

## Matthew Mobbs – FHEA Application

### Case Study One: Design, plan, support learning and design effective environment (A1, A2, A4, A5)

My teaching philosophy is to **design learning that allows learners to gain knowledge and explore new ideas in a safe environment, developing learners to have the confidence to apply their learning in their own context.**

Whilst my philosophy is quite a broad statement, it reflects the context in which I educationally develop. I have been involved in the designing of learning and teaching for over a decade, initially qualifying as a Secondary Level Science teacher, I transitioned into Higher Education in 2006, to become a Learning Technologist. This is a central role at the University of Leicester, within which I share knowledge and expertise in learning design and technology enhanced learning to academic departments and professional services.

I design and deliver learning in a number of contexts: contributing to the curriculum, designing taught sessions and assessment within modules; Within the extra-curricular sphere I have contributed to the complete re-design of accredited employability programmes and in the area of professional development, I am responsible for designing sessions and online activities to underpin the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of colleagues at Leicester and beyond. My teaching has been delivered through mixed methods: face-to-face, blended and online. Alongside this, I actively engage in pedagogic research.

Although the scope of my teaching is broad, the underpinning approaches are the same: to be constructivist and put the learner at the centre; to provide safe and flexible learning environments (both physical and virtual); and to have structured progression that is accessible to learners of varying levels and backgrounds. And finally supplemented with appropriate use of technology to support learning and aligned assessment.

My approach to the design of learning is to make it “*constructively aligned*” (Biggs and Tang, 2011, p.97), ensuring Intended Learning Outcomes are the foundation of both learning and assessment. When designing learning activities, in all the scenarios in which I teach, I ensure the learning is scaffolded (Bruner et al 1976). I achieve this by chunking the learning (Miller, 1956, cited in Bodie et al, 2007) into smaller units of activities that enable the learners to (co-)construct knowledge, understanding and application. This is also an effective method of ensuring learners progress through the cognitive domains of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). I use several teaching styles and learning activities to enhance learning of a variety of student groups. Furthermore models like the Conversational Framework (Laurillard, 2001), put the learner at the centre, which drives me to incorporate activities such as group work, discussion and reflection into my design, to enable learners to co-construct their knowledge, understanding and application. (V3).

These principles and approaches are evident in a workshop I designed called Creating Multimedia for Learning and Teaching. This is a professional development activity for Academic Staff at the University of Leicester, designed to enable them to enhance their own teaching practices (K1).

During the workshop I initially evaluate the participants’ current knowledge by facilitating a discussion, getting them to identify where multimedia can be used in learning in teaching and getting them to reflect on the extent they have already produced and used multimedia in their own teaching. This enables me to tailor the session accordingly. If they are beginners I will

deliver at an introductory level and for more experienced learners, I develop higher level skills (V1).

We then progress onto developing some of the practical skills of producing multimedia resources, these activities happen in small groups (typically 2-3). The learning is scaffolded, taking them through the stages of production, initially introducing them to audio production for podcasting. They then progress onto video, screen capturing, webcam recording and using mobile devices to record visuals for videos. Finally, they explore editing using desktop solution and moving onto online tools, such as YouTube.

We conclude the practical element by looking at hosting and sharing videos and exploring how these can be embedded within teaching scenarios. All the activities are supported by instructional worksheets I have authored (K1, K4).

Upon completion of the practical activities, I get the participants to evaluate their learning from the session and consider how they might use the skills they have developed, to introduce multimedia into their teaching (K5).

This has proved to be a successfully design workshop, with 100% of the 60+ attendees this year rating the relevance of the session to their own work, the quality of the session and material and effectiveness of the tutor as 'Satisfactory' or 'Very Satisfactory' on departmental evaluation forms. Participants have evaluated my teaching as "very attentive and understandable" (K5).

Although the feedback has been positive, my personal reflections on the design have enabled me to adapt the workshop over time (K6). In the first iterations of the workshop during the practical activities, each group worked on different task for a set time, before progressing onto the next exercise. This was hard to facilitate and learners completed tasks at different rates. Therefore, I redesigned the activities to have to the whole class working on a single task simultaneously. This actually made the session more effective, both for my role as the facilitator, ensuring participants are engaged in the activities and are on task. It also enables me to identify common misunderstandings and address these from the front of the classroom to all members, by demonstrating examples on the screen. Furthermore, the learners are able to peer support one another and reflect upon their learning as a collective (V1).

As seen in the previous example, group work and collaboration is always a key feature of my learning design. I use learner-centred activities and often utilise Learning Technologies to support them, for example I deliver a session on Personal Branding for the University's School of Management for postgraduate students on the MBA programme (K1, V4). The learners have to evaluate their current understanding of Social Media's role in developing their own Personal Brand. For this activity I use Padlet, a collaborative online space to facilitate discussions (K4). In the activity I pre-design and place the logos of recognisable social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, plus others) on the Padlet. I give each group an iPad, they discuss their own experiences of using the platforms within their groups and share these with the broader group on the collaborative environment, which updates live as learners enter ideas. Therefore not only are they working in small groups, but also sharing with a larger cohort simultaneously.

