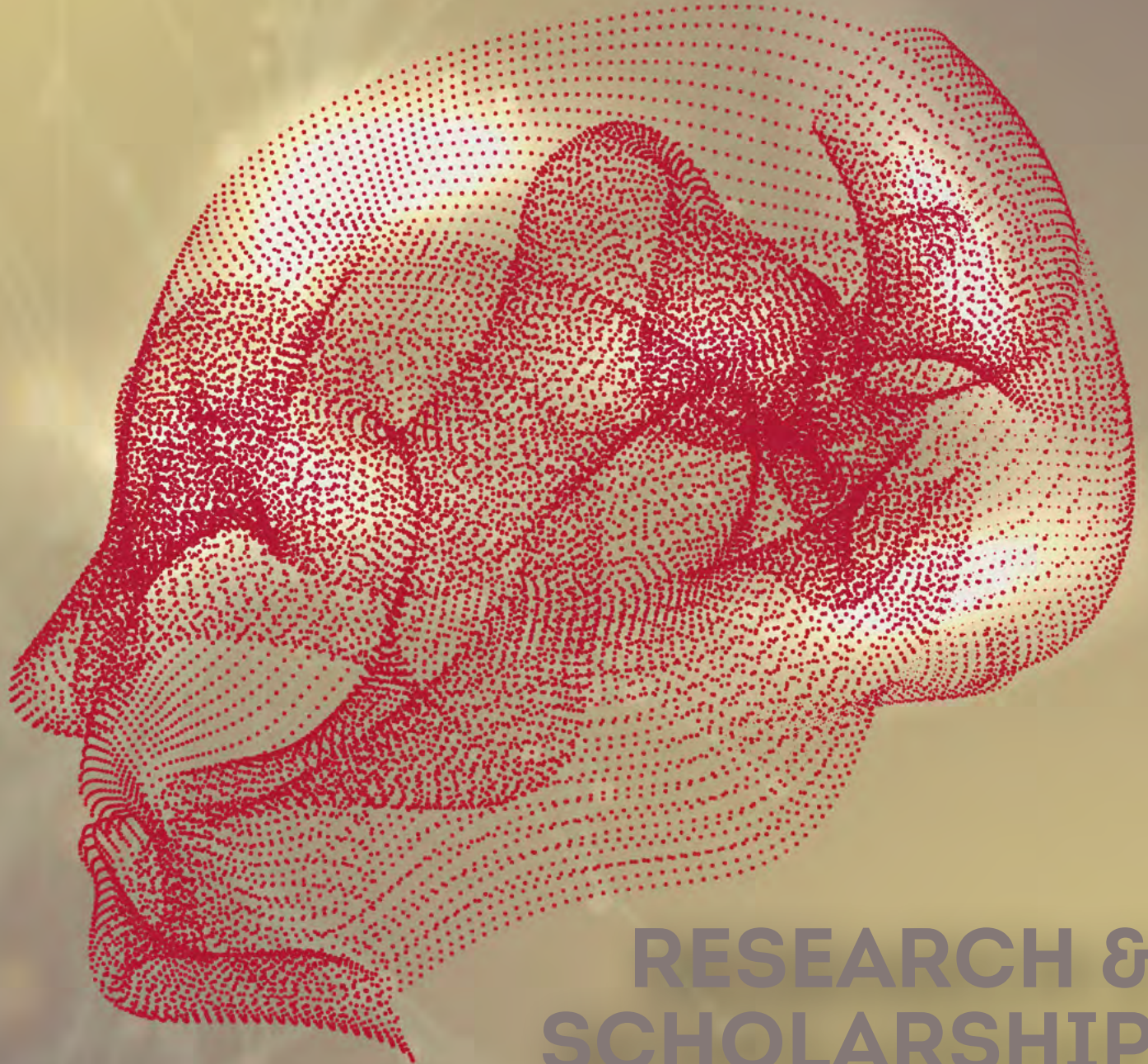




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DEGREES FOR REAL LIFE



RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP SHOWCASE 2022-2023



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WELCOME



It is now 10 years since the launch of our first edition of the Research & Scholarship Showcase in 2013. At the same time, we also launched the first research and scholarship bidding round which has been an annual initiative to enable our staff to receive internal funding to undertake small scale research projects. These initiatives are supplemented by the annual Research and Scholarship Conference in August and the HE Conference in February, which provide the opportunity for staff to disseminate good practice and research project outcomes. All of these activities at University Centre Somerset (UCS) and the wider Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) support our staff with progression in their professional careers and in developing their subject expertise. The projects undertaken form part of the continual enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment and have a positive and demonstrable impact on the student experience.

As we launch this latest Showcase of Research and Scholarship there are two significant awards to celebrate. Firstly, I am delighted to confirm that we have been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Education, a highly sought after and distinguished award recognising the pioneering work undertaken to deliver nursing degrees locally. Secondly, we have received Silver in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023) which denotes Very High Quality with Outstanding Features for our university level provision at UCS. The importance of research, scholarship and well-informed curriculum development to meet the needs of students and employers cannot be overstated and is a key focus of UCS / BTC. We are delighted that our work and commitment in these areas have been nationally recognised.

A huge thank you to all our staff who have contributed to the 2022/23 Showcase and for your time and commitment in writing these articles. I am truly amazed by the incredibly diverse range of projects and good practice taking place. They range from trialling new digital technologies to the decolonisation of the curriculum and improving quality of opportunity for students from underrepresented backgrounds. Some of you are undertaking higher level qualifications and sharing outcomes from your Master's dissertations, others engaging in national networks to help progress a research and scholarship culture within the College-Based Higher Education sector.

I am very proud to present this new publication to you all, and I hope you will join me in congratulating everyone involved in writing for the Showcase, as well as those involved in editing, proofreading and designing this publication.

ANDY BERRY

Principal and Chief Executive
Bridgwater & Taunton College

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With thanks to:

Caroline Warden and Lucy Kidner for proof-reading support
Claire Tinelli-Frost for the publication design



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What are the barriers and opportunities dual practitioners experience when developing their craft of teaching in Further Education environments? (Master's research summary)

Introduction

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) (2018a; 2018b) advocates the current levels of educational reform, further underpinned by enhanced practitioners with very emerging and higher technical skills ability. Practitioners require an impactful and continuous professional development model, built to address such rapid reform and churn. Essentially, increased professional development is required due to industry rapidly changing to meet global shifts, with employers at the core of emerging curriculum design and content. This signals the Government's response to narrowing skills gaps, further fuelling economic growth (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016; Independent Panel on Technical Education, 2016). In summary, this research explored how practitioners have been prepared and developed to ensure effective delivery within these newly formed curriculums.

The research provides important analysis to fuel reflections and strategy for stakeholders. The key stakeholders identified within this study are further education practitioners, providers, industry and learners.

The practitioner is entangled within the term "dual practitioner", or "dual professional", a growing term to signify the sector's response to deliver the Government's reforms of technical education in the Post-16 Skills plan (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016; Independent Panel on Technical Education, 2016). A provider's continuous professional development offer is key (Tully, 2020), in developing practitioners and ensuring they remain at the cutting edge of emerging higher technical skills, enabling the new highly skilled workforce. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) expects industry to support the introduction of new

content, nevertheless, to also empower higher skills within post-16 educational reform through work experience, sharing of skills and investment (CIPD, 2022). The core and fundamental element within this research objective focused upon improving the learner experience. These new cohorts of learners are the pioneers for higher technical and educational reform, ready to build a stronger workforce and economy. Therefore, the drive to put industry at the heart of the curriculum and content, requires post-16 teachers with extremely current and emerging skills. This means that the sector is now upskilling industry professionals to become tomorrow's technical teachers, further securing an impactful learning experience for these pioneering learners.

Whilst stakeholders support the core aim of technical reform, the broader collaboration of multiple stakeholder operational groups require strategy and equivalent engagement. Industry is trying to rapidly find a solution for the skills gaps in their workforces, further gaining an advantage for curriculum content and design. Nevertheless, education is demanding investment from Government to promote the opportunities which a career in education could provide, seeking to recruit more professionals towards the sector, improving upon their own current workforce shortages.

A conceptual framework applied to this study accentuates the relationship between professional development which is targeted and self-selected (independent variable), further exploring the potential impact and effect on practitioner practice (dependent variable). Intuition and previous research suggest that the more relevant and engaging professional development is for practitioners, there will be an increase of influence within their professional practice, evolving their craft of teaching.

The moderator variable underlines the practitioner's experience within the role and previous methods of professional development; however, the mediator variable acknowledges the practitioner's motivation to undertake any form of professional development. The control variable acknowledged within this research removes personal opinions of current educational reform and review.

This social science centred study applied an epistemological lens, exploring the stakeholder reflections, opinions, and beliefs around a practitioner's response to develop. The aim of the research, based within further education environments, considers how teachers improve their pedagogy, connecting previous research to qualitative methodology.

The qualitative data collected from this study explores the quality of understanding, correlated to the practitioners' socially constructed version of reality. The research method focuses within interpretive and naturalistic models endorsing depth of research, consequently removing breadth, advocating the relationship between variables. Interviews qualitatively evidenced the human experience,

personal intent, and preference. Nevertheless, the ethical importance placed upon unconscious bias is key, further ensuring valid data and research. This study followed the guidance and policies sanctioned by the University of Derby (2022) and all participants gave informed consent, were given the right to withdraw, and the research adhered to all confidentiality guidelines.

