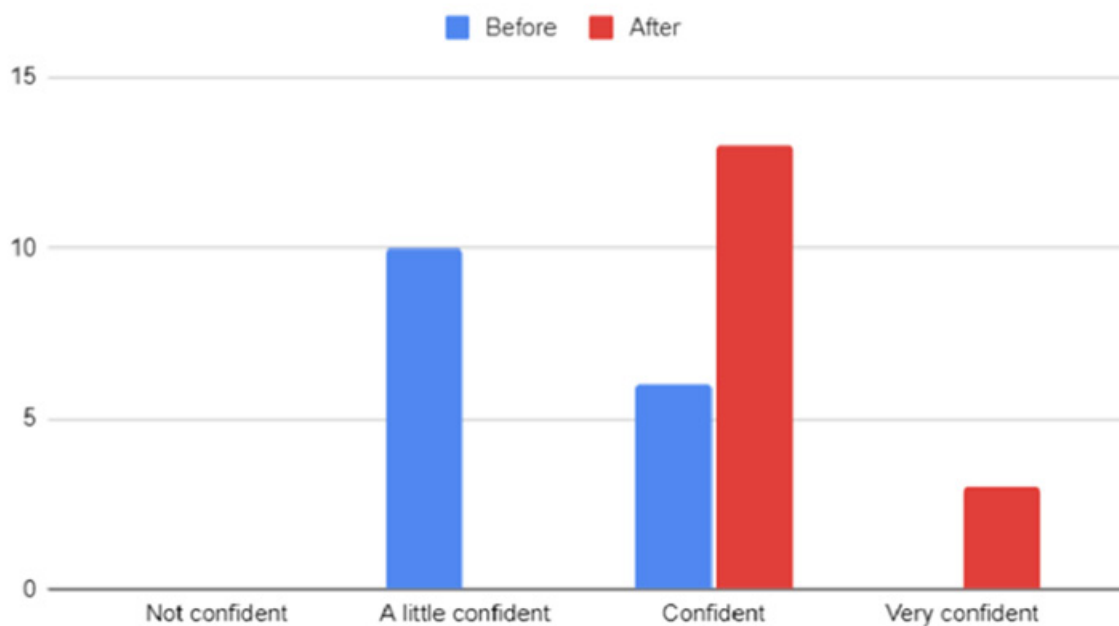


‘ One strength of the offer is the way that CPD is integrated into the course. This helps participants to experience many areas that can be built into their practice and evidenced in their assessments. Participants are also exposed to an action research project which is a great way of seeding innovation and change within the institution. ’

Impact on students

Positive impact on the students the participants teach is demonstrated through the evaluation data collected and analysed in the ARPs. The participants' quotations and data, included here, provide a flavour of the nature and impact of the interventions undertaken.

Figure 1: Students' confidence levels before and after the intervention



The module was Highly Commended in the University Exemplary Course Award in 2021 and continues to bring theory and practice together for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

“ For my ARP project, I investigated working with students to co-construct a rubric and marking criteria. This has been a significant experience in my teaching, firstly, because it enabled me to understand the extent to which students may be confused about what they are being assessed on, and secondly, because it provided a unique experience to work with students as partners, nurturing their understanding and giving them a sense of ownership. Seeing the students getting excited about the task, and witnessing their confidence grow in how they tackle assignments has been a privilege and an experience I would recommend fellow lecturers to engage in. ”

Panna Karlinger, School of Education

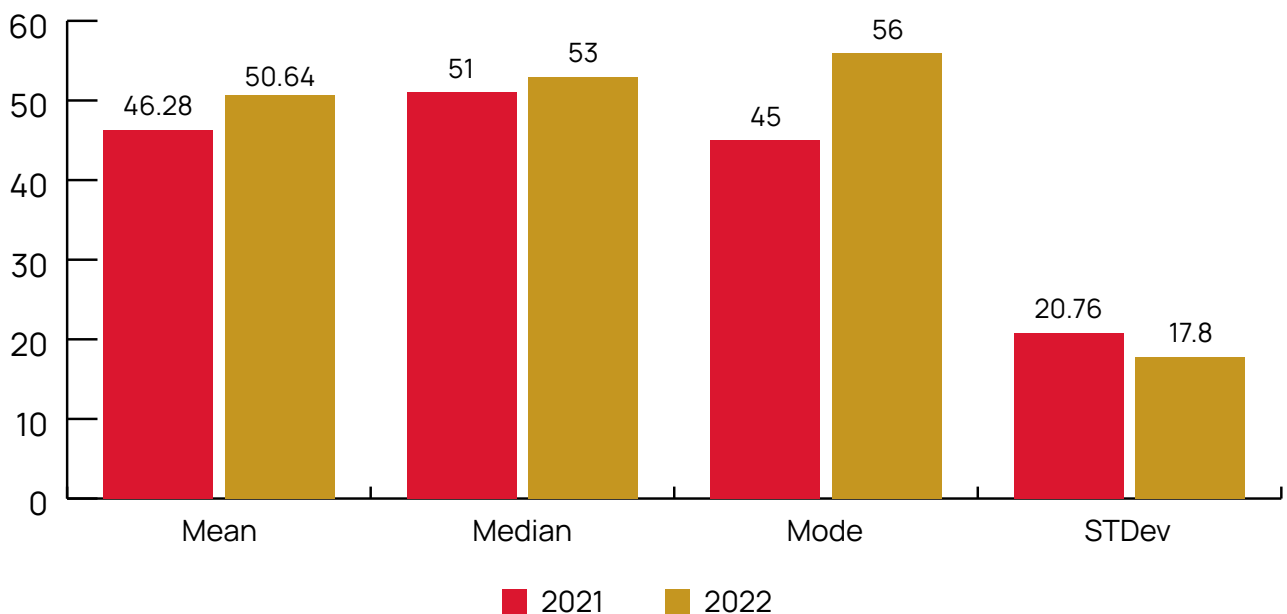
“ My ARP was about using retrieval practice with a think-pair-share activity to enhance students’ engagement and learning for teaching Python programming to postgraduate students. This ARP indicated better student engagement and learning in terms of a higher number of attempts and higher correct answers in retrieval practice with a think-pair-share activity as compared to retrieval practice only. ”

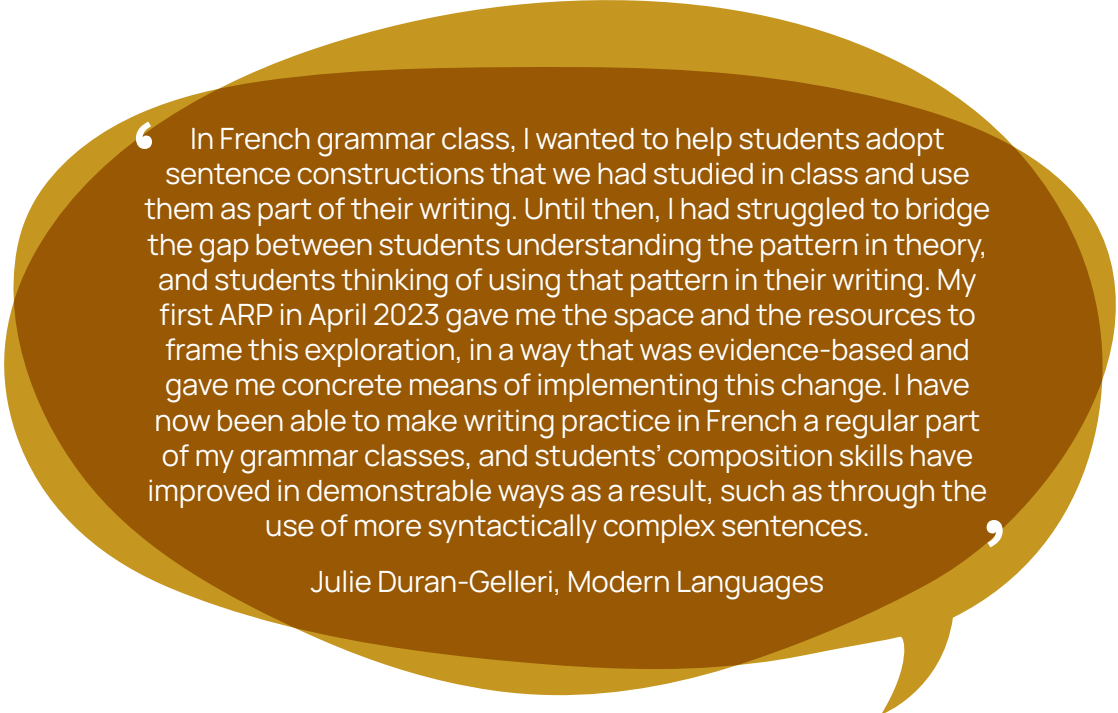
Yasir Shaikh, Computer Science

“ ARP1 provided the perfect opportunity to implement and study the effectiveness of authentic assessment workshops within the context of a module. The planned workshop greatly enhanced student learning by providing an authentic learning experience, improving students’ assessment literacy and confidence in their final assignment. ”

Eleanor West, School of Art

Figure 2: Job assessment marks analysis, 2021-22





“ In French grammar class, I wanted to help students adopt sentence constructions that we had studied in class and use them as part of their writing. Until then, I had struggled to bridge the gap between students understanding the pattern in theory, and students thinking of using that pattern in their writing. My first ARP in April 2023 gave me the space and the resources to frame this exploration, in a way that was evidence-based and gave me concrete means of implementing this change. I have now been able to make writing practice in French a regular part of my grammar classes, and students’ composition skills have improved in demonstrable ways as a result, such as through the use of more syntactically complex sentences. ”

Julie Duran-Gelleri, Modern Languages

Case Study 5: 'Basic, Better, Best': Supporting bilingual delivery in FE

Helen Griffith, Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion

Context and background

Bilingual delivery can take many forms and can be interpreted in different ways. The author of this case study, would often be asked the question, 'How exactly do I teach bilingually, what does it mean in practice?' As Director of Bilingualism at Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion, a multi-campus further education college in South West Wales, the author decided to provide a practical solution to the question. The answer was the creation of an easy-to-follow, visual, prescriptive tool (*see infographic at end of this case study*) that staff could work through as a checklist to ascertain where they currently stood in their bilingual delivery abilities, and how they could move forward and improve their bilingual classroom for the benefit of all learners.

The tool focuses on the concept that every tutor can develop their bilingual teaching skills from basic, to better, to best and that, in this way, every learner will receive at least the 'Basic' bilingual classroom experience in every single lesson they attend. Other learners would naturally receive the 'Better' and 'Best' bilingual delivery models depending on their programme and the linguistic skills of their tutor. A visual prescription of the various levels allows tutors to easily use the checklist as a guide to what makes a basic, better and best bilingual lesson. The aim is to enable all staff, regardless of their linguistic ability, to confidently deliver at least a 'Basic' bilingual lesson. It is hoped that this will inspire them to move further along the continuum to improve, both their own Welsh language skills and those of their learners.


The tool was launched, supported by a series of staff development sessions demonstrating how to use it, and where to easily find the resources available to hit each of the criteria along the prescriptive path. The next step in the development of this tool, will be to produce a more digitised version with the digital resources and training sessions loaded behind each of the criteria, so that tutors can return to it, again and again, to review and revise the resources on offer and support their development along the 'Basic, Better, Best' criteria. The digitised package will complement the infographic and will be engaging and informative.

After an initial block of general staff development, tailored sessions have been prepared for different departments and for staff with varying Welsh language skills. Training is delivered simultaneously within a department, with staff split into groups of those who identify their Welsh language skills as being 'Basic', 'Better' or 'Best'. Bite-sized 15-minute session slots are also offered at lunchtimes for staff to come to ask questions and receive more personalised one-to-one support.

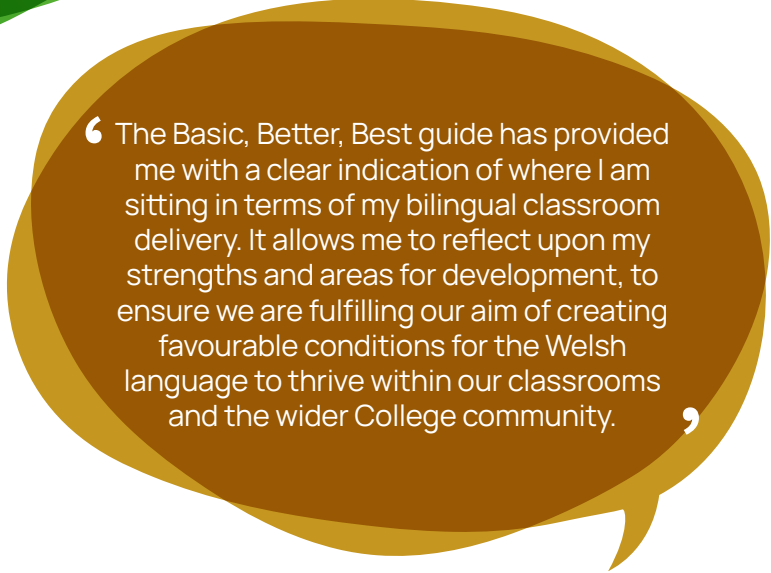
As part of the College's bespoke Professional Learning Framework, different Pathways of Curiosity [see Case Study 3] are offered. One of these pathways is the Bilingual Pathway which is a staff development pathway created around the needs of the 'Basic, Better, Best' criteria. The Professional Learning Framework is supported by Welsh Government Funding through the FE Professional Learning Fund (PLF).