I also design and deliver online learning, utilising learning technologies and effective design of the Virtual Learning Environments to enhance the learner experience, by incorporating active learning techniques. Although the design of online learning fundamentally uses constructivist approaches outlined previously, I also use frameworks like the 5 Stage Model (Salmon, 2003. p.29) to ensure learners can overcome challenges like remoteness, to have the confidence to access and engage in online learning. By ensuring that interaction and collaboration between learners is incorporated in the learning design, this enables learners to build communities, co-construct knowledge and understanding in order to support their development. I have achieved this through effective use of collaborative tools, like discussion

forums, blogs and wikis (V2).

An example of active online learning I have designed is the Forensic Science and Criminal Justice MOOC. The lead academics wanted learners to discuss criminal cases in a forum. To make this a more engaging activity I redesigned the discussion to be a role play, with learners assuming the roles and explore the motives of varying agents within the criminal justice system, including the police, judicial system, criminals and victims of crime. This design lifted the discussions from personal opinion, to a more critical analysis, as the learners had to apply the psychology and motivation of the assumed role to their interpretation of the scenarios (K1, K2, K3).

Furthermore within online learning I have enhanced the support for learners by designing and creating a number of (reusable) learning objects to support the development of academic literacies. These resources are openly available on YouTube and have Creative Commons licences for redistribution.

One example is a series of animated videos that use metaphors to explain key skills and approaches to learning. The motivation behind the design of these resources has been to present academic literacies using clear and relatable examples that enable learners to contextualise the intended learning outcomes. For example in the video Reading and Note Making I have compared ill-prepared approaches to reading to going shopping without a list and purchasing items you do not need. The metaphor concludes that if you approach reading with a clear focus, you can critique literature and draw conclusions more effectively. These resources have been proven to be impactful, as they are now used in teaching here at Leicester, delivered contextually within the curriculum of a number of departments (K6).

To support learners with Specific Learning Difficulties, in partnership with the University's AccessAbility Centre, I have created a series of online interactive tutorials to support this specific cohort of students with academic skills they require, e.g. Spelling, Concentration and Memory, amongst other. These resources blend advice and guidance with interactive activities to help them practice the skills (V2).

I hope this case study has demonstrated my effective engagement in the design, planning and supporting of learning. As a result of my strengths in this area, I have been regularly invited to collaborate with peers and support the CPD of others. Not only here at the University of Leicester, but also for external groups and organisations, for example 'Designing Future Learning Scenarios' to a group of teachers from Kazakhstan and 'Using social media in Careers Guidance' to the Association Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). I see this as a further validation of my expertise, which has also resulted in the opportunity to publish my work in the area of podcasting in two book chapters, designed to enhance others' practices:

- Salmon, G., Edirsingha, P., Mobbs, M., Mobbs, R. and Dennet, C. (2008) *How to Create Podcasts for Education*. Open University Press.
- Salmon, G. and Edirsingha, P. (2008) *Podcasting for Learning in Universities*. Open University Press.

## Case Study Two: Assessment and Feedback (A3, A5)

I like to consider myself quite innovative when it comes to the consideration and design of assessment, using it as a method for, as and of learning (Earl, 2006), in both summative and formative context. I am currently undertaking an International Education MA. This course is enabling me to engage in Learning and Teaching theories and practices in a global context, which is impacting on my practice by applying the theory directly in my teaching, aligning practice to literature and making me think more critically when it comes to measuring impact of my practice from a research perspective. One area this is particularly impacting upon is my design of assessment, where I am researching the diverse methods of assessment used across the HE sector and designing a framework to inform assessment selection (V3).

Furthermore, I believe in varied assessment, especially focusing on authentic assessment as a method of developing 21st Century Transferable Skills alongside subject teaching (V4). To do this I often give learners the opportunity to give peer feedback on one-another's presentations. For example in a session with MBA students I get learners to reflect independently upon what they consider their own personal brand to be, by writing a short 30 second pitch on themselves, which they present to peers in small groups, receiving peer feedback. These types of small group presentations and collaborative activities are formative assessment approaches I try to embed across my teaching.

One particularly successful example of an authentic assessment I have designed of this is on a Module for History of Art and Film, which I co-designed and co-deliver with departmental colleagues. The module asks the learners to conceptualise and design a film and art event. This is a group assessment, where learners have to decide team roles and responsibilities, producing an assessed website and business proposal for their event, which they have to pitch to a panel of 'investors' (markers). This enables the learners to develop key digital, communication (written and oral) and business skills, alongside critical analysis of subject material. For this module I lead on the teaching and assessment of the website element. For this I had to design, and have subsequently redesigned the marking criteria and feedback methodologies.