Qualitative methods used to question the "why, how and what" in current and future planned practitioner professional development, focused on developing impactful classroom-based pedagogy within Further Education. This methodology exposes research depth, crucial to ensure the study can substantiate any proposals focusing on impactful development for all stakeholders.

Literature Review

The Department for Education's (DfE) (2023a; 2023b) intentions are clear, pursuing a higher skills agenda to fuel economic growth. The Association of Colleges (AoC) (2022a; 2022b) remain as potential gatekeepers through the reforms, acknowledging the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2013) and CIPD (2022) demands from industry, yet advocating Meyer and Benavot (2013) seeking to use further education as a solution. Still there is no potential success without collaboration (Foster *et al.*, 2018) further requiring a closer working relationship with all stakeholders.

Undoubtedly all stakeholders value the role of dual professionals (ETF, 2018b), however, with a skills shortage unfolding, industry (Foster *et al.*, 2018; CIPD, 2022) and DfE (2023a; 2023b) will need to resource the potential gap further education providers face without support (Lifelong Education Commission (LEC), 2023). The LEC (2023) further weaves dual practitioners as a fabric of technical skill advancement, noting the required change and challenge of upskilling these in-demand professionals to absorb the craft of teaching.

Fleming (2018) concurs with Augar (2019) considering investment and upskilling as a potential solution to higher skills agendas. Yet too often Dromey and McNeil (2017) and Heick (2022) reference a forced or leader directed professional programme, benefitting the policy maker over the classroom impact (Wiltshier, 2007). GuildHE (2018) and LEC (2023) further entwine to remove the dissection of industry and pedagogical development.

The Ofsted (2023) use of the word pedagogy needs refocusing from leadership demands, to self-directed and trusted heutagogy (Gerstein, 2013; Jones, Penaluna and Penaluna, 2019; Heick, 2022). Tully (2020) endorses McVey's (2016) improvement culture, fostered upon impactful CPD. O'Leary and Wood (2017) note the need not to measure, with Biesta (2007) stating that education is not after a cure.

However, Ofsted (2023) as the quality cornerstone for providers (due to the risk they present), demand providers explore practitioner development that builds over time. Downes (2008) acknowledges the digital world (Siemens, 2005) often used within development, promoting a culture of human collaboration and creativity. The encouragement of pedagogical traits (Lucas, Spencer and Claxton, 2013) refocused within themes, would enable an impactful practitioner development rubric (Collin and Smith, 2021).

Discussion

The research and findings draw attention to the provider's professional development strategy and culture, further connected within the team culture and relationship with the line manager. This discussion section has therefore pondered some questions to the extent a provider and dual practitioner can judge their current impact; what are the barriers and opportunities dual practitioners experience when developing their craft of teaching in Further Education environments?

The research provides some key considerations, these points link to the Professional Standards for Leadership in the Further Education and Training Sector (ETF, 2022).

Professional development strategy and culture

Dual practitioners require a professional development plan that is not forced but self-reflective of their needs and starting point (Tully, 2020; LEC, 2023). Whilst an understanding remains for development that is compliance based, dual practitioners do not view this as professional development (Dromey and McNeil, 2017; LEC, 2023). The ETF Professional Standards for leaders challenge leaders to reflect to ensure that they meet the needs of their staff (Wiltshier, 2007; ETF, 2022). The ETF Professional Standards (2022) further explore the requirements for leaders to provide a sustainable high-quality learning environment, further driving the use of dual practitioners starting point to increase CPD impact (Augar, 2019). Encouraging an improvement culture (McVey, 2016) which allows space for quasi experimental practice is critical (Wiltshier, 2007). Furthermore, how is this supported and evidenced to promote impact (Tully, 2020). The ETF further poses the question to leaders around their currency of educational pedagogy, coercing leaders to maintain, update and develop their classroom expertise (Wiltshier, 2007; ETF, 2022).

Team culture and relationship with the line manager

The line manager's perspective of professional development is critical, are they seeking a cure (Biesta, 2007) for poor performance or driving a starting point of continuous development for all (Heick, 2022)? The ETF Professional Standards (2022) demands leaders to support, inspire and motivate practitioners to accomplish their goals (Herzberg, 1993), further linked to organisation ambitions (ETF, 2022). Does the line manager promote the advantages of reflection, pedagogical discussion and endorse the value placed upon stakeholder voice or seek their own agenda (Gerstein, 2013)? A provider who fosters a culture of inspirational teaching, learning and assessment (ETF, 2022), will increase the positive impact on all stakeholders. Critically, does the line manager and team culture promote the ethos of advancing the craft of teaching or rather the compliance based upon observation and judgements (O'Leary, 2017)? The ETF fuels leaders with evidence-based research to develop practice through informed practice and research (ETF, 2022).

Conclusion

The research question explored and studied the craft of teaching, further pursuing what are the barriers and opportunities dual practitioners experience when developing their craft of teaching in Further Education environments?

The research and findings highlight various opportunities for dual practitioners to develop their craft of teaching. Preceding research and the study's findings equally promote pedagogical discussions between leader and practitioner (ETF, 2022), further evidencing the value providers place upon their development offer, monetary or impact (LEC, 2023; AoC, 2022a). Practitioners value reflection and self-determined direction, reinforced by findings and research (Gerstein, 2013); however, these need to be used to prompt a starting point for development, further increasing intrinsic motivation (Herzberg, 1993) and impact (Tully, 2020). The research and findings encourage impactful CPD that builds over time (O'Leary and Wood, 2017), further highlighting the value placed upon quasi experimental practice (Wiltshier, 2007).

Potential barriers in some cases are bipolar opportunities. For instance, providers are implicated to how they support and value the significance placed upon quasi experimental practice (Wiltshier, 2007), further driving the provider culture and classroom impact. CPD is not a cure (Biesta, 2007) and providers need to ensure that CPD is not generic, tick-boxed or forced (Dromey and McNeil, 2017; GuildHE, 2018).

Recommendations

The research study concludes further advising recommendations post research. Dual practitioners are exposed to a rich network of resources, however the practitioner's motivation to improve fundamentally drives the providers' improvement culture (McVey, 2016). Therefore, opportunities for dual practitioners to develop their craft of teaching is dependent on multiple factors, further considering the opportunity to develop could present a potential barrier, if the practitioner is unmotivated. The research study's recommendations can be subdivided into 2 sections. Firstly, development strategy and culture, and secondly team culture and the relationship with the line manager, with each section further recommending key strategic direction post research.

Development strategy and culture recommendations

1. Dual practitioners require a self-reflective professional and pedagogical development plan correlated within appraisals and line manager dialogue, increasing engagement and potential impact.
2. Ensure dual practitioners have awareness of their pedagogical starting point, applying this starting point to future development to secure increased impact within their pedagogical development.
3. Promote, support and evidence the positives of quasi experimental practice, further securing this within the providers' improvement culture.
4. Ensure dual practitioners' pedagogical and professional development is linked to greater sources of evidence than observation. These sources could include stakeholder voice, curriculum planning and curriculum data.

Team culture and relationship with the line manager recommendations

5. Ensure line managers see professional development as a starting point or journey, rather than using professional development as a cure or tick box exercise.
6. Uphold line managers promoting the advantages of reflection, pedagogical discussion and further advocate the value placed upon stakeholder voice, curriculum planning and curriculum data.
7. Ensure the line manager and team culture promote the ethos of advancing the craft of teaching, rather than promoting compliance or erroneous judgements based upon observation.

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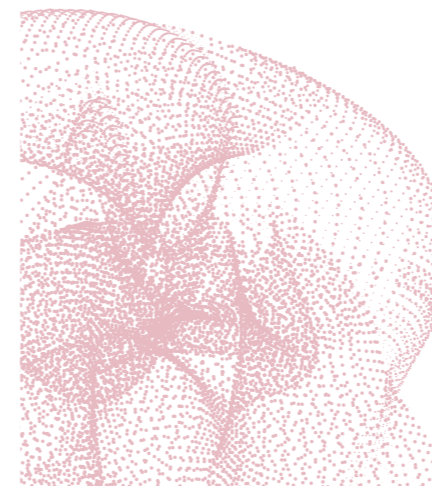
An interim evaluation of the University Centre Somerset Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025 undertaken in 2022-23 using data available from 2021-22

Executive Summary

A review of the most recent data available (from 2021-22) undertaken during the academic year 2022-23 reveals that University Centre Somerset (UCS) has surpassed the majority of its milestones and targets set out in its Access and Participation Plan 2020-25. This interim evaluation of the plan examines the key areas of activity that were planned in order to achieve the milestones and targets. It reviews these in light of nationally published reports and their findings to ensure that UCS is taking account of national thinking and good practice. In addition to confirming that UCS is in line with national good practice, this evaluation concludes with confirmation of the exact position of UCS in relation to each target and proposes areas of focus to enable UCS to continue to meet and surpass its targets in relation to those from underrepresented groups being able to access higher education, succeed whilst at UCS and progress into employment or further study.