Impact on staff

Staff have been positive about the 'Basic, Better, Best' tool and have found it a useful framework to support the development of their bilingual skills, as indicated by the two comments from staff in different subject areas, included below:



“ The Basic, Better, Best tool has enhanced our bilingual classroom efforts, providing a common framework and clear objectives. It has allowed us to identify our strengths and areas for improvement, shaping our teaching strategies. It has assisted us in advancing our bilingual classroom, promoting collaboration, and improving the student learning experience. ”



“ The Basic, Better, Best guide has provided me with a clear indication of where I am sitting in terms of my bilingual classroom delivery. It allows me to reflect upon my strengths and areas for development, to ensure we are fulfilling our aim of creating favourable conditions for the Welsh language to thrive within our classrooms and the wider College community. ”

Impact on learners

Learners have also responded positively to the initiative with those with limited Welsh language skills, and those who are fluent in Welsh and submit their written work in Welsh, stating that the focus on bilingual delivery has enhanced their college experience, as well as their confidence and prospects more generally.

“ Bilingual teaching, in my opinion, really helps me to have the opportunity to apply for jobs in the future and also gives me the confidence to compete in skills competitions. I recently competed in a competition with Skills Wales. The ability to communicate bilingually is an advantage for me in that world as well. ”

“ The main reason I see that having a teacher who teaches bilingually like this is a good thing is that it allows me to improve my Welsh speaking skills. I enjoy having conversations in Welsh and talking about the work we do in class in a way that I can, sometimes, understand more clearly than if it were said in English. ”

Institutional impact of the tool

The 'Basic, Better, Best' tool is also having an impact strategically at Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion, as well as on an operational level within the classroom. It is now an embedded measure of bilingualism within teaching observations, with a dedicated section of the observation form allocated to the tutor's bilingual delivery standards, mapped against the 'Basic, Better, Best' criteria. The data from the latest teaching observation cycle is going to be analysed and the Bilingualism team will then be able to target support, encouragement and further training where required.

The success of the 'Basic, Better, Best' tool has also helped inform the latest Bilingual Teaching and Learning Strategy and the intention is to move forward with it as a blueprint for how to actively develop and support excellent bilingual delivery across the College. Good practice in bilingual delivery is shared during staff development sessions as well as at the end-of-year Festival of Practice college-wide event for tutors.

A GUIDE TO CREATING YOUR BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

BASIC

1. Greet your learners in Welsh from the outset – Bore da, Pnawn da, Diolch. Display Welsh greetings posters – create the bilingual ethos.
2. Remind learners of the advantages of being bilingual.
3. Identify your Welsh speaking learners so that you know who they are and group the learners to give them an opportunity to speak Welsh with each other.
4. Ensure that learners know that they have the right to:
 - A Welsh medium personal tutor.
 - Welcome booklets
 - Welsh resources
 - Assessed in Welsh 'if available'.
 - Submit written work in Welsh
5. All headings on your PowerPoint presentations and google classrooms are bilingual with Welsh first – highlight subject specific terms.
6. Tutor produced handouts, both paper based and electronic to be bilingual with Welsh first
7. All signage and posters must be bilingual – Welsh and English versions on show. Display subject specific Welsh terms/ glossaries on walls.
8. Arrange bilingual work placements for learners keen to improve their skills.
9. Invite bilingual employers or guest speakers to give subject-specific talks and ask them to underline the advantages of bilingualism in their organisation and with customers.
10. Get learners involved in each of the Welsh language events run by the Bilingualism team. Get all your learners involved in Welsh Celebration Days. Encourage learners to participate in Urdd competitions
11. Display a 'Welsh Word of the Week' and update

BETTER

As Basic but with the following additions:

1. Use Welsh informally with your learners in and out of the classroom so that it becomes 'normal'
2. Identify learners who are fluent Welsh speakers and encourage them to produce some of their work in Welsh
3. Select easy bilingual tasks that are realistic e.g. those which aim for providing a service for Welsh/ bilingual communities (bilingual information leaflets, menus, posters/ adverts, presentations)
4. Use Welsh-speaking students in your class to pronounce words or ask them for the term or word in Welsh. Elect a Welsh Champion for the class for this purpose.
5. All tutor produced PowerPoint presentations to be bilingual – Welsh first on the left hand-side. Split the page into columns so that translation team can input the Welsh version.
6. Use audio-visual clips/videos in Welsh with subtitles
7. Give your learners the electronic tools to support them – get them to download the apps such as Cysgliad, app Geiriaduron or specific apps for your subject areas from Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Porth Adnoddau (<https://www.porth.ac.uk/>)
8. Use Welsh or local examples in order to promote Wales, the Welsh language and Welsh business/industry and culture in lectures, case studies

BEST

As Basic and Better but with the following additions:

1. At the beginning of sessions go over key terms – ask learners to tell you what the Welsh version is – put up on screen.
2. In group work set up situations where Welsh medium learners work bilingually with non-Welsh medium learners in order to develop bilingual skills eg. working on a bilingual leaflet, presentation
3. All teaching material to be bilingual
4. Using your own Welsh skills to teach bilingually to the whole group so that it becomes the norm and expected method of teaching
5. Create an expectation that learners produce work bilingually or in Welsh
6. Over 50% of your learners produce some aspects of their assessed work bilingually.
7. Use a Google comments bank for marking



To support you please look at the Cymraeg Google site:
<https://sites.google.com/colegsirgar.ac.uk/cymraegcsgacc/home>

Or contact our Welsh Language Officers – Menna Jones or Lowri Evans.

Send resources for translation through the Gateway Translation System or email:
translate@colegsirgar.ac.uk

Case Study 6: Improving Welsh language confidence and competence through bilingual delivery

Amy Lewis, Bridgend College

Context and background

The Welsh language is integral to the cultural and national identity of the people of Wales. In 2017, on the 50th anniversary of the first Welsh Language Act, when restrictions on use of the Welsh language were removed, the Welsh Government launched their strategy to increase the number of people speaking and using Welsh to one million by 2050 (*Cymraeg 2050*, 2017).

One of the ways that the Welsh Government is working to achieve this is to take advantage of the 200,000 employees in health and social care services and ensure that all have a minimum level of 'courtesy Welsh' in order to be able to offer services through the medium of Welsh. This is known as the Active Offer (*More than just words*, 2022). The Active Offer means that health and social care providers will become proactive in offering services through the medium of Welsh, without a service user needing to ask for it. Courtesy-level Welsh is defined as an ability to use a basic level of Welsh, such as greetings and introductions and simple key words relating to the workplace, as well as being able to read short texts (*Cymraeg. It belongs to us all*, 2020).

In line with the Active Offer, staff working in priority areas in the health and social care sector in Bridgend College were therefore offered free Welsh for adults courses. Bridgend College provides further education, higher education and work-based learning to in excess of 6,000 full and part-time learners, and employs over 650 members of staff across four campuses. The College is situated between Cardiff and Swansea. In the 2021 census, it was reported that under 10% of people in Bridgend were able to speak Welsh, which is one of the lowest speaking counties in Wales (*Welsh Language in Wales Census 2021*, 2022). In the summer of 2023, the author of this case study completed the entry-level qualification for adults learning Welsh, known as Mynediad (*WJEC*, 2020).

Part of the author's teaching role is delivering modules to Access to HE students who are hoping to progress to university to study various health professions - one of which is entitled 'Communicating effectively in health care'. In 2023-24, the author decided to deliver the module as bilingually as possible and focus on improving learners' courtesy-level Welsh and their understanding of the Active Offer. The bilingual delivery lasted 10 weeks and included:

- greeting learners in Welsh
- resources being presented bilingually
- relevant short courses being embedded within lessons
- case studies and an overview of the laws in Wales related to the Active Offer
- a focus on Welsh vocabulary
- opportunities to practise conversational Welsh
- completion of a glossary of useful Welsh phrases
- role-playing activities using the College's Welsh Development Officers.

There are a number of organisations funded by the Welsh Government that can support bilingual delivery, and a lot of the resources used in the classroom came from these. They include Hwb - which has a collection of online tools - and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (CCC) which provides resources through the Porth, specifically to help further education colleges and universities create opportunities to train and study in Welsh.

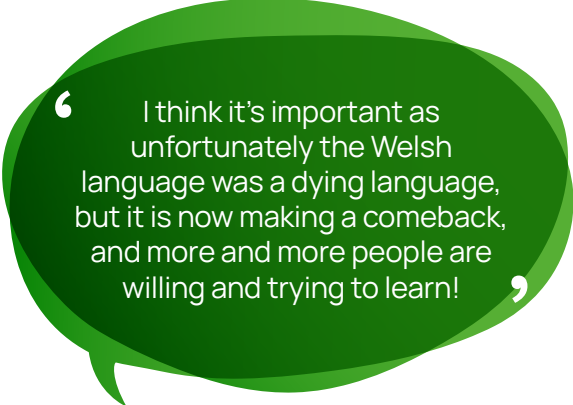
Impact of the initiative on the students

Before the 10-week module began, the lecturer gave out a questionnaire which asked learners to:

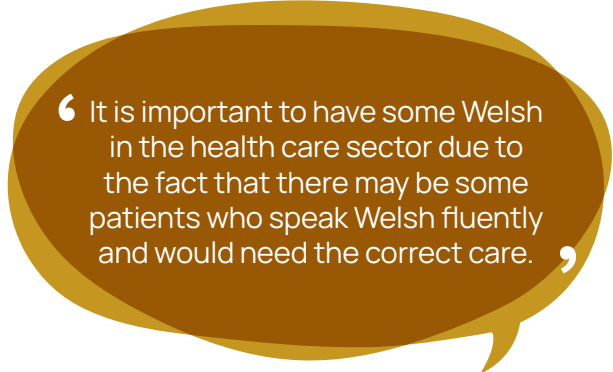
- rate their Welsh-language speaking skills using the Welsh Language Framework
- rate their confidence in using their Welsh language speaking skills
- rate how important they thought it was to be able to offer services in Welsh
- provide a longer written answer explaining their answer to the third question.

This questionnaire was repeated at the end of the module. The Welsh Language Framework used is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which divides languages into four areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. People can rate themselves on these four areas separately in terms of no skills (0), entry level (1), foundation (2), intermediate (3), advanced (4) and proficient (5). The lecturer offered definitions of the five speaking options which can be seen below. Weekly, she also gave out an electronic exit ticket, asking what they specifically enjoyed about the bilingual delivery and what they felt could be improved.

Before the 10-week delivery, most of the reflections around the importance of being able to offer services in Welsh were positive and included comments such as:

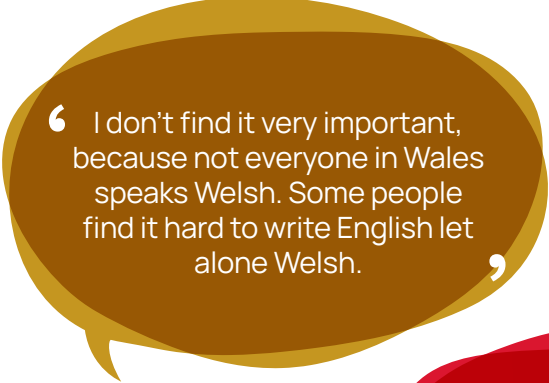


“ I think it’s important as unfortunately the Welsh language was a dying language, but it is now making a comeback, and more and more people are willing and trying to learn! ”

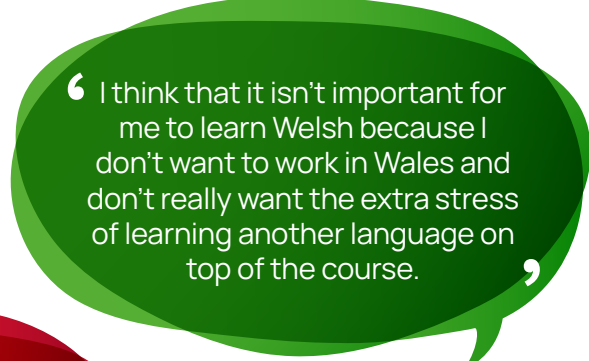


“ It is important to have some Welsh in the health care sector due to the fact that there may be some patients who speak Welsh fluently and would need the correct care. ”


However, there were also a number of more negative comments such as:



“ I don’t find it very important, because not everyone in Wales speaks Welsh. Some people find it hard to write English let alone Welsh. ”



“ I think that it isn’t important for me to learn Welsh because I don’t want to work in Wales and don’t really want the extra stress of learning another language on top of the course. ”



“ In my work life I have never needed to use Welsh. ”

Informal comments in the classroom week-by-week were mostly positive, with many students reporting that they were enjoying the Welsh aspect; however, there was a minority who were still a little resistant. The majority of students were females (90%) aged 18-45. Those who were parents seemed to be the most invested in the language as they could see the value in it through their children and the promotion of bilingualism in schools.