In the first iteration of the marking criteria I designed three broad areas of focus that were assessed, with each of these having a handful of requirements, aligned to the extent they achieved the intended learning outcomes (mark out of 30). Upon reflection, based upon the varying quality of submissions, I felt the learners were not being provided with enough clarity of expectations. I have subsequently redesigned these criteria into a rubric. Still using the three core areas of focus, but now providing learners with clear definitions of what they had to demonstrate, grouped into marking boundaries.

The other part of the assessment on this module is an oral presentation that represents a pitch for investment. Fellow course tutors and I mark it against a rubric. In terms of the sequencing of the assessments, students deliver this summatively assessed presentation before submitting the website. As we provide verbal and written feedback upon the presentation, learners can use it to improve their website. I also provide written feedback to each group on their website submission. The feedback form I designed has four sections; providing reflective statements upon each of the three core areas, aligned to the ILOs and a final feedforward summary on how they could improve in the future (K3).

Throughout my career I have also championed the effectiveness of reflective activities and embedded them in assessment. This has been done to a large extent on the Leicester Award, a suit of extra curricular programmes available to all learners at Leicester. The aim of the programme(s) are for learner to gain recognition for the participation in an extra-curricular activity. In 2011, the Coordinator of the programme approached me to help redesign the structure of the programmes and the way they are assessed. I persuaded her that Open Reflective Blogging was a powerful tool to support learners' self-reflection (Sharma 2010),

receive peer review and develop strong digital footprints which impact positively on the recruitment process (Reppler 2011) (V4). Now all learners on the programmes have to produce an Open Blog Portfolio to present a narrative of their professional development. To measure the impact of this assessment method, we conducted interviews with learners to get their feedback. It became evident that the expected learner benefits were experienced as they understood that such reflective open portfolios help them during the recruitment process and increase their online visibility:

*"I have left the blog open to the public...I know some employers will use the Internet to find out what you have done outside of your C.V."*

Although the actual reflective narrative was marked by the course tutor, they appreciated peer feedback throughout the process:

*"A few random people, about 5, commented on it...when someone had commented on mine, I did go and have a look at their one. Just to take a look at what they were doing."*

But most importantly it encouraged development of their reflective practice skills and without making it explicit to them, the learners were demonstrating the phases of Kolb's Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

*"It was useful because I had to think about areas for development. I didn't know I had to develop my reflection skills until I started reflecting and realised that I wasn't very good at it, so I had to try harder to reflect, by the time I got the final 500 words, I did it really easily."*

The final area of formative assessment I would like to reflect upon is my use of digital tools in formative assessment. Initially within the classroom, I have used audience participation tools, such as Participoll to assess levels of understanding during teaching sessions. Participoll is an online multiple-choice quiz/voting tool that can work on any internet enabled device. This Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) learning design enables learners to participate and actively learn in sessions. I have used it to ask learners questions in sessions and to gather opinions on subjects. This enables me to identify potential shortfalls and misconceptions in learners' knowledge, and consequently tailor sessions and respond to their needs accordingly (V1, K5).

I have also used accreditation features within the Virtual Learning Environment for formative assessment. Drawing upon the expertise from my degree in Physics, for the Introductory Mathematics and Digital Skills module I delivered within Biological Sciences, I have developed a blended course in which the taught materials were delivered via the VLE and each week the students had to answer 15 Multiple Choice Questions from a question bank, ensuring that no two students would receive the same question set. Each question provided the learner with contextual feedback. The learners could choose to carry out these tests in a face-to-face computer lab session, where they could ask myself and the fellow course tutor for guidance to check their understanding (K1, V2)).

Finally, the role of incentivisation as a form of feedback and assessment is something that I have started to incorporate within my learning design, especially within the VLE in the form of Digital Badges. These are awards that learners can receive based upon a predefined set of actions or results. I have incorporated these within Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice in Higher Education, on which I am a tutor and pathway leader. This course is designed in a flipped classroom delivery, meaning that learners are expected to have engaged in a set of pre-session materials before taught session and also do activities post session. To encourage participants to do this, learners are asked to mark selected core materials as 'reviewed', once they have done this they are rewarded with a Digital Badge. The methodology is not only designed as an incentive for learner to do the required activities, but enables us as tutors to track learner engagement in the course and the perceived readiness of learners for taught sessions.

Whilst I hope these case studies have provided evidence of my abilities as a practitioner, I

continue to develop professionally. As a member of the Association of Learning Technologists professional body, I attend the annual conference which always provides an opportunity to engage in the shared practice from across the sector. I have contributed to these conferences by delivering workshops on 'Designing your Personal Learning Environment' (2009) and 'MOOC to mainstream: Curriculum Design' (2015). Furthermore, I am an active member of two special interest groups as within this community; the East Midlands Learning Technologist group and the Games-based Learning Group. In these groups, particularly the latter we share emerging practices and approaches from across the sector.

Beyond accredited courses and professional groups, I consider myself to be an active member of the learning and teaching community at the University of Leicester attending and delivering at numerous learning and teaching focused events throughout the calendar year. I often seek feedback on my practice and teaching through the appraisal process, learner evaluation forms and peer observation where one observer has described me as an "engaging, informative and innovative teacher" (V4).

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