Introduction

'Access and participation plans set out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education' (Office for Students (OfS), 2023a). They form part of the OfS regulatory framework, and a university or college must have an Access and Participation Plan if they are registered with the OfS in the 'approved fee cap' category. Our current plan runs from 2020-2025.



On 27 March 2023, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) released figures indicating that 'we could see up to 30% more higher education applicants over the remainder of the decade, intensifying competition for places and posing risks to disadvantaged students' (UCAS, 2023). Set this against the wider context, that includes the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis, and the challenges of ensuring parity of access and participation become all the more evident.

Delivering Our Plan

Aim	Target Group	Description
Reduce access gap from underrepresented groups	Socio-economic	Reduce the access gap between full time Quintile 1 (Q1) students on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and Quintile 5 (Q5) students
Reduce access gap from underrepresented groups	Socio-economic	Reduce the access gap between part time Q1 students on the IMD and Q5 students
Reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	Disabled	Reduce the percentage difference in degree attainment (1 st and 2:1) between disabled and non-disabled students
Reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	Disabled	Reduce the continuation gap between full time disabled and non-disabled students
Reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	Disabled	Reduce the continuation gap between part time disabled and non-disabled students
Reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Reduce the continuation gap between full time POLAR Q1 and Q5 students
Reduce the progression gap for students from underrepresented groups	Disabled	Reduce the percentage difference in progression into employment or further study between disabled and non-disabled students

Figure 1: Access and participation plan aims and milestones (University Centre Somerset, 2020)

To make progress against the milestones identified in figure 1, eight key programmes of activity have been identified. A brief summary of progress against each is outlined below.

1. Sponsoring the Bridgwater & Taunton College Multi Academy Trust (MAT) to support Governance, pre-16 attainment and aspirations in the schools that are part of the Trust.

The Trust has expanded to include 7 schools, a number of which have a member of Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) management on the Board of Governors. The Principal and Chief Executive of BTC is the Chair of the Board of Governors of the MAT. The aim of this strategy has been to support the embedding of good practice in each of the MAT schools, whilst allowing them to retain their own unique identity, that enables them to serve their school and

At University Centre Somerset (UCS), part of Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC), we are fully committed to promoting, maintaining and supporting equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work, creating an environment that inspires students to achieve their full potential, gain self-esteem and respect. Our Access and Participation Plan sets out an analysis of underrepresented groups in Higher Education (HE) at BTC/UCS with the purpose of identifying any gaps between underrepresented groups and their peers.

wider community and be responsive to local needs.

The involvement of BTC at this level has enhanced the opportunities to raise aspiration through partnership and collaborative working. This is demonstrated by the fact that the vast majority of schools in the MAT have become well performing schools with a 'Good' rating from Ofsted. Brymore Academy is one of the top performing schools within Somerset. In 2023 the Multi Academy Trust was the winner of the 'Innovation' category at the National MAT awards.

In 2022 the Director for Fair Access at the OfS asked BTC to write a case study of the fact that BTC set up

and sponsors a Multi Academy Trust. The OfS said that it was unusual for a college to have taken the lead in sponsoring a MAT and that they would like us to share information on why and when this was first set up and its impact at that point in time in 2022. This was part of the launch of the new direction of Access and Participation to support attainment in schools. This case study was published by the OfS in April 2022 (Office for Students, 2022b) as an example of effective practice.

2. Working with External Partners

BTC is one of 14 partners involved in the delivery of the Next Steps South-West (NSSW) project, the South-West brand of the national Uni Connect project. Two of the outreach officers for the Somerset arm of the project are based at BTC and are line managed by a member of the University Centre Somerset (UCS) Higher Education Team. This model allows for direct communication between those delivering the project to young people in the area and UCS. This fosters opportunities for collaborative working and joined up thinking, whilst maintaining the impartiality of the NSSW offer. During the 2021/22 academic year, Somerset delivery accounted for 39.3% of total delivery across the NSSW of which 45% was delivered by the BTC based outreach officers. As at January 2023 the BTC based officers had delivered 182 sessions for the academic year 22/23 accounting for 46% of all Somerset delivery, engaging with 13 different institutions (Chedzoy, 2023).

The collaborative approach taken to widening participation has allowed BTC/UCS to become involved in further project opportunities such as the University of Exeter 'Bridges to HE' collaborative Further Education progression programme. This programme is delivering sessions to BTC FE students with the aim of encouraging young people to consider Higher Education. The collaborative approach in place is working effectively to support those from underrepresented groups.

3. Offering Accessible Courses that Meet Employer Needs

The UCS HE offer has developed through employer engagement to ensure a responsive model with real, local employment opportunities for UCS graduates. Nowhere is this more evident, than in the work that has been undertaken alongside the National College for Nuclear to develop programmes of study that respond to the needs of the employers working on the Hinkley Point Project. Similarly, we have developed the breadth of our nursing offer in order to respond to the identified needs of the local NHS trust. The provision has grown extensively from initially offering a Trainee Nurse Associate (TNA) apprenticeship based

on a Foundation Degree, to then obtaining Nursing and Midwifery Council approval to run full nursing degree apprenticeships in both adult and mental health pathways, and then expanding to provide direct entry (non-apprenticeship) nursing degree and TNA routes. Although these course offers are new (starting in 2022/23), there is already evidence to suggest their impact locally. Internal BTC MIS data indicates that there has been a 4% increase in offers to students studying on the BTC Access to HE Nursing Diploma for a 2023/24 start compared to the 22/23 cohort suggesting a progression pathway for learners returning to education.

Quintile 1 are postcodes that are least likely to enter HE and Quintile 5 are postcodes where people are most likely to enter HE. TUNDRA (Tracking Underrepresentation by Area) is an area-based measure of 16-year-old state-funded mainstream school pupils in England who completed GCSEs in summer 2012-2016 and their participation in higher education at age 18 or 19. Quintile 1 are those least likely to enter HE and Quintile 5 are those most likely to enter HE.

Our data for these measures in June 2023 demonstrates:

- TNA is made up of students of whom 65% come from POLAR4 Quintiles 1, 2 and 3; 27% are from Q1 and this is the largest single quintile group. This course is therefore having a significant impact in relation to widening participation of underrepresented groups from postcodes where people do not historically enter higher education.
- TUNDRA data highlights an even clearer remit of this course for widening participation as 83% of TNA students are from TUNDRA Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 of whom 32% (the largest quintile group) are from Quintile 1. The national average in 2021-22 (the most recent data available on the OfS Access and Participation Plan data dashboard (OfS, 2023c) shows 46.5% being from TUNDRA Q 1, 2 and 3. So, the TNA programme is significantly ahead of this national picture.
- 10% of TNA students declare themselves to be non-white which is significantly higher than the population of Somerset which is 4% as confirmed by the Office for National Statistics 2021 Census data. Again, this demonstrates very positive impact of this course within the local community of Somerset.

The data shows the success of the strategy to work with a large local employer (in this case the NHS Trust) to develop a curriculum that meets their needs, leads to employment and has a positive impact on the engagement of those from underrepresented groups.

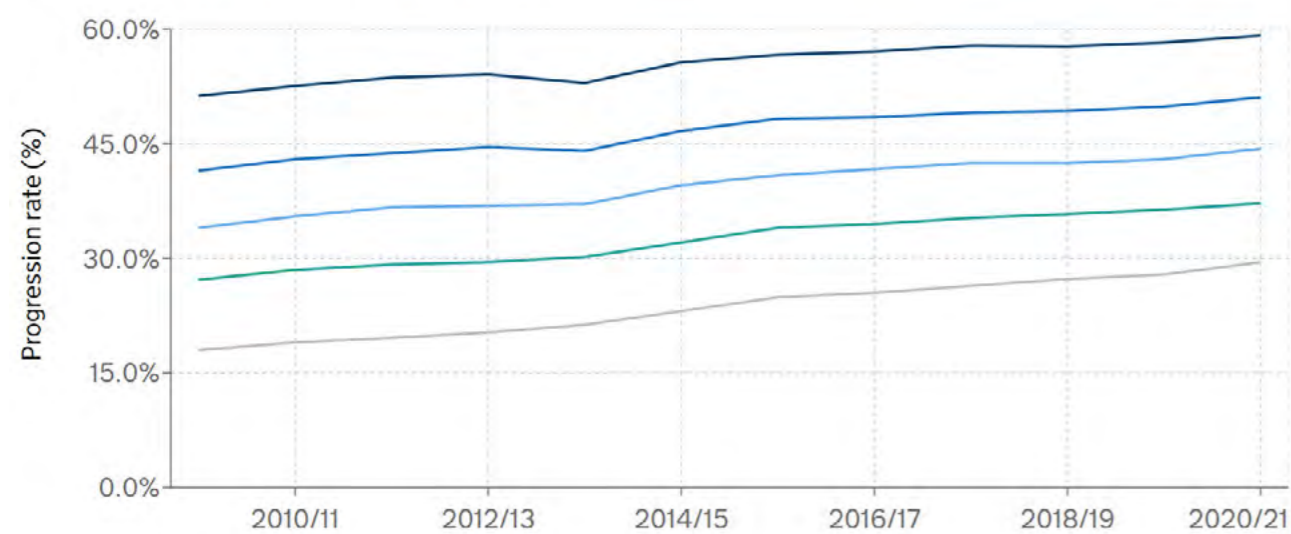
The general principles which underpin the UCS offer of accessible Higher Education for local people include the concept of degrees for real life. A foundation degree to top-up pathway is pivotal to this strategy. It reduces the barrier of a high UCAS tariff by offering the lower foundation degree tariff in the first instance (typically 48 points) and a progression pathway to a full honours degree via the top-up route, allowing students to 'find their feet' in HE. This approach is effective in enabling underrepresented students to access HE at UCS.