Analysis of the feedback showed that their self-reported levels of Welsh-speaking skills had dramatically improved:

	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
	No current level of Welsh language skills	Can say place names/ Welsh first names or Welsh signs correctly. Can greet and introduce others in Welsh. Can show linguistic courtesy by opening and closing a conversation in Welsh. Can give and receive personal details.	Can understand the essence of conversation in Welsh. Can convey basic information eg simple admin or routine tasks. Can give and receive instructions and directions.	Can converse partly in Welsh but turns to English in discussion and to give detailed information. Can describe people and locations.	Can contribute effectively to meetings within own area of work and argue for or against a case. Can deal with people in most situations in Welsh but turns to English when dealing with complex situations	Can deal effectively with complex discussion and questions in Welsh Can adjust the style of language to suit all situations and needs.
Before	33.3%	51.1%	13.3%	0	0	2.2%
After	8.8% (↓24.5%)	35.3% (↓15.8%)	55.9% (↑42.6%)	0	0	0 (↓2.2%)

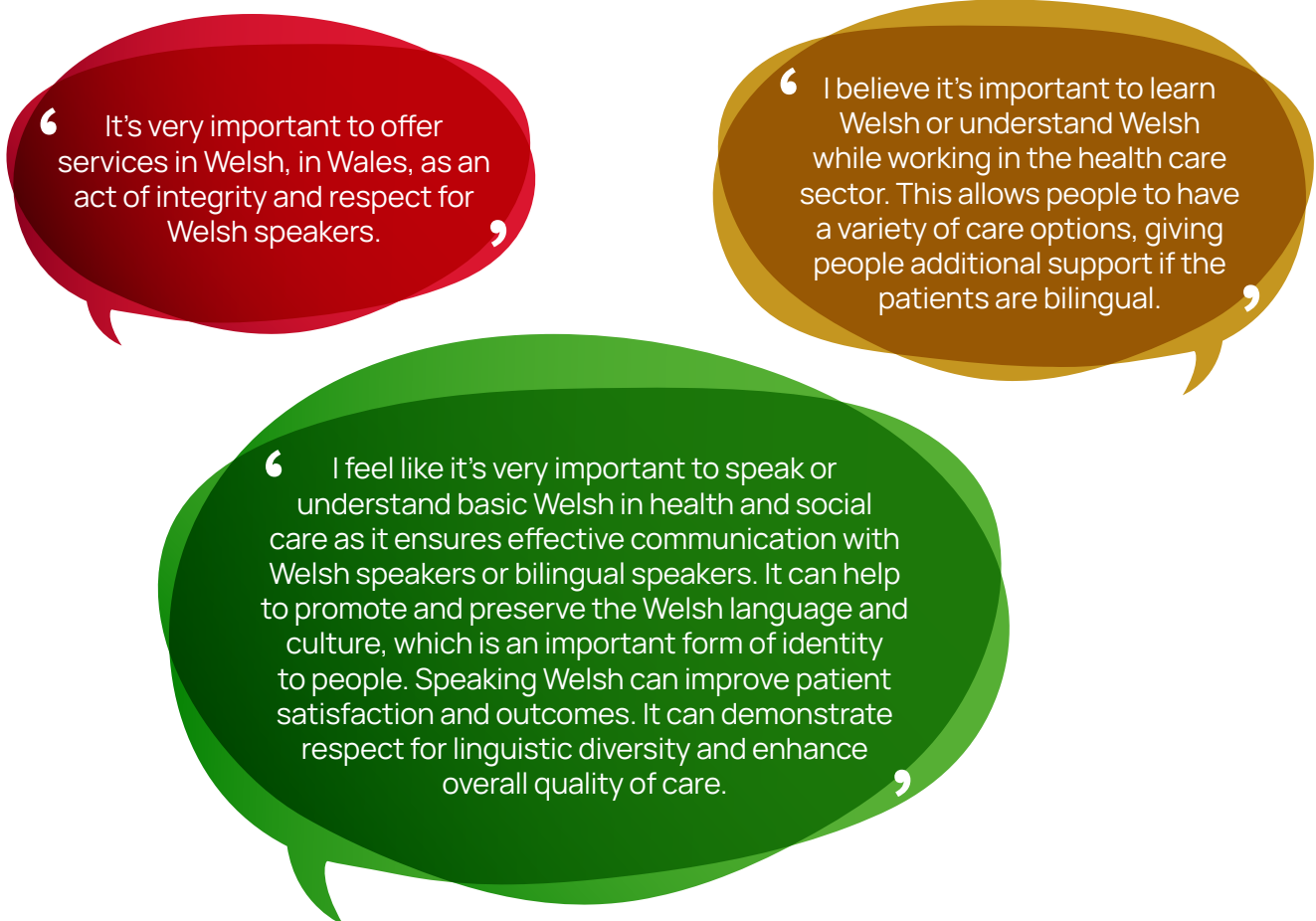
Their confidence in using these skills had also improved:

	Not confident at all	Not very confident	Slightly confident	Very confident
Before	31.1	33.3%	31.1%	4.4%
After	5.9% (↓25.2%)	17.6% (↓15.7%)	67.6% (↑36.5%)	8.8% (↑4.4%)

The students' understanding of the importance of speaking Welsh and the Active Offer had also increased:

	Not important at all	Not very important	Slightly important	Very important
Before	4.4%	4.4%	35.6%	55.6%
After	0 (↓4.4%)	5.9% (↑1.5%)	23.5% (↓12.1%)	70.6% (↑15%)

The comments around importance were also now almost all positive with greater recognition of the importance of Welsh in health care and a shift towards recognising its broader impact on patients and professionals. For example:



Overall, the students' self-reported Welsh-speaking skills, confidence in using these skills and the importance of Welsh and the Active Offer had increased. They were positive about the bilingual delivery and enjoyed strengthening their skills.

Impact of professional development on the author

In terms of the author's teaching practice, completing the Mynediad course significantly boosted her confidence and proficiency in speaking basic Welsh. However, when attempting to deliver a module bilingually, she also realised her limitations. While she could manage basic greetings and conversations in Welsh, she felt she struggled with discussing complex terms and understanding much of the bilingual content on her slides. This gave her a feeling of inadequacy and a feeling she had taken on more than she could manage. Upon reflection, and having attended bilingual delivery sessions, she recognised that she could have approached the task more effectively with better planning and preparation over time. Moving forward, she aims to maintain her bilingualism by practising Welsh greetings and integrating new strategies, such as introducing three key Welsh words per session. However, she also acknowledges the need to streamline her approach, such as avoiding overcrowded bilingual slides.

To continue to develop staff skills and work on the Welsh language agenda, she believes there needs to be greater investment in teaching staff, more tailored Welsh courses for adults, and potentially mandatory skills development for targeted professionals.

Staff from Bridgend College who recently successfully completed a bilingual teaching programme - 'Our Language Journey'



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Case Study 7: Work Welsh+ in higher education

Dr Owen Thomas, Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol

Background and context

During 2022-23, a scheme called Work Welsh+ (Cymraeg Gwaith+), which was part of the wider Work Welsh in Higher Education scheme, was delivered throughout the universities in Wales. The scheme was coordinated by Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and sponsored by the National Centre for Learning Welsh.



Work Welsh+ was designed for teaching staff who already had a relatively high level of Welsh language skills, namely Advanced+ level. Its aim was to increase the Welsh-medium teaching workforce in higher education by preparing lecturers and other teaching staff during the 2022-23 academic year, through a series of individual training sessions for Welsh-medium teaching in 2023-24, under the supervision of a personal tutor. Unlike the main Work Welsh scheme, the staff who took part in Work Welsh+ received individual training by following a syllabus that was specifically tailored for them. As part of the offer, staff also had the opportunity during the training year to complete the Raising Confidence (Codi Hyder) package, developed by the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

In July 2022, all the universities in Wales received an invitation from Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol to join the scheme through a letter of application. During the summer of 2022, the universities submitted their applications and nominations to Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, as the body responsible for funding and coordinating the scheme nationally. To ensure that the funding was strategically targeted, a number of conditions were attached to the scheme. For example, there should be no contractual barrier preventing staff from teaching through the medium of Welsh in their department, and universities also needed to ensure that there would be an opportunity for the applicant to offer Welsh-medium provision during the following year. All successful applications received funding to meet the costs of employing a personal tutor at the university.

Professional development

The training began during October 2022, and formally ended before the end of July 2023. The staff were registered on the IT system at the National Centre for Learning Welsh, and individual training sessions were held at the universities, either on campus or via Microsoft Teams. During October 2022, and in consultation with each participant, an individual syllabus was drawn up by the personal tutor before the start of the weekly training, which would continue until the summer of 2023. Tutors supporting the academic staff were funded at Swansea University, Bangor University, Cardiff University, and the University of South Wales. Some of these staff members had followed Work Welsh modules previously, but other staff were joining Work Welsh for the first time.

Impact on participants and students

Professor Sally Holland is a Professor of Social Work and a former Children's Commissioner for Wales based in Cardiff University. Her application noted that during 2022-23 she would have the opportunity to teach on a MA Social Work module, thereby ensuring a group of six Welsh speakers had, for the first time, an opportunity to work together through the medium of Welsh. Support was required to help prepare materials in Welsh and to enable her to gain enough confidence to participate in their discussions. Rather than following a specific coursebook or curriculum, the tutor needed to focus on a number of elements during Sally's training - namely, conversation practice, language patterns and writing skills.

In conversation in the spring of 2024, Sally stated that the course had had a significant positive impact on her confidence levels in Welsh and the weekly lessons provided a 'safe harbour' to discuss her language skills and methods of using Welsh in the classroom. Although there were only two Welsh speakers on the MA module in 2023-24, there will be five next year and the school is keen to develop its Welsh-medium provision and informal social opportunities for Welsh-speaking students, which she is happy to support. Module questionnaires showed students welcomed the opportunity to work in Welsh and particularly appreciated becoming familiar with professional terminology associated with the field through these sessions.

Dr Helen Waller-Evans, who is a lecturer in the School of Biosciences in Cardiff University, needed to master formal Welsh and scientific terms in order to be able to use the language in her work from day to day. She feels Work Welsh+ has helped her to achieve these goals and particularly helped her to support two doctoral students sponsored by Y Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, as they wrote their theses in Welsh and as they prepared for their vivas. She has also contributed to the development of new Welsh language scientific terms since undertaking the scheme and is keen to offer further Welsh-medium opportunities, thereby opening up increased scholarship opportunities for those studying in the School.

Dr Margot Saher from Bangor University similarly wished to develop her professional vocabulary and presentation skills in Welsh, as well as share modules with another Welsh-medium lecturer at the School of Ocean Sciences. By 2023-24, Dr Margot Saher was contributing to a module on data analysis through the medium of Welsh, holding tutorials with Welsh-speaking students, using Welsh with students writing dissertations in Welsh, together with working on a Welsh-medium research article. She feels that Work Welsh+ has not only increased her confidence using the language but has also had a positive impact more widely on the community of university staff at Bangor who are learning Welsh. Through the training that she received with Work Welsh+, she too has increased the Welsh-medium academic opportunities available to students.

Support areas were also represented on the training scheme. For example, Ruth Elliott was a study skills tutor for students with additional learning needs. There is a particular shortage of individuals with the appropriate skills, including language skills, to support Welsh-medium students who may require additional support. Ruth noted in conversation in 2024, that the opportunity to offer study-skills provision to such students through the medium of Welsh is likely to have a positive impact on their retention levels and helps ensure their final degree outcome appropriately reflects their ability. She felt that without having had the opportunity to undertake the Work Welsh+ training, she would not be able to provide such support through the medium of Welsh.