4. Focused Tutorials

Although the Government statistics for the academic year 2020/21 (Department for Education, 2023) indicate a narrowing of the gap nationally for progression to HE between the most advantaged (POLAR Quintile 5) and the most disadvantaged (POLAR Quintile 1), there still remains a 29.7 percentage points (pp) gap between the two groups as shown in Figure 2 below.

The latest TUNDRA data for UCS (OfS Access and Participation Plan data dashboard 2023) that is now

Progression to HE by age 19 by POLAR Disadvantage



- ◊ HE Progression Rate (Q1 - Most Disadvantaged, England)
- ◊ HE Progression Rate (Q2, England)
- ◊ HE Progression Rate (Q3, England)
- ◊ HE Progression Rate (Q4, England)
- ◊ HE Progression Rate (Q5 - Most Advantaged, England)

Source: Matched data from the DfE National Pupil Database, HESA Student Record, ESFA ILR and OfS POLAR4 quintile

Figure 2: Statistics on progress by POLAR Quintile (Department for Education, 2023)

being used by the OfS in replacement of the POLAR data, illustrates that 50% of our students come from Quintile 1 (see Figure 3 below).

Furthermore, research from the Higher Education

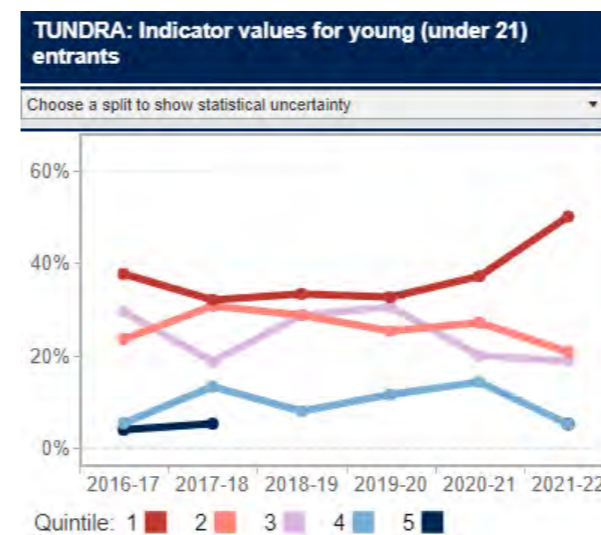


Figure 3: TUNDRA: indicator values for young (under 21) entrants (Office for Students, 2023c)

Policy Institute (HEPI) (Coombs, 2021) suggests that students from more socio-economically disadvantaged families are more likely to be First-in-Family (FIF) or First Generation HE Students. The same report observes that: 'First-in-family students have higher non-continuation rates than those with parents who have been through the higher education system ... These findings underline the importance of equipping first-generation students with the tools to navigate the university system past the point of admission'.

In line with the HEPI report recommendation that 'all students should be provided with a regular and familiar point of contact' (Coombs, 2021), all UCS students have the backing of a tutor, a named staff member that can be a first point of call for concerns, help, advice and guidance.

At UCS we hold tutorials that enable us to consider the individual needs of our students. This means that we are able to explore what support or signposting is most appropriate to an individual without making assumptions of need. This process is working effectively and will be further enhanced by the introduction of UCS Elevate in September 2023.

5. Higher Education Academic Development Study Skills Sessions (HEADStart)

'An interesting and often overlooked barrier to progression for disadvantaged students is their potential lack of information literacy: they often have

little experience of how to use a library, search effectively for information and use appropriate scholarly sources' (Robinson and Savestrini, 2020).

UCS HEADStart sessions (Higher Education Academic Development) are delivered by the BTC Learning Resources Service and are aimed at students new to HE. They are tailored to suit each programme and feature examples and practical activities associated with specific research needs. Refresher sessions are delivered to 2nd and 3rd year students and are tailored to their study needs. This is achieved through a close collaboration between the library staff and course leaders/module tutors. Sessions have been delivered through synchronous and asynchronous methods. Additionally, some of the sessions are delivered to students at Level 3 to support them with their transition to HE. The detailed evaluations of the HEADStart programme provide significant evidence of its impact on students. This includes positive impact for those from underrepresented groups as well as other students.

6. Effective Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Our annual Higher Education Self-Evaluation Document (SED) is a detailed analysis of Teaching, Learning and Assessment across all the courses UCS provide. It allows for a proactive review process and helps to identify key areas for improvement or development moving forward. It also provides an opportunity for evaluation against priorities identified in the previous academic cycle. This approach allows for the consideration of the needs of all students and helps identify potential barriers to participation for UCS students.

Students' opinions are actively sought via 'Student Voice', allowing students to directly feedback and comment on the teaching, learning and assessment on their course in an appropriate professional and documented environment. This feedback is considered at a strategic level as part of the quality review process. This fits with the good practice recommendation made by AdvanceHE to 'Treat feedback as part of an ongoing, positive relationship, not a one-off event' (Pitt and Quinlan, 2022).

Continued monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment will continue to feed into developments and the very high quality with outstanding features standard that has been confirmed by the Silver Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF 2023) award. In the report from the TEF 2023 panel (OFS, 2023e), it states on page 3: 'The panel judged there to be compelling evidence in the provider and student submissions and the indicators that the very high quality and outstanding features apply to all the provider's groups of students, including students from underrepresented groups'.

7. UCS Elevate

'UCS Elevate' was launched in September 2023 to provide a framework with a consistent and purposeful approach to supporting HE students to build the skills and knowledge they will need to flourish in their chosen careers. The aim of this programme is to support students from all backgrounds, including underrepresented groups, through a structured series of topics which builds resilience and enhances academic, professional and personal development, as well as self-reflection, in order to develop real life skills for real world success. UCS Elevate is developed around six strands:

- Industry ready
- Highly skilled
- Professional
- Empowered
- Knowledgeable
- Community minded

The intention is to capture students' confidence levels across these different strands at the start and end of their course. The impact of this enhancement activity will then be evaluated.

8. Financial support for eligible students

'Financial barriers are often at the core of concerns about higher education opportunities for disadvantaged students' (Robinson and Savestrini, 2020). This is an issue for concern that has come into closer focus as the UK emerges from the pandemic into a cost-of-living crisis. A research poll commissioned by the OfS

(2023d) and published on 17 March 2023 found that 'rises in the cost of living have had a reported impact on many of the students polled. Almost one in five respondents said that they had considered dropping out of university or college because of such increases.' Furthermore, the poll found that this was more the case for 'disabled students (30 per cent of whom had considered it, compared with 14 per cent of those without a disability)'. In the academic year 2021/22, 33 bursary awards were made by UCS. Figure 4 below shows the categories against which bursaries were awarded.

This illustrates that 50% of the total bursaries awarded were to support students with specific barriers to accessing higher education. 33% of the total bursaries made were to support childcare costs which represent a significant barrier to mature students with family, returning to education. In its 2019 annual review the OfS noted that: 'one of the most dramatic changes since the introduction of fees at the £9,000 level has been the rapid decline in the number of mature students attending university. Since 2012, the number entering higher education over the age of 25 has halved'. Students have confirmed that the bursary funds awarded to them have assisted with them staying on programme. Bursaries are therefore an effective means of supporting disadvantaged students.

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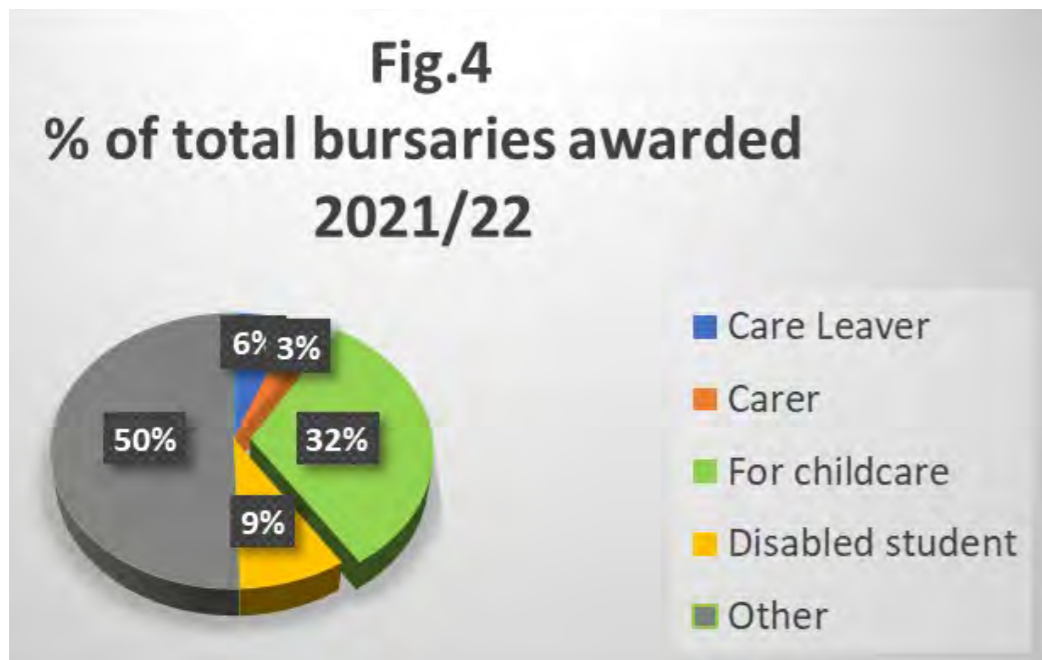


Figure 4: % of total bursaries awarded 2021/22 (University Centre Somerset, 2023)

Conclusion:

What this all means and where we go next

Figure 5 below shows actual progress in percentage point terms against the aims we set out in our Access and Participation Plan and the latest data available on the OfS data dashboard.