Case Study 8: Becoming a trauma and adverse childhood experiences (TrACE)-informed university

Dr Caroline Hughes, Wrexham University

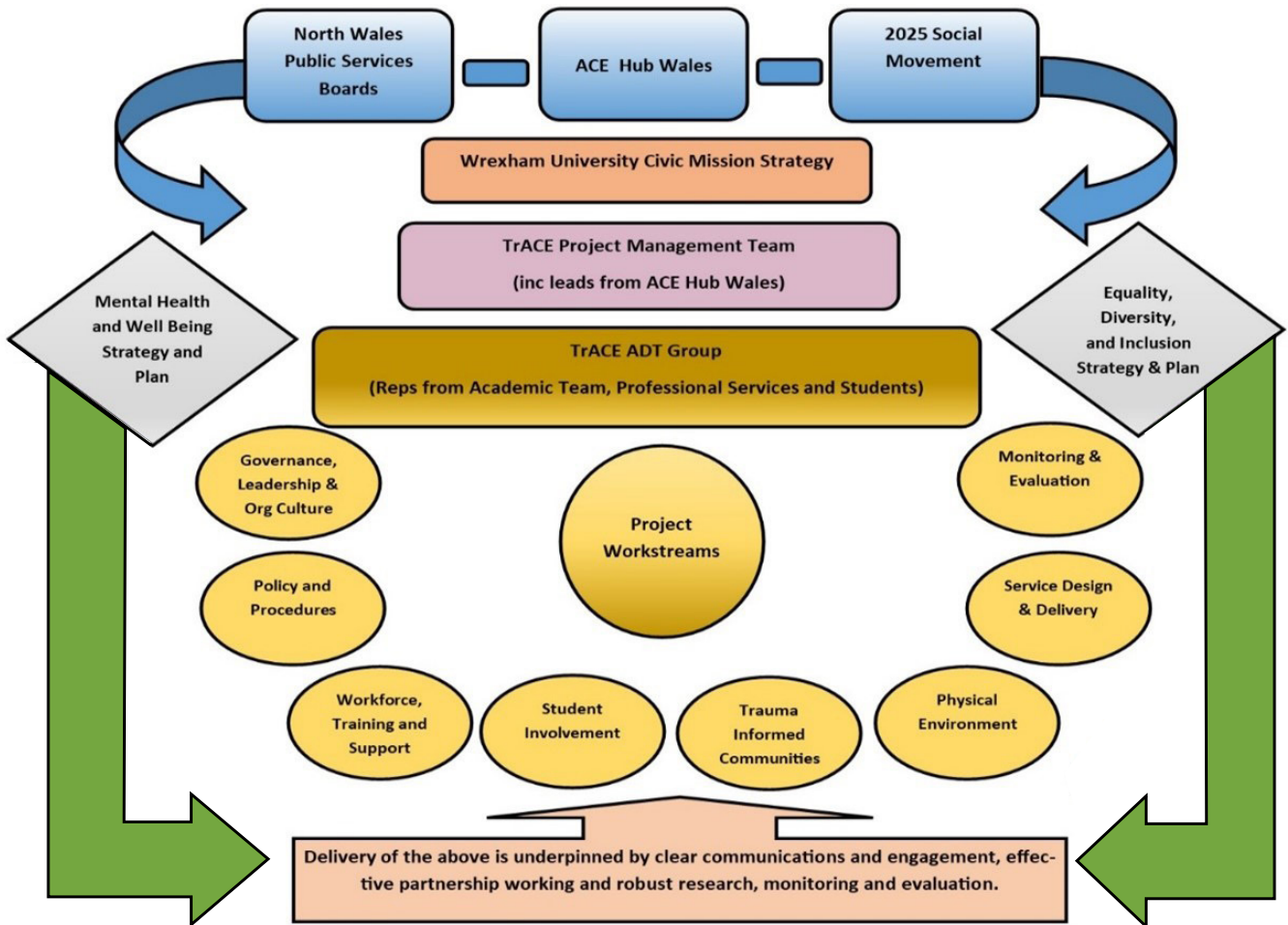
Context and background

Wrexham University (WU), based in northeast Wales, offers a wide range of study options and programmes, many of which are vocationally focused. The University was first in England and Wales for social inclusion in 2023-24 for the sixth year running and was also ranked in the top 10 in the UK for teaching quality in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2024.

WU is working to become a Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experience (TrACE)-informed institution, one of the first universities of its kind in the UK. This project is being conducted in partnership with the Welsh Government-funded and Public Health Wales-hosted ACE Hub Wales. The TrACE-informed project incorporates the University's strong commitment to mental health and wellbeing and their drive to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. It is a key priority of the University's civic mission partnership strategy, which is collaborating with partners to tackle social inequality in north Wales.

Being TrACE-informed means developing a better understanding of trauma and the impact of adversity for everyone that works and studies at WU, to better enable all to progress and thrive and be treated with kindness, compassion and respect. Becoming TrACE-informed does not treat trauma and symptoms; it develops a fundamental, universal approach that recognises that adversity and trauma are a possibility and recognises that all individuals can play a part in supporting this through a strengths-based philosophy.

Figure 1: Project structure



In the last two years, the University has established a network of engaged staff, students and partners. Using the TrACE Toolkit, designed by the ACE Hub Wales, a self-assessment process has been used to reflect on current culture, practices and processes. A trauma-informed lens has been used to support the design and implementation of existing strategies, objectives and plans, and specific pieces of work and activities instigated and led within the TrACE project structure itself.

Consideration is being given to environmental influences upon learning, and the project has a physical environment workstream group and has formed a partnership with the [Trauma-informed Design](#) (TiD) Society in the USA. Research is now being undertaken to develop a physical environment tool for higher education providers. This evidence-based tool will help inform decisions for maintenance, refurbishment and new-build programmes moving forward, as well as promoting wellbeing, safety and emotional regulation across the campuses.

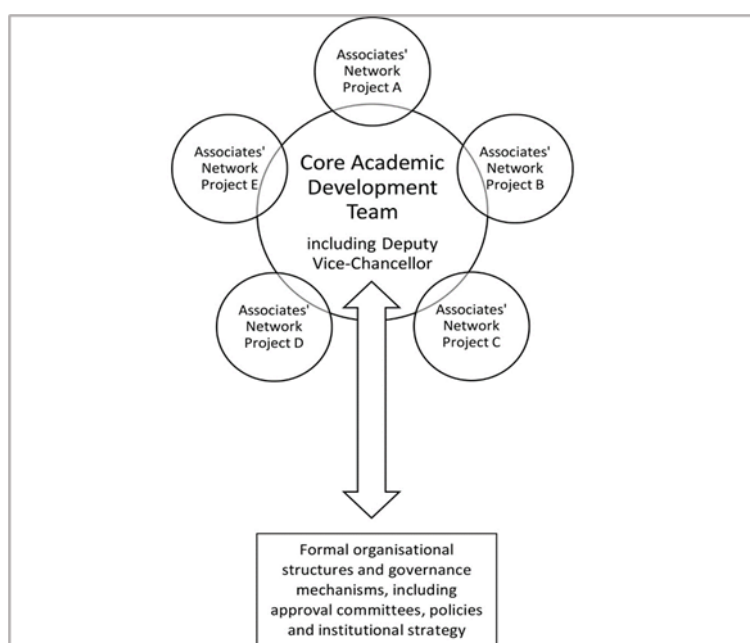
WU also hosts a North Wales Community of Practice, bringing together organisations working through a trauma-informed lens, sharing good practice, exploring challenge, promoting professional development, and strengthening community links to encourage social change.

Impact on staff

The project is part of the Academic Development Team (ADT) Associates Network. The ADT Associates are colleagues employed in both academic and professional services roles who work 'cross-systems' on integrated development projects (Heron et al 2018; Taylor 2018; Taylor 2020). The ADT aims to drive and support cross-institutional learning and teaching development in a distributed way. This approach is key to enhancement at WU and, in 2021, the ADT was a Teaching Excellence Award winner for the Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE), run by Advance HE.

The TrACE ADT group currently has 26 members and has the largest membership of all the groups within the ADT Network.

Figure 2: The ADT structure



All WU staff are encouraged to attend information-sharing and awareness-raising sessions regarding the TrACE approach. Sessions have been delivered to departments such as Marketing and Recruitment, and personal tutors have also attended tailor-made sessions to help best support learners and promote staff wellbeing. Guest speaker slots within lectures are also available, demonstrating the impact of cross-curricular learning. An e-learning module is being developed and will be launched for all staff and involved students, which will build on awareness raising and trauma-aware workshops that have been delivered to date.

Positive feedback received from the personal tutor sessions include the following:

“ Great introduction to personal tutoring for new to role staff! Covered lots of relevant information such as policies and procedures and I found the trauma-based approach useful. ”

“ Very informative, great inclusion of trauma-informed approach. So important to a personal journey. ”

The University has also considered policy guidance through a TrACE lens. Members of the TrACE Project Team have co-produced a '[Guidance for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice](#).' The guidance aims to ensure policies are easily accessible and written in a way which can be digested during periods of distress, when complex, legal language can often be overwhelming. Examples of policy considerations include clear and meaningful communication which acknowledges the communicative nature of behaviour, and the avoidance of labelling, while ensuring terms used are compatible with TrACE-informed approaches.

This guidance is currently being piloted, in conjunction with WU's Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), with the Quality Assurance (QA) Team. Initial training has been provided to ensure staff know how to effectively review policy. Coaching support is offered along with input to the QA Team when updated drafts of policies are available, so they can learn from feedback on an ongoing basis and inform future reviews.



‘ The Quality and Regulation team are looking to review all regulations, policies, and procedures during the current academic year. As part of this review, we were looking to engage with key University initiatives to inform our revised documentation. We linked up with Lisa and Caroline and learnt about the TrACE initiative and signed up to a training session to help inform our learning of this area and how we can apply it. The training was very informative and insightful. From this we have developed some flash cards to engage consultation group members helping us review our policies and procedures and ensure we are developing them through a trauma-informed lens. ’

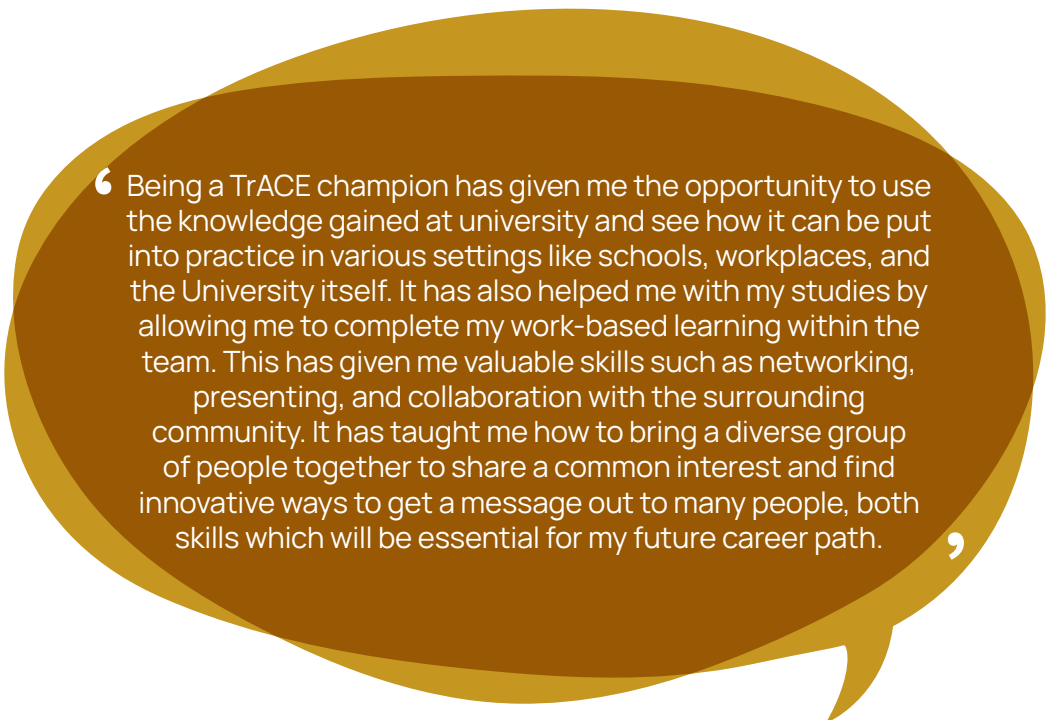
Helen Weller, Head of Quality, Wrexham University

A TrACE Project Evaluation has been conducted to monitor progress and impact of the trauma-informed approach. Dr Caroline Hughes presented the University's approach to this evaluation at an ACE Hub Wales conference in February 2024, to share good practice among colleagues. In the evaluation process, the team deliberately focused on reporting people's voices. The evaluation will be repeated every two years to continue to learn from user experiences and evolve the project approach.

Impact on students

WU attracts a broad demographic of learners by providing a supportive, nurturing environment, and seeks to empower students from all backgrounds, by providing them with the support they need to succeed, and, in turn, equip them with the skills they need beyond their studies. The TrACE approach, as indicated, focuses on a strengths-based philosophy, recognising individual strengths and building resilience. To create a culture of understanding and compassion, the development of positive and nurturing relationships within WU is a priority.

A truly collaborative approach has been adopted with student involvement at the heart of the project. Workshops are delivered to learners by the student leads, offering an overview of being trauma-aware. 20 students are now registered TrACE Champions who advocate the approach, increasing awareness via conversations, presentations and events. Training is also offered to Students' Union council members and societies. It is this joined up and co-productive approach that is driving meaningful changes and bringing the maximum benefit to students, staff and partner organisations. In the words of a Level 6 Mental Health and Wellbeing student:



“ Being a TrACE champion has given me the opportunity to use the knowledge gained at university and see how it can be put into practice in various settings like schools, workplaces, and the University itself. It has also helped me with my studies by allowing me to complete my work-based learning within the team. This has given me valuable skills such as networking, presenting, and collaboration with the surrounding community. It has taught me how to bring a diverse group of people together to share a common interest and find innovative ways to get a message out to many people, both skills which will be essential for my future career path. ”

Conclusion

Embarking on the journey to be a TrACE-informed university was never about arriving at a destination. It was always going to be about an ongoing cycle of review and moving forward. The project team is in the process of refreshing the original self-assessment and will use the opportunity to further develop ideas and prioritise project activity, so it continues to respond to the organisation's needs.

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Case Study 9: Resilience: Should we be teaching this as a study skill?

Sadie Thackaberry, Coleg Cambria

Context and background

During the pandemic, the world took an enforced pause, with broken norms and wide-reaching changes in routines. Education witnessed large-scale disruption with the move to online learning being stifled by inexperience in digital delivery, accessibility issues to wi-fi in remote locations for many, and barriers for students that required supportive help, such as those with additional learning needs, or without devices or quiet spaces to study (El Saheli-Elhage 2021; Naik et al 2021).

Pre-pandemic reports for student mental health were of concern (Lipson et al, 2018), yet post-pandemic the problem revealed is one of epidemic proportions. The Lancet reports that COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact with cases of major depressive disorders rising by 53.2 million and anxiety disorders rising by 76.2 million globally (Santomauro et al, 2021), affecting younger individuals the most. Students reported feeling isolated during the pandemic and then anxious once the world opened back up (McKinlay et al, 2021). These problems spilled over into the classroom environment and impeded students' progress towards educational goals, leading to the idea of teaching resilience - while one may not be able to cure the problem for the student, one may be able to help them cope and adapt to the adversity experienced.

Inspired by a personal mental health journey, the pandemic provided an opportunity for the author of this case study, to engage in an online course from Yale University entitled the Science of Wellbeing. Concepts such as addressing expectations and overcoming biases are addressed through recorded content, readings and recap assessments, yet perhaps one of the most important aspects was the guided retrospection. The short course unpacked the reasons as to why one may approach life circumstances in a particular way, providing both a psychological and biological explanation, making this grounding accessible and tangible to the set task of designing an environment to help one, as an individual, change behaviours that are not wanted, or that are just accepted without consideration. Review, reflect and rewrite personal goals: this was the essence of this personal and professional learning experience. This led to further reading around the topics, supported by titles such as Grit by Angela Duckworth, and the development of a focused teaching initiative for students studying at higher-education level within Coleg Cambria.

Resilience initiative

An action research project was created and conducted with a group of 20 HND Animal Management students (from Levels 4 and 5) in 2021. This initiative, which was to be delivered face-to-face, had to move to remote delivery due to a Wales lockdown. Across five weeks, students were guided through the concept of resilience, covering the following interactive considerations:

- reflection on what resilience meant to them
- a personal SWOT analysis
- an examination of their triggers for stress
- identification of what they wanted - not just what they thought they wanted
- the ability to say no.

They were creative and encouraged to have the freedom to fail and take risks and practise the art of being grateful. The five sessions were composed of three taught elements embedded into the students' one-hour-a-week study skill session, with two further sessions in their weekly tutorial time, the latter allowing space to practise and engage in elements of the initiative.

One example of a taught element, delivered in week one and inspired by the professional learning course undertaken, was where the cohort were asked to individually engage in reflections of goal setting. Students were allowed up to three goals, with the condition that these were already considered and in motion before this point in time. Students were then asked to compile a list of up to 10 'wants'. In session, they were then guided through the process of analysing the list of wanted things (these did not need to be inanimate possessions) and deciding if they were willing to do the work in order to achieve them. The purpose of this exercise was to provide some needed clarity for the student, as often one only thinks one really wants something, or one becomes stifled in how to obtain it, and attributes obstacles as barriers as one has not assessed the way forward suitably.

This task led students to either removing unwilling 'wants' or reigniting a passion for a particular 'want'; they de-cluttered or found a new way forward. The final part of this session asked the students to align what they wanted with what they had set as goals. Some found that their 'wants' were more suited to be viewed as goals, and perhaps more of a priority at that point in time for them, and so there was a shift of movement here too. The message here was one of a need to refocus and examine energy use, as often we spend time on those things we may think we want, but do not, and spend time unsure how to work toward one's goals. A core concept of resilience building is about taking the time to honestly reflect and to consider how to move forward.

During the five-week period, students were also asked to complete sections of a personal resilience diary, to track their own progress. Overall, students tended to find the SWOT analysis difficult as they overanalysed the weaknesses and overemphasised the threats. While it took a little time, they eventually warmed up to the practice of being grateful once the habit was established. On reflection, the two most successful components for this cohort were when they flexed into creativity and risk taking. Poems were written, paintings created, new songs on musical instruments attempted and there were also some woodwork and baking examples. A few individuals that did not feel comfortable fully embracing creativity still glanced in its direction and created study timetables to help guide them through the year. It was the risk takers that evidenced growth perhaps the best of all. From first driving lessons, to admitting they were not fine and taking the first steps to gain help, to joining a gym and exercising in front of people rather than at night alone - these students decided what was out of their comfort zone and how they wanted to grow, then went for it.

Two examples of students flexing their creativity



While the diaries provided a narrative, focus groups were held to support a conclusion. The overall aim for the action project was to provide a point of reflection, a growth in self-awareness and ultimately support student resilience. Yet did they consider this a study skill? Should it have a place on a university-level course? The focus group was asked what they considered was a study skill for higher education, and the usual suggestions were made:

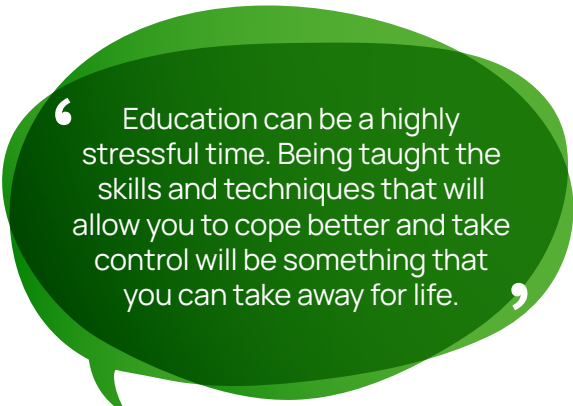
- referencing
- report writing
- critical-thinking skills
- academic posters
- statistics
- debate sessions
- understanding sample sizes
- how to make sense of scientific literature.

They then also added resilience.

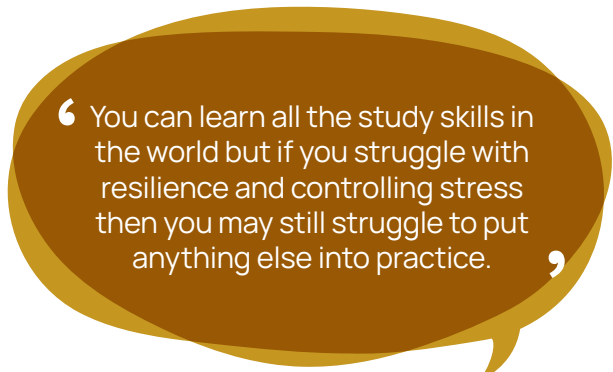
The Animal Management HND is now into its third year of resilience workshops, and while practice and reflection has seen revision of the initiative, the timings have stayed much the same. The students still have the five weeks, and this still appears at a time where rapport has been built, and cohorts can be understood. However, these sessions are now only delivered to the Level 4 cohort, with the Level 5 cohort having two tutorial sessions to focus on goal setting and wellbeing. The timing of the delivery was a major consideration when putting together the initiative - for it to be well received, the one to deliver it must have created a safe space and be aware of who it is they are asking to reflect upon adversity; sensitivity for the individual is crucial at all points.

Impact on students

Feedback from the 2021 cohort included:



“ Education can be a highly stressful time. Being taught the skills and techniques that will allow you to cope better and take control will be something that you can take away for life. ”



“ You can learn all the study skills in the world but if you struggle with resilience and controlling stress then you may still struggle to put anything else into practice. ”

The initiative did seem to be valued, students who engaged did so with purpose at their own pace, they sought their own relevance from the multitude of aspects and placed it in their everyday lives. Growth did happen, and all students that participated in this initiative went on to either progress onto the second year of study or to qualify with the award towards which they were studying.

Impact on the author

The unplanned side effect of the professional learning undertaken, which led to the pursuit of resilience for the student cohorts, has also enabled growth for the individual delivering the initiative - a full circle that can only help to foster future growth for future cohorts. Thoughts for next year have already been considered - for example, conducting paired pre and post-intervention questionnaires in the hope to both assess the distance travelled and to better tailor the resources for the cohort, with the aim of supporting engagement and investment in the process.

Wider institutional impact

Last academic year saw the initiative showcased as part of an internal higher education conference at Coleg Cambria, where academics across departments came together to showcase scholarly research activity undertaken. The discussion was well received within the business degree department, and they were inspired to roll out their own resilience focused workshop this academic year. A task where students placed reflective thoughts into a 'stress bucket' to acknowledge the impact then became a coined term throughout the year, one that allowed conversations to be started in a relaxed manner as the students felt comfortable reaching for this signal to the tutor that they wanted additional support. The team viewed the impact as a positive one and have plans to take it forward for future academic years.

Conclusion

Educational establishments always push for success measures in high grade attainment, but perhaps we also need to acknowledge success as small steps of personal risk to foster growth, or leaps into reflection to enrich self-awareness. Students require support with the grounding needed to be resilient in this ever-changing and fast-paced world. Resilience requires grit and stamina, as does life. Teaching resilience means that students entering the education system from a multitude of backgrounds can be afforded a more equal opportunity of success. This is its importance, namely its inclusivity, which is a life skill and not only a study skill.

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Case Study 10: Errors by design: Using AI to enhance student learning

Pete Dunford, Bridgend College

Context and background

Working in a college context in South Wales, the author frequently observed in both FE and HE Animal Care biology classes, that low subject confidence, poor understanding and weak recall ability presented many students with a significant challenge. Despite trying a variety of methods to improve these in lessons, he noted students seemed unable to fully grasp core concepts or retain them for extended periods. As part of an action research project, he began exploring whether new generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies could offer a path to more active and engaging learning experiences that could improve this.

Inspired by Dan Fitzpatrick et al (2023) *The AI Classroom*, and its emphasis on preparing students to collaborate with AI systems, he embarked on a professional learning journey to transform his teaching approach. Resources such as this, along with workshops at Jisc's DigiFest and discussions within his Personal Learning Network, reinforced his belief that AI has the potential to revolutionise student learning. Noticing a particular focus on teacher-centric rather than learner-centric AI tools, he was further motivated to find ways to directly empower students. Determined to cultivate AI-ready learners, he began actively seeking ways to integrate student-centred strategies, such as developing ready-made prompts, that would foster collaboration with AI tools without requiring advanced skills.

He decided to experiment with Google Gemini (previously called Bard) because its seamless integration within the students' Google Workspace accounts would provide a familiar setting for the exercise. Prior to the activity itself, care was taken to address ethical and responsible AI use with the students, and he engaged in a dedicated lesson exploring what is AI, its potential benefits and limitations, and guidelines for using it appropriately. These guidelines were based on guidance from the Joint Council for Qualifications ([AI use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications guidance](#)) and Jisc ([Artificial intelligence - Jisc](#)). Being aware that a significant risk of AI systems is their inherent biases and potential for false information, the author decided to make critical thinking a key element of the activity he was designing. Using his understanding of AI, he crafted a specific prompt that the students would input to Gemini in a lesson. The prompt asked Gemini to simulate a confused learner needing help on a topic of the student's choosing. It would then try to provide an explanation but would deliberately include errors and misunderstandings that the students would then attempt to identify and correct.

Students at work in Bridgend College



Impact of the initiative on students

The initiative was a successful way to introduce students to the potential for AI to support them and led to lively class discussions, particularly about its unique language style, including an unexpected mix of English and Chinese script in one case. Despite this, students reported the AI's explanations as generally helpful, but noted that they often had difficulty in pinpointing subtle errors. Building on this feedback, a second prompt that turned the AI into a quizmaster was created, enabling the students to play a game of three truths and two lies instead, which significantly helped to alleviate this particular problem.

There was a modest increase in reported confidence regarding topic understanding with both prompts, using a 1-to-10 scale. The confused student prompt averaged an 8.3% improvement while the three truths/two lies prompt averaged a 9.4% improvement. However, the actual level of understanding and recall was not directly measured on this occasion. Both prompts were well received, although most students expressed an overall preference for the three truths/two lies prompt and found it more engaging, interactive and enjoyable to use, liking the game format with its clear structure. They felt that it was easier to identify the errors, particularly on topics that they were not very sure about. Those students that preferred the confused learner prompt liked the more conversational style of the AI response noting, for example:

“ It makes you think in more detail about all the different areas of the topic as it does not give a lot of guidance. ”

It was felt that it would be particularly suited for:

“ exam revision and testing yourself on a subject you are already fairly confident with. ”

Feedback from the students showed that these activities ignited an interest in further exploring how AI could support their learning, with 75% of them saying that they were planning on using the prompts the lecturer provided again as part of their revision. 88% of the students said that they were keen to explore different AI tools for themselves now and felt that they had developed confidence to be able to write their own prompts, having used the pre-written ones.