Aim	Description	Baseline data	2020-21 Milestone	OFS DATA FOR ACTUAL PROGRESS AGAINST BASELINE DATA	2021-22 Milestone	OFS DATA FOR ACTUAL PROGRESS AGAINST BASELINE DATA
Reduce access gap from underrepresented groups	Reduce the access gap between full time Q1 students on the IMD and Q5 students	8pp gap	7.5pp	3.7pp	7pp	-8.66pp Achieved
Reduce access gap from underrepresented groups	Reduce the access gap between part time Q1 students on the IMD and Q5 students	16.9pp gap	15.5pp	5.6pp	14pp	0.0pp Achieved
Reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups	Reduce the percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between disabled and non-disabled students	10pp gap	9pp	32.6pp *	7pp	-11.1pp Achieved
Reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	Reduce the continuation gap between full time disabled and non-disabled students	6.9pp gap	6pp	-2.4pp	5.5pp	-4.5pp Achieved
Reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	Reduce the continuation gap between part time disabled and non-disabled students	6.3pp gap	6pp	21pp *	5.5pp	No OFS data Available
Reduce the continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups	Reduce the continuation gap between full time POLAR Q1 and Q5 students	10.1pp gap	9pp	No OFS data Available	8pp	No OFS data Available
Reduce the progression gap for students from underrepresented groups	Reduce the percentage difference in progression into employment or further study between disabled and non-disabled students	3.7pp gap	3pp	No OFS data Available	2pp	No OFS data Available

Figure 5: Statistical summary of progress to date against access and participation plan aims and milestones (University Centre Somerset, 2023; Office for Students, 2023c)

***Data skew attributed to impact of lockdowns during COVID-19 pandemic.** 'The sector-level trends reported in the student characteristics dashboards and key findings include data up to the 2021-22 academic year. There may be some expectation that these statistics will reflect changes due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, particularly given that the UK entered three national lockdowns throughout the period March 2020 to July 2021' (OfS, 2023g).

We can demonstrate significant progress in terms of our aim to reduce access gaps between full time Quintile 1 students (most deprived) on the Index of Multi Deprivation (IMD) and Quintile 5 (least deprived). We set a milestone of reducing the gap in 2020-21 by 0.5 pp to 7.5pp from a baseline of 8pp, and our OfS data shows that we actually reduced it by 4.3pp to 3.7pp and to an impressive -8.66pp in 2021-22 against a milestone of 7pp. This represents a closure of the gap within 2 years of 16.66pp. Likewise, for part time students, the gap has been closed by 16.9pp from a starting baseline of 16.9pp to OfS data of 0.00 pp in 2021-22 (against a milestone of 14.0pp).

Whilst nationally the trend is for an increase in representation from Quintile 1 IMD students, UCS is well above the averages and our progress to date demonstrates the success of our flexible delivery strategies, entry requirements and internal transition pathways from courses such as the Access to HE Diploma.

Our focus on reducing attainment gaps between disabled and non-disabled students again mirrors a national trend as identified by the OfS (2023g) in their student outcomes data. However, our progress shows a greater improvement. Continuation rates for full time disabled students 2020-21 improved by 9.3pp from a baseline of 6.9pp to -2.4pp. This fell by a further 2.1pp to -4.5pp for 2021-22. It appears that the impact of the pandemic is demonstrable in our attainment gap data for disabled students in 2020-21, with a 32.6pp gap recorded between non-disabled and disabled students' attainment rates, up 22.6pp on the 10pp baseline data.

This is reflective of the issues faced by many students during the lockdown periods and also the rise in students identifying issues with their mental health during this period: 'the economic, social and educational consequences of COVID-19 have the potential to affect disabled students particularly negatively. According to the Office for National Statistics (2022), around 65% of disabled adults said coronavirus-related concerns were affecting their wellbeing, leading to increased stress and anxiety' (ONS, 2022). However, the data for 2021/22 indicates a significant improvement with the data showing a 21.1pp improvement from the baseline data of 10pp to -11.1pp indicating our students with a disability attained better than our non-disabled students.

To progress further, we aim to gain an even greater understanding of the data so we can translate this into active support for ALL students. We would also benefit from further engagement with the student body, through the Student Union Executive, student voice and the quality improvement cycle, to capture more specific feedback and opinion related to the Access and Participation Plan and to explain our targets and the progress being made. We need to ensure we understand the range and depth

of the disabilities our students face with each new cohort, ensure that additional needs are understood and supported from the start of the student journey, whilst avoiding an assumption of need based on a declared disability in favour of a consultative dialogue.

The ultimate goal would be a 0pp attainment gap with all students, irrespective of underrepresentation, achieving top level degree attainment. Using the UCS Elevate framework and tutorials to target appropriate support to all students and ensuring that changes in student circumstances (such as those declared through the extenuating circumstances process) are also captured throughout the student journey, we can improve even further.

In conclusion, the progress made to date has exceeded expectations, but we must not be complacent. Our next steps are to understand in greater detail what we are doing well and to ensure we drill down into the data fully to capture and disseminate good practice and identify areas where we could improve student experience. We are making great progress, but we have the opportunity to create a market leading model to the benefit of our whole UCS and BTC community as well as wider dissemination of good practice externally.

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JOHN BAGLOW

Lecturer
Teacher Training

Why use Class Notebook?

Introduction

This study aims to establish how Class Notebook, a digital notebook which is part of the Microsoft Teams set of software, is being used and to evaluate its contribution to teaching. I have tried to avoid sweeping generalisations; Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC) has a wide range of programmes of different lengths, levels and student cohorts, so any evaluation of Class Notebook must take these differences into account.

It goes without saying that whenever we consider adopting a teaching resource or strategy, we should reflect on its contribution to the students' overall learning experience. What criteria do we apply? How can we judge the effectiveness of a resource?

For this research project we have drawn on Donaldson's (2015) very useful checklist of criteria for effective teaching and learning. Donaldson defines pedagogy as the selection of classroom methods in light of the purposes of the curriculum and the needs of the learners. He also adds that decisions about teaching and learning are very context and purpose specific and are best taken by the teacher themselves. In other words, the teacher should not be governed by these principles but should work towards those which are most appropriate in the context in which they are working. This is good advice.

Other such checklists exist, of course, but Donaldson's seems to be both comprehensive and has many features in common with other widely quoted taxonomies. We have not used Rosenshine's (2012) set of principles as that concentrates more on the practicalities of planning and delivering a teaching session rather than looking at the overarching principles.

Criteria for evaluating the College's use of Class Notebook

It would be hard to relate many of Donaldson's criteria specifically to the use of Class Notebook, but there are four which College tutors involved in this project felt that it made a specific contribution to, to differing degrees:

- Encouraging collaboration
- Employing a broad repertoire of teaching approaches.
- Reinforcing digital competence
- Promoting problem solving, creative and critical thinking.

Of course, Class Notebook is not the sole or arguably even the best way of meeting these criteria but there is evidence in college that it does offer innovative ways of working towards them.

Darabi, Sikorski and Harvey (2006) taxonomy of characteristics of effective teaching includes several characteristics for which there is evidence in the way Class Notebook is being used in BTC programmes but there is one, namely "facilitating access to course content", which is the way I saw Class Notebook used most extensively. Therefore, I shall examine the College's use of Class Notebook against Donaldson's four criteria and the additional one from Darabi, Sikorski and Harvey.

Though critical literature on the use of digital notebooks is in short supply, there are numerous uncritical articles and blogs which seem to assume that any new technology should be welcomed wholeheartedly regardless of how effective it is or whether its use is justified by the outcomes. Some of these read more like Microsoft publicity material or manuals than appraisals of Class Notebook's effectiveness.

a) Facilitating access to course content

Class Notebook gives the tutor the facility to set out a wide range of text, videos, slides and other resources and links in the appropriate sequence. In this respect it has some features in common with Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environments (VLE). Probably the most common use of Class Notebook in BTC is for access to course content, which means that it has much in common with VLEs such as Blackboard.