Impact on the author

The whole experience has confirmed the way the author of this case study thinks about teaching and learning; solidifying his understanding that student engagement and learning go hand-in-hand. He is of the opinion that the initiative highlights the fact that modern teachers need to be Experience Designers who are prepared to experiment and iterate on activities based on learner feedback, in order to help develop subject confidence alongside wider skills development. He has seen the potential for how generative AI may be a useful tool to support more traditional lesson styles. Students really enjoyed using the AI and were keen to use it independently with their own prompts and take ownership of their learning of the technology.

His immediate next steps, based on feedback from the students, is to write a toolkit of customisable prompts that they can use independently to enhance their learning and revision. He also intends to use this toolkit next year as a structured activity to measure subject recall ability before and after AI use and determine its effectiveness as a learning aid. He feels that to continue developing as a teacher, he needs to keep innovating, reflecting on feedback and iterating. His aim is to empower students to be critical users of generative AI while embracing its potential as a learning tool. Not only will this help with their understanding of biology but will build strong information literacy skills for a world filled with increasingly advanced AI.

The original draft of this case study was written with assistance from Google Gemini Advanced on 15 and 16 February 2024.

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Case Study 11: Seeing the way forwards: the impact of progress tracking and providing exemplars in flexible delivery rollout

Elizabeth Jones, University of South Wales

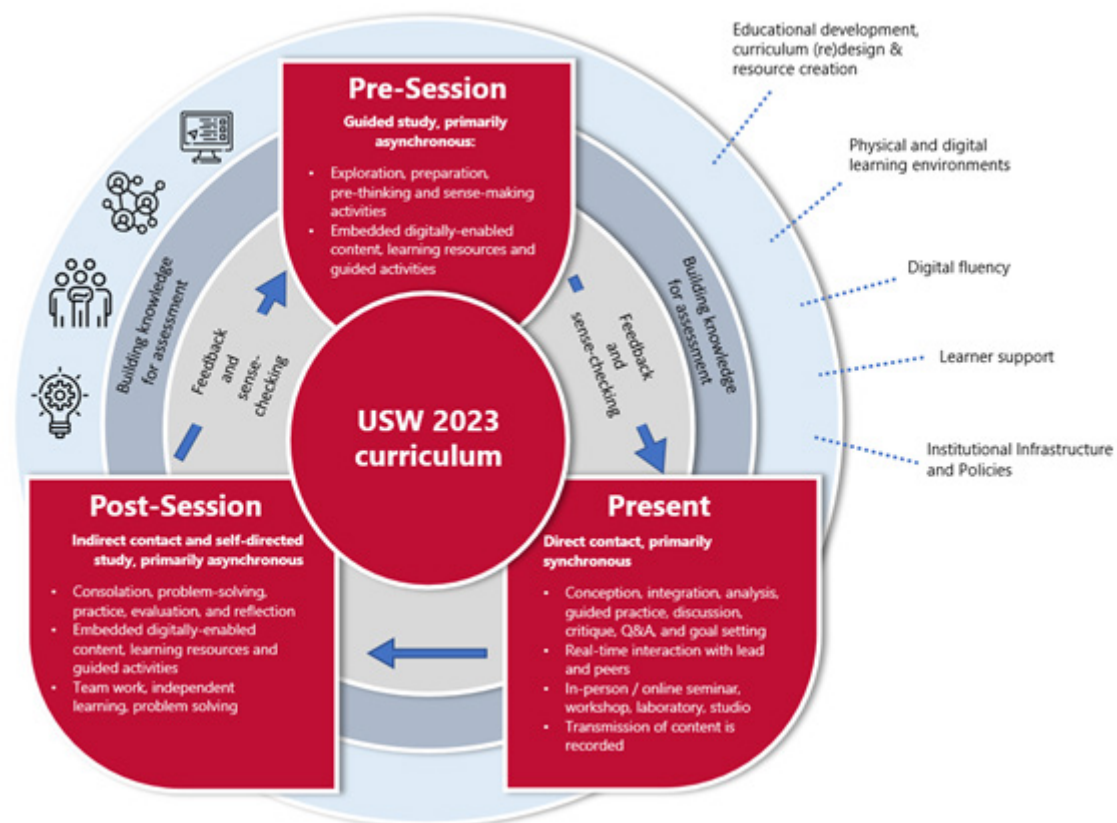
Context and background

The University of South Wales (USW) began piloting flexible delivery models as part of its USW 2030 strategic plan (USW, 2019). The overall project is intended to develop a flexible learning model, or a range of models that will maximise accessibility, market attractiveness, and experience, as a more flexible approach to teaching and learning offers opportunities to make USW more inclusive and diverse. Throughout summer 2022, representatives from USW's staff and student community collaborated with Advance HE to devise a series of USW Flexible Learning Principles that are bespoke to the institution. The flexible delivery working group then developed these principles into the first pilot model, explaining how these principles could look in practice.

The first pilot explored a blended three-part model, whereby campus-based delivery is complemented through asynchronous digitally-supported learning activities, both before and after each campus-based session (see Figure 1 below). A key part of this was supporting staff to use the virtual learning environment (VLE) more effectively and implementing an active learning design approach including providing better narrative, guidance and scaffolding to learners. This meant ensuring contextual information was provided around the guided learning activities online, a clear progression path through the content, and the use of progress tracking features in the VLE.

13 pilot modules were introduced to the programme in summer 2023, ahead of delivery in the academic year 2023-24. A range of modules across Levels 3-6 were selected with representation from each of the three University faculties. Each module team began with a half-day co-design workshop for groups of between 2-4 pilot modules. Each module team was invited to attend, and they were able to bring student representatives, course leaders and heads of subject if they wished. Some teams sent a single representative, and others brought a group of academics, students and managers. A representative from each professional service team that was offering support to this pilot was also present. The workshop was divided into two parts. Part 1 explained the three-part model of flexible delivery the University was aiming for, and introduced the support offers from professional services. Part 2 was a facilitated module redesign using a modified version of the ABC method (UCL, 2015).

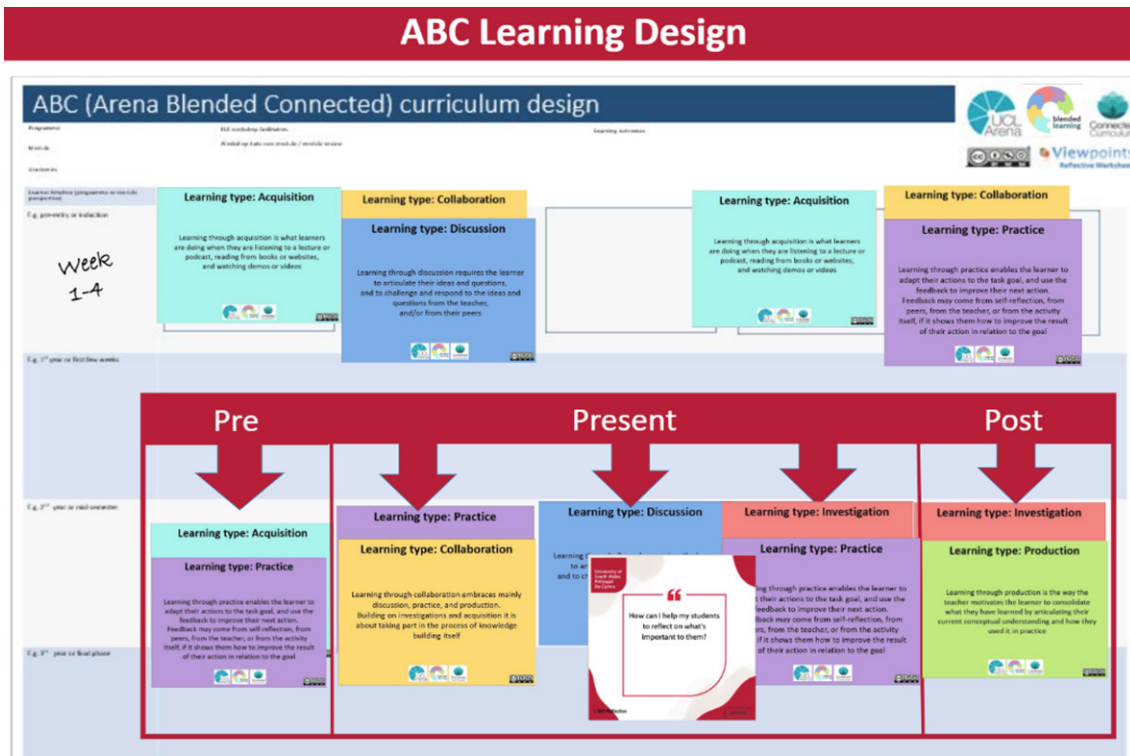
Figure 1: The three-part model of flexible delivery



The ABC method

The ABC method is a highly interactive learning design workshop that allows small groups to rapidly visualise and build the delivery of their modules/courses using storyboards built from activity type cards. The activity type cards are based on the work of Professor Diana Laurillard and break down all learning activities into six types: acquisition, collaboration, discussion, investigation, practice and production. Each learning type card has a definition and list of example activities that could be classified as this type. Participants use the cards to set out the activities in which learners will engage during an individual session, the whole module or even an entire course. This method was chosen because it has been shown to be well suited to the requirements for redesigning courses for a more blended approach. The basic framework of the ABC method was used with some minor changes to the introduction to demonstrate how the previous delivery method could be redesigned to fit the three-part model and reduce the amount of 'acquisition' learning that took place during timetabled on-campus sessions.

Figure 2: The ABC Model



Additional cards were also introduced, that participants could use to plan their modules. These cards were custom-made packs from the various support services (for example, Study Skills, Employability, Library) setting out different offerings that could be incorporated into delivery plans, such as an assessment planning workshop or a session on information literacy skills. Representatives from each professional service team were also present at the workshop and rotated through each module team during the planning session to allow academics to get more information and learn about how the offers could be integrated into their delivery.

Figure 3: A mathematics support card

USW Study Skills

Maths Support

General numeracy support can be offered to students to practise their basic skills, both with and without a calculator. Workshops could cover topics such as converting units/calculating percentages/finding averages and measures of dispersion.

Delivery

- Sessions last up to 1 hr.
- Best with small groups (up to 10).
- On campus or on-line (not mixed).

Parameter

- Support not available for SPGS.

Recommended for

- Students who lack confidence in Mathematics and found GCSE Mathematics difficult.
- Students who need to refresh their basic numeracy skills.
- Students studying a science degree that did not do A-level Mathematics.

University of South Wales Prifysgol De Cymru

Maths Support card includes mathematical formulas such as $x^2 + y^2 = z^2$, $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$, and a right-angled triangle diagram with labels hyp, opp, and adj, and the formula $\sin(\theta) = \frac{\text{opp}}{\text{hyp}}$.

Challenges encountered

The major challenge of the workshops was the time needed and staff capacity to attend. Most teams were not all able to attend, and it was not possible to do the full redesign process without them. Four module teams plus student representatives and professional service teams created an environment that many found overwhelming.

After the first iteration, therefore, the number of representatives from each professional service was reduced to one and each workshop limited to two or three module teams, depending on the number of participants they were bringing. Even then, the sheer amount of information and ideas was often too much for academic colleagues. They reported being excited and positive about the ideas they were gaining, but wishing they had more time set aside to engage in the redesign process.

The pilot teams were also trialling Blackboard Ultra, an upgraded version of the VLE. Participants were probably more nervous about this than about the actual delivery changes. Each pilot participant was offered individual support after the workshop, at a time convenient to them, to introduce the Ultra experience, and to get their module moved to the new version. At least one member of each pilot team received the training and could ask for further support if required.

Next steps

After the workshop and Blackboard Ultra support, the pilot participants were asked to complete a storyboard or schedule of their redesigned module to help the flexible delivery team plan any necessary support and ensure that academic teams were on track. Regular updates and offers of further support were advertised throughout the summer. A website of resources and support materials about the flexible delivery model, learning design process, ABC process, and Blackboard Ultra were made available to all colleagues.

Only one team completed a full outline plan during the summer and most of the other teams did not respond to any of the support offers. The fact that it was not completed outside the confines of the workshop is likely indicative of the intensity of contemporary academic life. It also shows the importance of the workshop time for enabling colleagues to focus, if only briefly, on the development process.

Exemplar module

The one area of support that did garner a reaction was the exemplar module. This exemplar was a fictional module created on Blackboard Ultra by the Digitally Enabled Education team to demonstrate how different features of the new system looked 'in action'. It also showed how the flexible delivery model could be laid out on this new look VLE. The module was fully populated with learning content arranged in the three-part delivery model, fake students had completed some activities, and key features of good learning design that had been highlighted in the workshop and support website were demonstrated. For example, contextual information was provided for all items explaining why, when and how to approach the various elements; a learning journey through the content was created, with layout and labelling; and students could see their progress using a tracking feature.

Providing examples is not a new concept but it was the sheer positivity of the reaction to this particular exemplar that was significant:

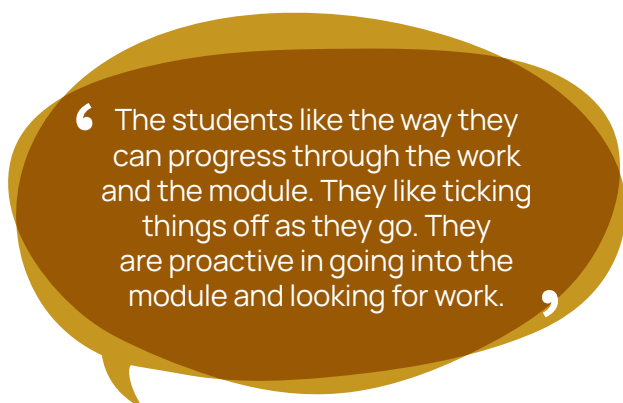


The exemplar not only helped colleagues understand the features of Blackboard Ultra, but also brought the model itself to life outside the time constrained and supervised confines of the workshop, allowing time to experiment and reflect. Unlike offers of synchronous support, the module allowed staff to dip into it at their own convenience, and to engage with the concepts in an authentic way, with full staff permissions to view, edit and grade as they would on their own modules. Concepts introduced in the workshops and online support materials about accessibility, guiding and scaffolding activities, and teacher presence were given meaning through examples. Importantly all these illustrations were linked into a bigger picture that provided clarity for staff.

So often when examples are provided, they are stripped of a great deal of context. Sometimes this is by necessity, but also sometimes for convenience and brevity, there is a tendency to select a single VLE feature, a portion of a module or a moment of teaching from within a session, to illustrate particular points or to demonstrate one tool. Yet as Pilkington (2016, p.59) reminds all, one of the five key premises for the professional learning of lecturers is that ‘professional learning is contingent and situated within organisations, and **contextualised** practices and processes’ (author’s emphasis). By placing the theories and pedagogical principles of flexible delivery into the context of a whole module, it allowed colleagues to conceptualise what it would mean in practice, and from there how to transform the idea into their own context.

Impact of flexible delivery model on staff and students

The flexible delivery model and the structure of the online elements of the modules received some very positive feedback from the staff:



Equally, the students experienced benefits from the new model and learning design. It helped them feel organised, to work through tasks and see the direction of travel more clearly:



Much like the exemplar module, the flexible delivery model with its emphasis on providing a clear pathway through the learning, appears to be giving the students more confidence that they can see the way forward on their learning journey.

Future developments

A larger pilot is now planned for 2024-25, where the Digitally Enabled Education team will be working with all the Level 4 modules across approximately six courses – namely, two courses per faculty. It is hoped that by implementing the model across all modules within a course, students will become more accustomed to working in the rhythm of flexible delivery. This is important because although the students that gave feedback were positive about the value of pre-learning, there were other students who did not engage and were thus less prepared/engaged during on-campus sessions. Setting the same learning model across all their modules in their first year should help to create a new normal for students that simply becomes the accepted way of learning.

Based on the positive reactions, the intention is to use the expertise and experience of pilot participants to guide improvements to the exemplar, and to provide multiple exemplar modules to demonstrate different disciplinary approaches. This disciplinary relevance is important when providing examples because there are always those who doubt that an approach in one discipline might be suitable in their own. As Baume and Popovic state, 'the effectiveness and credibility...of academic development may be enhanced if some development work is undertaken...in a way which acknowledges evidence-based disciplinary approaches' (Baume and Popovic 2016, p 303).

The Digitally Enabled Education team will also be working with Learning Services to implement the exemplar idea for students. The intention is to create sample calendars and guided videos that demonstrate how to engage in a flexible delivery module, and different ways to organise their learning experience. Reflecting on the importance of disciplinary differentiation for staff, different examples will be provided, showing not only different disciplines, but also illustrating some of the different life situations study may need to fit around. For example, caring responsibilities, working hours, travel and commuting, and health changes - all of which affect how students can engage with their learning. All of these developments will be evaluated as part of the ongoing pilots and the intention is to roll out the flexible delivery model more widely from 2025-26.

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Case Study 12: Improving student feedback literacy and engagement

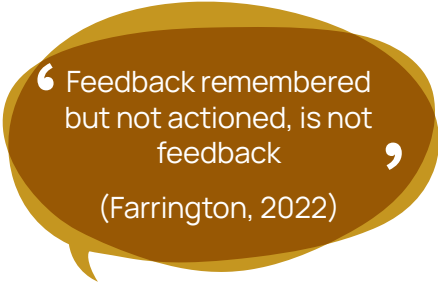
Steven Kehoe and Samantha Ellis, Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

Context and background

Assessment and feedback literacy is paramount to student success in higher education and can aid learners in shifting their attention from assessment outcomes to assessment processes. It can also support learners in understanding and engaging with assessment feedback, a perennial challenge to higher education institutions, as the engagement rather than the feedback itself is the crucial element to student learning (Zhang and Hyland, 2022). In response to this, a professional development event aiming to provide staff with mechanisms for improving students' feedback literacy and engagement was delivered by the higher education curriculum coordinator and programme leader of Sport and Public Services at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. This event was also aligned with the Higher Education Health and Care quality enhancement plan which identified feedback as an area for development based on module evaluations, National Student Survey data (Assessment and Feedback - 81.25% in 2021-22), and staff/student liaison panels. Grŵp Llandrillo Menai delivers higher education to over 1,500 full-time and part-time students within a further education setting across campuses in North Wales.

The professional development event took place in June 2023 and was delivered to a total of nine staff members with teaching responsibilities on foundation degrees (Levels 4 and 5) and BSc top-ups (Level 6) in Childcare, Health and Social Care, and Sport departments. Some staff also had significant further education teaching responsibilities. All staff were lecturers with an array of experience levels - ranging from highly experienced programme leaders to newly qualified staff from vocational backgrounds teaching in higher education.

Following on from the staff event, an intervention was administered for the 2023-24 academic year by module leaders, targeting a total of 56 students. For the purpose of this intervention, modules with practical, portfolio or exam assessments were not included. The intervention centred on the use of an assessment front sheet to be completed by the students and submitted with each assessment - an initiative that was already used by another department and viewed as leading practice by external examiners. Within the front sheet, students were advised to identify an element of previous feedback, either summative or formative, that had been acted upon in the current submission and from where that feedback had been received. Students were also asked to specify an aspect of the assessment on which they wished to receive feedback. Based on this, staff were instructed to provide explicit comments within the summative feedback linked to the implemented and requested elements of the feedback.



‘ Feedback remembered but not actioned, is not feedback ’

(Farrington, 2022)

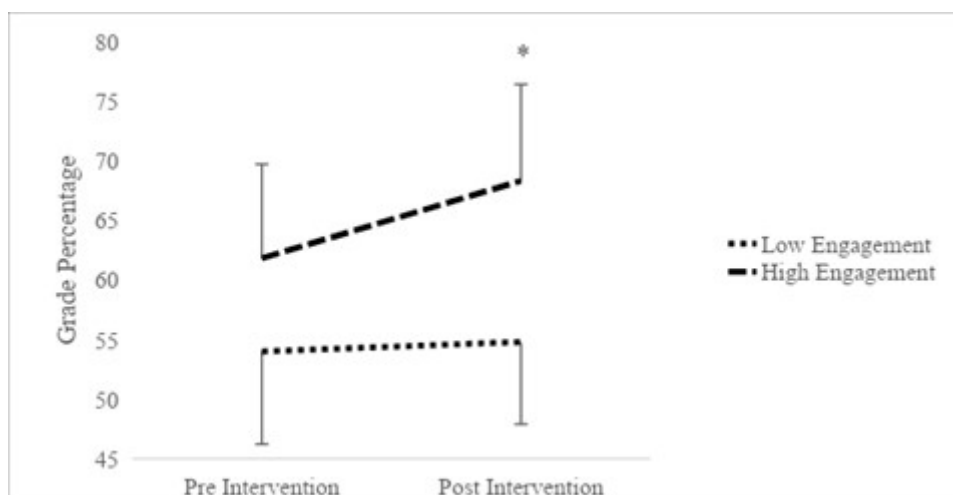
Figure 1: Example of an assessment front sheet

<p>One element of feedback implemented from previous feedback</p> <p><i>Justifying my conclusions to be explicit in my critical appraisal</i></p>	<p>Feedback received where? (signpost specific assessment)</p> <p><i>Contemporary Issues Assignment 1</i></p>
<p>Aspect of assignment you would like specific feedback on</p> <p><i>My critical thinking of the research article reviewed</i></p>	


Impact on learners and staff

Overall, out of 159 students, there was a 53% engagement rate in completion of both 'feedback implemented' and 'feedback requested' aspects of the assessment front sheet. The highest engagement rate was observed in written assessments (69%) and the lowest in presentations/posters (34%). Students were categorised into either high engagement (n=12) or low engagement (n=10), based on their individual completion rates. The High Engagement group had a significantly higher increase in grade percentage compared to the Low Engagement group over the course of the intervention, despite the High Engagement group having a superior grading profile pre intervention.

Figure 2: Group comparison in grade percentage change from pre to post-intervention




Students were overwhelmingly positive regarding the intervention and its impact as summarised by a student below:

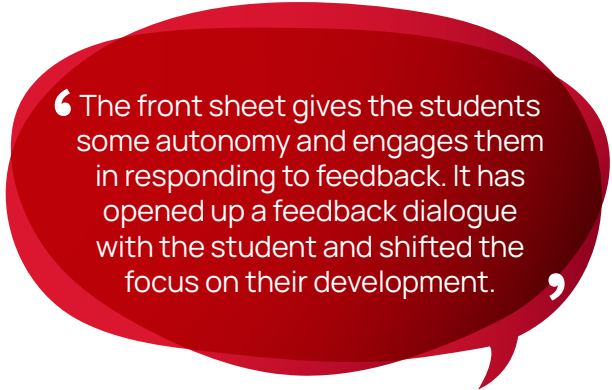


‘ Highlighting what previous feedback I was trying to develop in each new assessment really helped me progress and I felt the feedback was more personalised to me when I requested specific feedback on an academic skill or part of the assessment. This was hugely beneficial for me, and I’m glad to say that this reflected in my development, especially transitioning from Level 5 to 6. ’

Staff also felt the professional development session on assessment and feedback had been extremely useful, as evidenced by their responses below:



‘ Very informative and relevant to HE. Made me consider how my feedback needs to be more balanced and be able to be used in the future. ’



‘ The front sheet gives the students some autonomy and engages them in responding to feedback. It has opened up a feedback dialogue with the student and shifted the focus on their development. ’

One of the external examiners also commended the use of the ‘feed forward’ cover sheets.

Points to consider

Although the intervention can be seen as a success in improving feedback engagement and student outcomes, practitioners may wish to consider the following points when implementing an initiative of this nature:

- Students may require some guidance as to what types of academic skills/concepts on which they may wish to receive specific feedback, especially at Level 4. For example, it may be less beneficial for a student to request feedback on 'all of the assignment', rather than their academic writing style. Likewise, feedback on critical writing would be advantageous at Level 6, rather than feedback on referencing techniques.
- It is important to discuss with students their expectations regarding feedback and the use of the assessment front sheet, focusing on the development process rather than the outcome. High engagement does not always translate to improvements in grades.
- Some lecturers were more proactive in reminding students to complete all sections of the assessment front sheet. A more consistent whole team approach is required to support adherence and the engagement rate of some students; lecturers should build the review of previous feedback into their teaching and learning to support student feedback literacy - specifically, assessment workshops.
- Students can only implement feedback that is understood and has clear, actionable developmental points that can be applied in other aspects of assessments. This requires lecturers to ensure these points are not too assessment specific, and have been decoded by the student, preferably via a feedback discussion, and actions moving forward have been agreed.

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Case Study 13: The Welsh Collective: A professional development network

Steph Tindall, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Background and context

During 2022-23, all nine higher education institutions in Wales, together with 12 further education institutions, worked together on a HEFCW-funded QAA Cymru Collaborative Enhancement project entitled The Welsh Collective: Digital Learning and Teaching Enhancement. The project involved the setting up of a network group - the Welsh Collective - with a focus on immersive learning. The objectives of the Network include increasing opportunities:

- to identify collaborative approaches for effective pedagogy in the immersive learning environment
- to share the way digital education is developing as a sector, using collective intelligence
- for workforce development impacting both frontline HE delivery, leadership and management.

The objectives of the group in relation to the dissemination of emerging outcomes are to share practice that equips, trains and supports teaching practitioners:

- to plan and deliver effective teaching, learning and assessment in an immersive learning environment
- to support learners to learn using digital platforms
- to use technologies to ensure differentiation, equality, diversity, accessibility and inclusion.