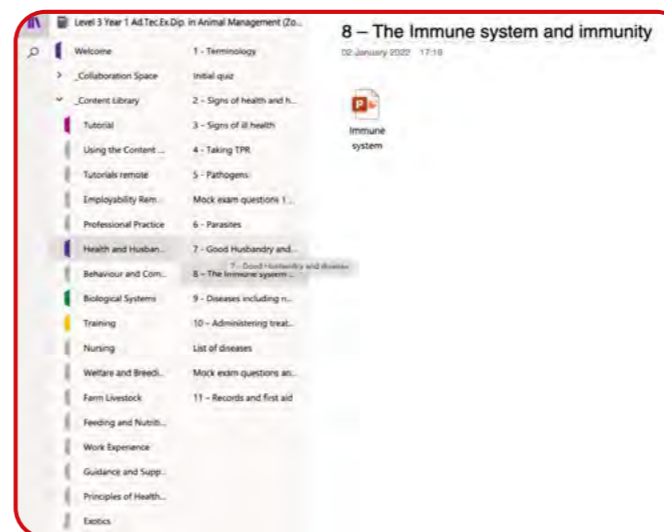


Figure 1: Animal Management

Here is an example of Class Notebook from Animal Management courses (Figure 1). Students are able to access the materials and resources which are set out so that they can see a clear thread running through each section. This contrasts with using Word files in the General section of each Team where such materials are all stored in discrete folders and files which are not linked or in sequence as they are shown here.

Images are added to improve the visual effect:

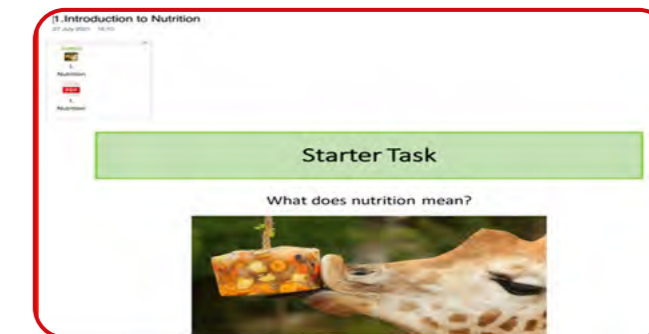


Figure 2: Animal Management

Below is a German course (Figure 3) where students move seamlessly from one item to another. The fact that materials and tasks are laid out in the logical sequence in which they should be carried out, clearly lends itself to both synchronous and asynchronous teaching. What is more, having many materials readily accessible and visible can make the teaching programme more accessible to students with a range of impairments (though very few students who responded to our questionnaire declared that they had an impairment).

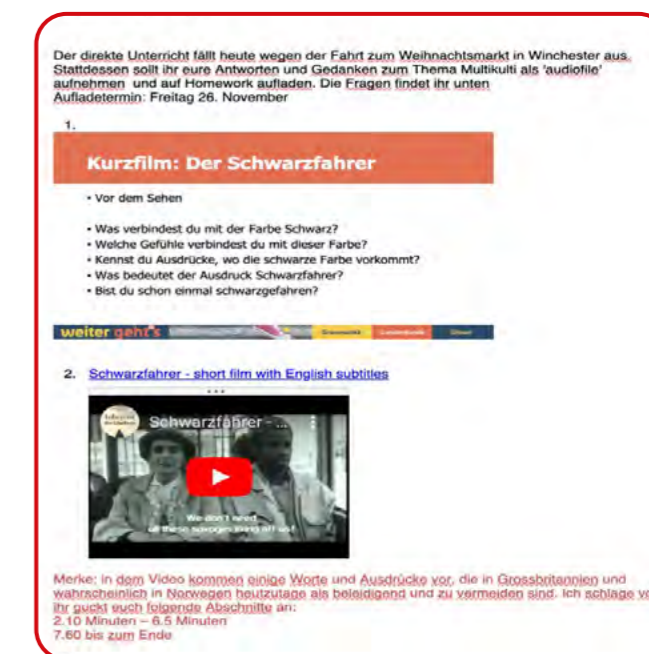


Figure 3: German for Norwegian students

This is an example from A-Level Law (Figure 4); students can access a sequence of factual material, integrated with specific tasks they are asked to complete.

Some classes in the study do not use Class Notebook to give students access to course materials, preferring to use Teams General as the vehicle for that. It would be interesting to research what tutors see as the advantages and disadvantages of that approach.

b) Encouraging collaboration

As well as using Class Notebook as a way of giving students access to materials, resources and tasks, it is used by the participating tutors as a vehicle for setting tasks, submitting homework and collaborating.

Acharya and Czajkiewicz (2008) cited by San Wong, Wong and Mahmud (2022) make a claim which is supported by evidence from BTC. They point out that Class Notebook can be used "to facilitate students' collaborative activities during or after the class, promoting interactive learning in the classroom" (p. 16). Similarly, Bethea-Hampton and Holder (2018) claim a digital notebook gives students multiple opportunities to communicate their thinking and creativity, assisting them in becoming creative collaborators. Does the reality live up to these claims?

One tutor in particular found that Class Notebook made a real contribution to the effectiveness of some classroom sessions. She describes how she uses Class Notebook:

Students have been able to create a bank of quotes from the text which they will all have access to for revision in the future. I am also able to access the space live in the lesson to see who is adding what to the space. This has been beneficial as I have been able to see who has been adding which quotes and if all students have understood the task and are linking the correct quotes to the questions. I have then been able to go around to students who are struggling and provide some scaffolding or reiterate parts of the task so that they understand. (Williams, 2022).

This can be seen in Figure 5.

Interestingly, it seems that the area named Collaboration Space tends not to be used for collaborative activities by the tutors involved in this research activity. They prefer to use the students' individual channels and Class Notes in Class Notebook.

2. Intention
18 September 2022 09:41

What does it mean to 'intend' the criminal consequence?

One type of mens rea that may be required by an offence in order to find a defendant guilty is that they **intended** the criminal consequence.

Intention is the most serious form of mens rea, the most serious crimes will require proof of an intention to commit the actus reus in order to find a defendant guilty.

For example, a defendant will only be guilty of murder if they intended to cause the death of victim or if they intended to seriously harm them and that this caused their death; if it can only be proved that a defendant was reckless as to the victim's death occurring they cannot be found guilty of murder.

Legal definition of intent: The criminal law recognises two types of intention:

1. Direct intention
2. Indirect (oblique) intention

1. Direct intention:
A defendant may directly intend a criminal consequence.

General definition:

Mohan (1976)
The defendant was driving in his car and responded to a police officer's signal to stop, the police officer believed that the defendant was spending. The defendant slowed down but then accelerated towards the PC. The PC moved out of the way and the defendant drove off. This defendant was charged with attempt to cause bodily harm by intentionally driving at a police constable, the jury asked for a definition of intention. The jury were directed that the prosecution had to prove that this defendant realised that such wanton driving would be likely to cause bodily harm.
Held: direct intention is a decision to bring about, so far as it lies in the defendant's powers, the criminal consequence, no matter whether the defendant desired that consequence or not.

2. Indirect intention:
A court may also find that a defendant has indirectly intended a criminal act (consequence). In order to prove indirect intention there is a 2-part test.

1. Was the outcome a virtual certainty of the defendant's actions?
2. Did the defendant realise this?

What type of test is this?

Figure 4: A-Level Law

The Tempest: Critic Quotes

"The whole sense of Caliban being taught language is cultural."
"Caliban is 'the other' and Prospero has power over him through language".
-Cicily Berry

Miranda

- Clark - "Miranda has acted as Prospero's preserver."
- Feminism wow
- Brett - "She shows extreme subservience to a man she has only just met." Feminism but the opposite because men bad grrrr
- Thompson - "Miranda demonstrates she has fully internalised the patriarchal assumption that a woman's main function is to provide a legitimate succession." Links to previous point - Miranda is just accustomed to being subservient due to her father...?

Lillia Grindlay 'Ferdinand and Miranda are characters playing the roles that Prospero has set for them'

- Prospero uses that 'aside' or the audience to express his true intentions
- Ariel, under Prospero's instruction, is the one who moves Ferdinand to Miranda so they could meet
- Kind of uses reverse psychology to manipulate them to want to be together.

Caliban is lost without the civilising influence exerted on him by prospero
-Griffiths
Every character is driven by an internal cry for freedom
-Sharpe
Ariel and Caliban to prospero are like Plato's "two seeds of the soul, the noble and the hideous"
-Wilson Knight
Addresses the problematic expectations of women in a patriarchal society
-Johnson
We identify prospero in some measure with Shakespeare himself
-Dowdin

Figure 5: English A-Level

Below (Figure 6) is an example of how a student has produced some notes during their class; these notes are available in real time to the teacher and are saved for future access:

Presentation Chapter 16
Friday, 8 October 2021 11:27

- Most friends had left to Pakistan or got killed
- Kabul was under the Russian's control
- Rahim prays
- Rahim found hard doing things because of his arthritis (specially in the winter)
- Baba is dead
- It is from Rahim kam's perspective
- He talks about how he had a routine and friends
- It has been 10 years since Ali and Hassan left
- The Sherawi -> The Russian army who took over Afghanistan
-> occupied the country for a decade
- Everything is dead and rotten -> "Rotten donkey"
- Hassan is going to become a father soon
-> expecting in winter
-> wants to have a boy to have him carry down the legacy

Quotes
"Rotten donkey"
Prospero pages on basic

Figure 6: English A-Level

Here a student has made notes in class; not only can the tutor access these notes as they are being written, the student and the tutor will also have future access to them (see Figure 7):

The Tempest: Critic Quotes

The Tempest: Critic Quot...

The Tempest: Character ...

The Tempest: Theme qu...

"The whole sense of Caliban being taught language is cultural."
"Caliban is 'the other' and Prospero has power over him through language".
-Cicily Berry

Miranda

- Clark - "Miranda has acted as Prospero's preserver."
- Feminism wow
- Brett - "She shows extreme subservience to a man she has only just met." Feminism but the opposite because men bad grrrr
- Thompson - "Miranda demonstrates she has fully internalised the patriarchal assumption that a woman's main function is to provide a legitimate succession." Links to previous point - Miranda is just accustomed to being subservient due to her father...?

Lillia Grindlay 'Ferdinand and Miranda are characters playing the roles that Prospero has set for them'

- Prospero uses that 'aside' or the audience to express his true intentions
- Ariel, under Prospero's instruction, is the one who moves Ferdinand to Miranda so they could meet
- Kind of uses reverse psychology to manipulate them to want to be together.

Caliban is lost without the civilising influence exerted on him by prospero
-Griffiths
Every character is driven by an internal cry for freedom
-Sharpe
Ariel and Caliban to prospero are like Plato's "two seeds of the soul, the noble and the hideous"
-Wilson Knight
Addresses the problematic expectations of women in a patriarchal society
-Johnson
We identify prospero in some measure with Shakespeare himself
-Dowdin

Figure 7: English A-Level

Figure 8 is an example of how students learning German were able to choose a German painter and write a description of a painting. The tutor was then able to annotate each student's text. Of course, student work can be submitted in a range of ways, but using Class Notebook does keep the students' work together and easily accessible whilst also giving the tutor and a student's peers easy access to it.

Figure 8: German for Norwegian students

Another example from an English group shows how a student has used a range of media to respond to a task (Figure 9). Of course, there is no reason why the student could not have used a pen and paper to achieve the same outcome, but the fact that their response is saved in this easily accessible place could be seen as helping the learning process.

Figure 9: International Baccalaureate English

In these examples, students are not just accessing information from the teacher, they are carrying out tasks and making their work available to their peers and their tutor. The actual tasks in themselves are not new; they involve making notes, answering questions, gathering information, expressing opinions and many others. The novelty lies in the vehicle being used; everything the students access and then go on to produce themselves is visible here and can be shared with others in the group.

In Figure 10 the tutor has used Class Notebook for students to self-assess where they feel they stand and share that assessment with their peers:

Figure 10: Animal Management

If we agree with Donaldson that collaboration is desirable as a way of reinforcing learning and of making use of peer learning, then Class Notebook seems to make that possible.

Research into participation levels with Class Notebook is almost exclusively based on Higher Education (HE) usage. Asmuni (2021) found that students exhibited an increased level of participation and perseverance in the Collaboration Space. Interestingly, they also found that students who had difficulty writing sometimes collaborated using images. There were no specific examples of this in the BTC samples looked at, but students did have considerable choice as to how they communicated with their peers and tutor. BTC tutors in the study did not use the Class Notebook Collaboration Space but instead they used Class Notes or the individual student channels in Class Notebook.

In fact, there is evidence that BTC tutors are using the digital notebook more innovatively than the HE tutors and students described in research. Bader, Iverson and Burner (2021) refer to research which suggests that most students did not take advantage of the drafting aspect of OneNote and reported simply pasting in a finished text, thus missing the opportunity for receiving feedback on work in progress. In other words, they suggest, a new tool ended up being used in an "old" way.

Would that necessarily be a bad thing? Even if students simply paste in text produced elsewhere, they have still carried out whatever task their tutor felt was worthwhile and they are still saving it in a logical place where it can easily be found and also reviewed by the tutor.

The extracts from BTC students' use of Class Notebook show that unlike the students in Bader, Iverson and Burner's research, students in BTC are often engaged in what Bader, Iverson and Burner call "drafting", meaning that they are actually producing work directly in Class Notebook.

Bader, Iverson and Burner (2021) commented that individual notebooks, which offer a possibility for feedback and a better insight into the individual progress of each student, were only occasionally used by a handful of students. There is clear evidence that in BTC some dialogic feedback does occur. In other words, tutors and students do collaborate.

Bader, Iverson and Burner regret that their study found little evidence of Class Notebook being used for formative assessment. They suggest that, especially in HE where the emphasis is on summative assessment, students might not be accustomed to submitting work for formative assessment. In further education, the opposite is likely to be the case. Formative assessment is central to effective teaching and learning. And indeed, several of the screenshots above show how tutors have been formatively assessing their students' work.

San Wong, Wong and Mahmud (2022) argue enthusiastically that Class Notebook can be used as a substitute for the traditional whiteboard due to its flexibility, real time engagement and how it enables collaboration. This is possibly true, though the emphasis in that study is mainly on online teaching. The courses in our BTC study are taught largely face-to-face, but we still see evidence of the sort of activities which would require use of a whiteboard in class. This is another example of a new tool being used in an old way.

c) Employing a broad repertoire of teaching approaches

This is not the place for a detailed look at different teaching approaches. If we accept Donaldson's suggestion that employing a broad repertoire of teaching approaches is desirable for a range of reasons to do with diversity, motivation, accessibility, differentiation amongst others, it is clear that using Class Notebook can extend the teacher's repertoire. We should never adopt a teaching approach uncritically but the examples from BTC show that there is potential for supporting learning in a wide range of different ways.

Patchigalla (2019) points out that there is evidence to suggest that using digital technology has a positive impact

on student motivation and engagement (but that there is less evidence that it improves student achievement.) This study has not attempted to measure the impact on student achievement of using Class Notebook but many students did find it engaging and motivating when surveyed. If students report that using Class Notebook motivates and engages them, is that sufficient endorsement? Is it possible for students to be motivated and engaged but not learning at the right level and in sufficient depth?

One caveat: although a good proportion of students commented positively on the use of Class Notebook, not all did. This underlines once more the need for a broad repertoire of teaching approaches to cater for diverse needs.

d) Reinforcing digital competence

We can probably agree with Sulisworo *et al.* (2017) cited by Bethea-Hampton & Holder (2018) when they claim that to engage learners who have mastered the digital world, teaching with relevant and innovative tools is a necessity in education but it is far from clear that our students have mastered the digital world.

Can using Class Notebook be seen as reinforcing students' digital competence? If we mean coding, then clearly not, but using a digital notebook does require students to be proficient in entering text, images, video, and other sources, which they share with others. The Education and Training Foundation *Professional Standards for Teachers* (2022) include in standard 16 "select and use digital technologies safely and effectively to promote learning". Using a digital notebook is an opportunity for tutors to encourage safe and effective use of information and communication technology. Figures 5 - 8 show how students are using digital skills.

Feedback from students in the study suggests that they do not find using Class Notebook technically challenging though they do make frequent reference to IT problems. It could be argued that learning to cope with these is also part of digital competence.

Much of the research on using digital notebooks in Higher Education suggests that the uses of digital technology such as Class Notebook to enhance the learning process are often quite limited. Henderson, Selwyn and Aston (2015) comment that digital notebooks include uses and practices which are "not the most expansive, expressive, empowering, enlightening or even exciting ways that digital technologies could be used."

Henderson, Selwyn and Aston are not specifically concerned with Class Notebook but they do explore at length whether today's undergraduates are universally proficient with IT and whether its use enhances the teaching and learning process. They bemoan the fact that "universities clearly are not brimming with students making extensive and imaginative use of digital technology". In fact, they found that technology-based learning seems to emphasise "the passive reception of information and instruction". We will look in the next section at what

cognitive levels of student engagement we think are desirable.

Many of the reportedly 'educational' benefits of digital technology reported in Henderson, Selwyn and Aston's (2015) paper are more accurately described as concerned with the 'logistics' of university study rather than matters related directly to 'learning' itself. This view is supported by Birkeland, Drange and Tønnessen (2015) who claim that although students use digital tools frequently in their everyday life, they are typically consumers rather than active producers of content.

Can this criticism be made of how tutors in BTC are using Class Notebook? It seems that it is not used for logistics, such as submitting summative assignments and communicating with the institution or the tutor about administrative matters, so in this respect BTC tutors in this study seem to be using it largely as a teaching resource.

Our study found frequent examples of students actively producing content. The notebook is clearly being used to good effect as part of the teaching and learning process.

e) Promoting problem-solving, and creative and critical thinking

Is there any evidence that using Class Notebook helps students with problem-solving or creative and critical thinking? These are often seen as important attributes of effective teaching and learning, as seen in Donaldson's taxonomy above. DeSchryver (2014) explores the extent to which the use of digital resources enhances higher order thinking, arguing that we should move students away from simple information consumption and towards more complex knowledge generation.

Patchigalla (2019) goes as far as to argue that students should be discouraged from cutting and pasting material into their notebook; they should create their own material, using graphic organisers, creating their own video and sharing notes with one another. We found many examples of students making and sharing notes and using graphic organisers but not of video sharing, but of course, a digital notebook does not record spoken face-to-face interactions between students.

Bader, Iverson and Burner (2021, p. 31) argue that HE students are proving reluctant to move beyond the use of resources for information retrieval and personal communication and to use them to operate at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (1956) where creativity and critical thinking are called for. They suggest that students may be proficient at using social media and messaging apps but they do not necessarily make good use of IT for more formative or creative activities.