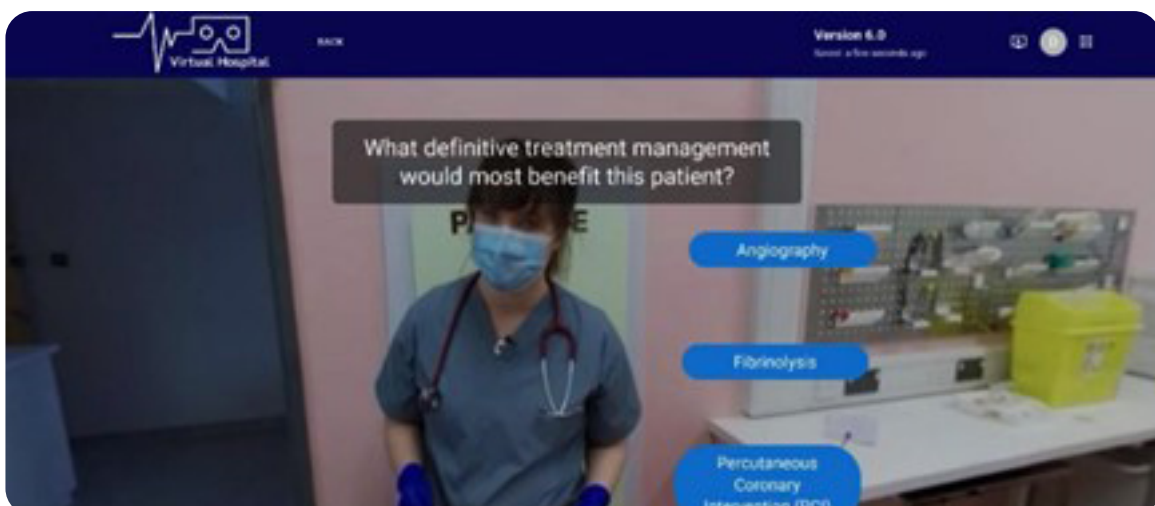
The first Welsh Collective event took place in June 2023. It involved all sharing where they were and what they were working on in relation to the very quickly advancing immersive learning space. Since that successful event, the group has focused on ensuring that the quality of digital learning remains high on the professional learning agenda in higher education institutions in Wales, and on strengthening further the collaborative working relationship and valuable contribution of FE institutions. Overseen on behalf of the PVC Learning and Teaching Network, by both Professor Mirjam Plantinga (UWTSD) and Professor Jacqui Boddington (CMU), the Welsh Collective uses HEFCW-funded QAA Cymru collaborative project money to continue to support HE and FE professionals, working within their institution in the field of immersive learning development.

Impact of the Welsh Collective

Although still in its infancy, the Welsh Collective has already had a considerable impact across the tertiary sector. Dr Huw Williams from Cardiff University, School of Medicine reports how they have used some of the lessons learnt:

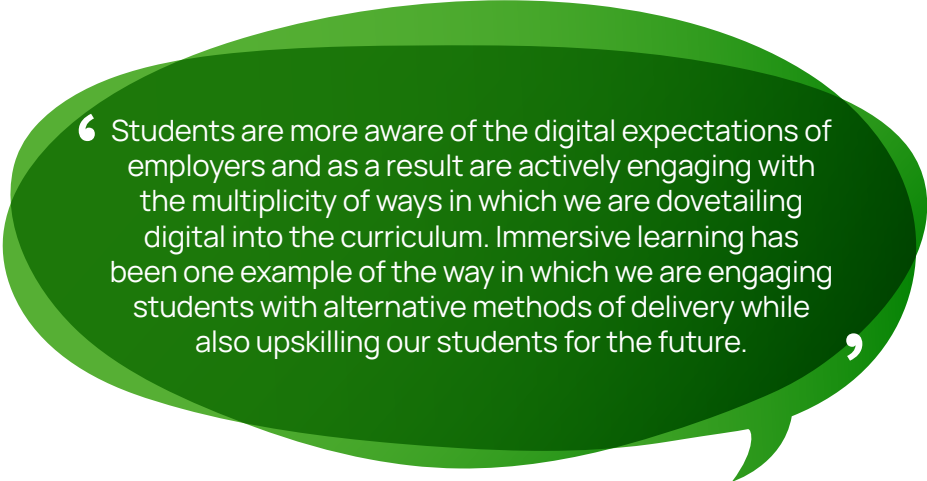
‘ We have learnt lessons from the meetings and connections of the Welsh Collective to take back to our Hybrid Interactive Virtual Environments (HIVE) team, who are employing these in the eLearning and immersive scenarios they are creating. ’

Teaching materials created by Cardiff University



Cardiff University is of the opinion that being part of the Network has led to improved learning by the medical students. This includes an example in relation to the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation of a resus room-based virtual reality (VR) simulation, which has shown improved outcomes at Levels 1 and 2 compared to the version deployed the previous year.

Dr Rebecca Jones, Digital Pedagogy Lead at Bangor University, also feels students have responded well to immersive learning:



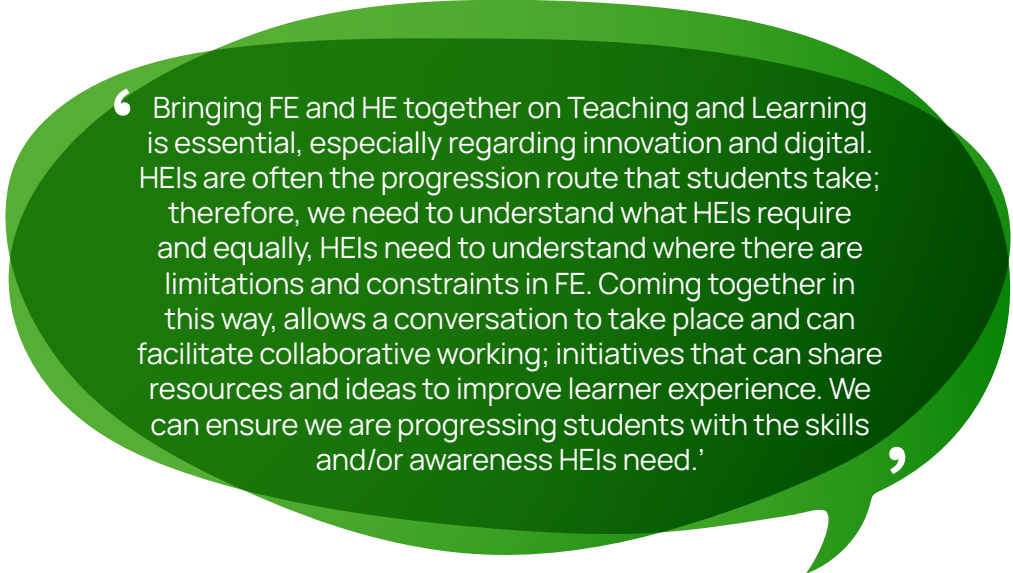
“ Students are more aware of the digital expectations of employers and as a result are actively engaging with the multiplicity of ways in which we are dovetailing digital into the curriculum. Immersive learning has been one example of the way in which we are engaging students with alternative methods of delivery while also upskilling our students for the future. ”

One of Bangor University’s many projects examined how VR could be used to explore landscapes, locations and digital representations of places and people, to provide opportunities for inclusive fieldwork. Stemming from innovative developments necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting restrictions placed on travel, VR headsets were used to explore international destinations. A third year Geography student said of the experience:



“ VR is a new way of learning and is making the virtual trip interactive and enjoyable. It’s really fun! I’ve really enjoying exploring the sites in new ways, that I’ve not experienced before. ”

FE colleges have also found the opportunity to work together with HE through the Welsh Collective, particularly positive, as Leanne Howe, the Teaching Learning and Professional Development Manager at Gower College, states:



“ Bringing FE and HE together on Teaching and Learning is essential, especially regarding innovation and digital. HEIs are often the progression route that students take; therefore, we need to understand what HEIs require and equally, HEIs need to understand where there are limitations and constraints in FE. Coming together in this way, allows a conversation to take place and can facilitate collaborative working; initiatives that can share resources and ideas to improve learner experience. We can ensure we are progressing students with the skills and/or awareness HEIs need. ”



The Welsh Collective conference

Together stronger

Collaborative networks and focused communities of practice, such as the Welsh Collective, are a valuable professional development model and resource and, as highlighted here, are an effective means of enhancing the student experience. The quote below was originally written in a blog post about the Welsh Collective, but has become the Network's mantra, celebrating the impact of professional dialogue and collaborative practice on student learning across the tertiary sector in Wales.

“As the Welsh Collective, we recognise that our outcomes and final products will vary, and we also acknowledge that in some respects we are in digital competition. Nonetheless, we want to journey together on the immersive learning road, sharing and learning from each other, exchanging knowledge, experience, and expertise.”

Annex: Case study contributors

Case Study 1

Dr John Deane is Dean of the Birmingham Campus of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. He is an experienced strategic HE leader including HE in FE. He has been a QAA reviewer for 15 years and is an Advance HE Accreditor/Consultant, as well as being an Advance HE Principal Fellow.

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Case Study 2

Annette Edwards has been Academic Staff Development Theme Leader in the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit at Aberystwyth University for the last five years, and before that was part of the Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice. Annette achieved her PGCTHE in June 2014 and SFHEA in February 2016. As a native Welsh speaker, Annette works bilingually on academic development enhancement and is also part of many Pan Wales groups including Supervision and Advance HE Teaching Excellence Awards.

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Case Study 3

Bryony Evett Hackfort is Director of Teaching, Learning and Education for Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion. Bryony is extremely proud of the further education sector and feels passionately about the need to amplify its voice. Bryony made the move into the leadership of teaching and learning in 2018 and has made the most of every opportunity to establish links, networks and projects driven to champion the FE sector within professional learning.

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Case Study 4

Dr Mary Jacob is a Lecturer in Learning and Teaching based in Aberystwyth University's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (LTEU). She coordinates the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education (PGCTHE), contributes to the ARCHE scheme for Advance HE Fellowship, and coordinates the Generative AI Working Group. She seeks out events and resources that are useful for teaching staff and shares them via the [Weekly Resource Roundup](#) on the LTEU blog.

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Case Study 5

Helen Griffith comes from west Wales and taught in secondary schools before moving to work in further education at Coleg Ceredigion. She has enjoyed a range of different managerial roles at the College and is now Director of Bilingualism for Coleg Sir Gâr and Coleg Ceredigion. The Welsh language is very important to her and ensuring that learners have every opportunity to use and improve their language skills is her daily mission.

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Case Study 6

Amy Lewis is a Psychology lecturer with a keen interest in health psychology, lifelong learning, HE in FE and bilingualism. Amy completed her Mynediad Welsh for adults course in 2023 and is currently studying the Sylfaen course. Amy recently took part in a staff development scheme to improve bilingual teaching methods along with other staff from Bridgend College.

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Case Study 7

Dr Owen Thomas is a member of staff at the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Since the establishment of two Work Welsh in Further and Higher Education schemes in 2017 under the auspices of the National Centre for Learning Welsh, he has been Manager of Work Welsh in Higher Education. This scheme ensures that staff can improve their Welsh language skills, whatever their level, in all universities in Wales.

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Case Study 8

Dr Caroline Hughes is Associate Dean: Student Engagement at the Faculty of Social and Life Sciences, Wrexham University and leads the Criminology, Law and Policing; Social Work and Therapeutic Childcare; Sport; and Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing departments. Caroline has led and been co-investigator on a number of qualitative studies focusing on homelessness, child sexual exploitation, and youth justice. Caroline is the academic project lead for the Trauma and ACE (TrACE) Informed University and Communities pilot, in partnership with the ACE Hub Wales.

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Case Study 9

Sadie Thackaberry has been teaching Animal Management for six years in a college setting. With encouragement from her family, she became a mature student after a short career in the accounts sector. She feels turning to teaching changed her life for the better, and with a passion for supporting mental health and education, teaching resilience to support students' journey towards their own personal success goals has been an early career highlight.

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Case Study 10

Pete Dunford has been teaching biology and study skills since 2006. He passionately advocates for the use of appropriate technology in education - be that a digital tool or pen and paper - and supports other educators to improve their own understanding of digital pedagogy through training and coaching. Pete regularly uses his own classrooms to trial different tools and techniques to bring the learners' perspective into those conversations in a meaningful way.

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Case Study 11

Elizabeth Jones is Head of Digitally Enabled Education at the University of South Wales. She has been working in digital education for 14 years and before that worked in academic libraries. Her areas of focus include artificial intelligence and inclusive digital practices.

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Case Study 12

Steven Kehoe is Programme Leader of the BSc/FdSc Sport Science and Sports Coaching and the Higher Education curriculum for Sport and Public Services at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. He has over a decade of experience teaching in the higher education sector and has a real passion for all things teaching and learning. Past and current research interests include the impact of dehydration on football performance and the psychobiological interplay in physical and mental fatigue.

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Samantha Ellis has worked within the childcare and education sector and has taught in this field since 2001. Samantha is Programme Leader for the FdA Childhood and Education Studies and Higher Education curriculum Quality Coordinator at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. Research interests include the theory and practice associated with sustainable development and creative pedagogies within early education. Samantha is currently working on projects centred around student feedback, fostering an engaging and forward-thinking learning environment through innovative teaching methods, and a commitment to educational excellence in higher education.

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Case Study 13

Steph Tindall is Head of Organisational Development at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, having joined the University in January 2023. She has dedicated her career to nurturing quality improvement and transformational change through collaborative approaches. Drawing from her background as a senior leader in further education, managing teaching and learning, quality and organisational development, Steph's professional focus is to foster a thriving, collaborative environment for growth and excellence.

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