What evidence is there of problem-solving and creative and critical thinking being achieved with Class Notebook? These are skills which are hard to measure but Figures 5 – 8 do show activities which indicate that students are engaging at a high cognitive level with the subject matter. It could be argued that this is another example of teaching old skills in a new way, but what is wrong with that? If critical thinking is an old skill, why not use technology to practise it if this offers an interesting, motivating and challenging approach?

What could possibly go wrong?

We have looked at the pedagogical justifications for using Class Notebook and we have suggested how it could contribute to the teaching and learning process. Regardless of the potential, as with any teaching strategy or resource, using Class Notebook can also have disadvantages and challenges:

- As with any reliance on IT in the teaching process, the tutor is reliant on the system functioning properly. Tutors and students report that when they are using Class Notebook, the Wi-Fi system sometimes slows the process down.
- Where students are provided with iPads in college there are no issues concerning access to IT. However, if Class Notebook is used for work outside college, students need to have access to reliable Internet connections, which is not always the case. Sahlberg (2020) points out that not all students in a cohort will have the same access to technology, including the Internet and devices that support learning, especially at home.
- Sahlberg (2020) also points out that with paper notebooks we do not need to wait for computers to turn on, deal with password changes or wait for our device to charge. Of course, that is the case with any use of ICT in teaching and is one of the challenges for all of us. If Mueller and Oppenheimer (2014), cited by Robinson (2018) are right, students who write their notes retain more than those who type them! This is not the place to engage with this claim except to say that perhaps the ability to retain information is not the main skill which Class Notebook is aiming to improve.
- We constantly need to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of any resource but for tutors there is an additional pressure that we are being urged to maximise use of digital technology which is seen as a panacea for effective teaching and learning.

The comments from one tutor endorsed these caveats:

- o It takes time to set up the page.
- o If the wi-fi connection is slow or not working, then some students can access the space and others cannot.

- o It can also take time for the typed work to appear.
- o Although it does provide a space where all students can share work and retain access to it, in the future it can be difficult to load and access.
- Some tutors who took part in this project, and who made substantial use of Class Notebook as the vehicle for giving students course 'handouts' and teaching resources, gave their students input on how to use Class Notebook as part of their induction into the course. Students on other courses commented that this would have been useful for them too.
- To minimise technical issues when using a digital notebook, one source (Betha-Hampton and Holder, 2018) suggests ground rules which require students to:
 - o Have at least 70% battery life on personal devices
 - o Be prepared to download applications related to instruction
 - o Be prepared to collaborate with one or more class members
 - o Turn ringers off during class
 - o Bring devices with them to each class meeting.
- The use of Class Notebook seems to be restricted largely to long courses. The tutor on a five-day course for adult learners reported that using Class Notebook with students who had just gained their first access to the college IT system and who were sometimes not confident in the use of IT, did not justify the time involved and the potential teething problems.

What the students think

Asking student reviews on Class Notebook is rather like asking their views on PowerPoint; the answer depends on their own preferences and inclinations on the one hand, and on how the resource is used on the other. The students who responded to the questionnaire were on a range of Level 3 programmes.

Unsurprisingly there was a wide mix of views, ranging from total dislike of Class Notebook in one case, to being very positive about its advantages. Students whose tutor used it as a VLE for giving them access in a systematic way to course materials tended to react positively. For these students, Class Notebook was the focal point of the programme.

For some other students, it was more of an adjunct to the main course materials but it still made an important contribution to their learning. In summary, this is their description of how Class Notebook was used:

- As a source of subject-specific information.

- a. One respondent commented: "it works well in history as it enables the course content to be organised".
- b. "Yes. I use it in all of my lessons."
- c. "Everything is in the same place. It's very easy to look at notes for a particular topic because they're in the same folder."
- d. "(My tutor) has set it up to group all topics together, so it is easy to find what you are looking for".
- For collaboration with peers and tutor:
 - a. "The best feature is that everyone can see you edit it live. The worst part is you can't type anything if too many people are on that notebook".
 - b. "Being able to communicate with my fellow peers and lecturers".
 - c. "I think the best feature is the collaboration space feature, where everyone can contribute to the same page. Although when everyone is working on it at the same time, it tends to not work as well but I like the idea".
- So that the tutor could see informal notes:
 - a. "We use it to write our reading journals".
 - b. "We make notes on the books that we have read but it isn't used much outside of that".
 - c. "I use it for making notes in law and doing worksheets in criminology".
 - d. "Easy to create notes that teachers can see easily without having to be submitted".
 - e. "Only for making notes in my history class as that is where (my tutor) puts the workbooks, for my usual notes or homework I usually use either PowerPoint or Word, depending on what the task is about."
 - f. "The fact my teacher can check it (is good)".
- For organising work:
 - a. "My notes are well organised, and I can access them everywhere".
 - b. "The best feature is probably the way it keeps things organised".
- To share formative work with the tutor:
 - a. "I use it to share work and to make notes; Microsoft Teams is much more useful for submitting homework."

Conclusions and Recommendations

This project was concerned largely with full-time Level 3 programmes at BTC. Some of the conclusions and especially the student comments might well not be the same with other programmes. As always, tutors should choose resources and teaching strategies because they align with their pedagogy. In other words, having arrived at a view of what are the principles and characteristics of effective teaching, tutors should evaluate a resource such as Class Notebook in light of those principles. The first part of this review looked at some of those principles.

1. At least two of the classes reviewed made substantial use of Class Notebook for giving students access to resources and teaching materials. Student comments were overwhelmingly positive in these cases. Tutors who do not do this might want to consider its advantages.
2. One of the criteria of effective teaching was employing a broad repertoire of teaching approaches. Tutors looking for more variety could consider using Class Notebook. In particular, there was considerable evidence that students found Class Notebook very useful for note-taking.
3. Some tutors and students stressed the value of students being able to work together.
4. It is hard to draw any direct conclusions about promoting problem solving, creative and critical thinking but it is reasonable to conclude that students collaborating on the kind of tasks shown in Figures 5-9 were engaged in creative and critical thinking.
5. If reinforcing digital competence is a reason for choosing Class Notebook, then our conclusion is mixed. Whilst many students were happy using the technology, they also reported a large number of frustrations with its use.
6. Students made numerous suggestions to tutors for improving the students' Class Notebook experience. These included devoting time to inducting students into the most effective ways of using Class Notebook and making fuller use of it by uploading materials used in class. Students found variations in Class Notebook use between tutors to be confusing (but it is hard to see how that could be avoided, even if it was desirable).

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Researching decolonisation: a reflection from practice

Introduction

I have spent a peculiar amount of time asking people if they are WEIRD this year. I do not mean 'weird' as in the Oxford dictionary definition of 'being strange or difficult to explain' (Oxford Dictionary, 2023). Rather, I am asking people if they are W.E.I.R.D. as in Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic (Henrich, 2020). What is even weirder (pardon the play on words), is students will often reply 'I am definitely not rich, Louise!' while sitting in a university lecture and holding a £600 (at least) iPhone in their hand. This is a common misconception that humans hold. Ontologically we presume we know what it means to be human and assume that our normal is everyone's normal. Statements like this fail to acknowledge our social positioning and minority status as WEIRD humans. This is particularly poignant when we come to understand that to be WEIRD means that you are in a global minority population of 15% (Henrich, 2020).

In 2022, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education reviewed the benchmark statement for Early Childhood Studies. Upon this revision, the following adaptation to the requirements was introduced.

Students should be able to... demonstrate in-depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of babies, young children and multiple childhoods, nationally and globally, from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, decolonising, sustainable, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives (QAA, 2022).

When I read the revised guidance, I did not even know what decolonisation was, nor how I could facilitate the students' understanding enough to transmit any type of knowledge regarding the subject. What followed was one of the most transformational journeys of my career to date. I spent the whole summer of 2022 following lines of enquiry, attending training and talking and reflecting. I soon learnt that decolonisation is a political way of thinking about the world which acknowledges the role of colonialism, empire and

racism as erasing certain ideas. In this sense it encourages deconstruction and relearning to facilitate an alternative way of thinking about the world and praxis (Bhmbra, Gebria and Nisacioglu, 2018). Within the world of teaching and learning it is particularly important that it disrupts your way of thinking by critiquing the knowledge we use and providing inclusive curriculums and relevant teaching that is connected with the community (Shahjahan *et al.*, 2022).

In this sense, epistemologically we assume we know what counts as knowledge. This made me reflect on the reading lists attached to many of our modules and the content I was teaching. I do wonder why if I want to know about child development in 2023, I continue to teach theory from scholars that are mainly male, white and in most cases, dead. This was also reinforced through the research I conducted, which found that as white supremacy requires white middle class values to be propagated, institutionalised and normalised, African worldviews and epistemologies are overlooked, undervalued and delegitimised (Broughton, 2022). Higher Education as a system perpetuates colonialism by creating systems embedded in inequality and using Ethnocentric paradigms (Shahjahan *et al.*, 2022). It means that history is skewed to uphold a particular narrative and there are several things we have never been taught (Evans and Evans, 2022). Much of our understanding is from a single narrative, that is based in systematic racialisation. This has been perpetuated by domination and dehumanisation, often in the name of profit (Campbell-Stephens, 2021). Within the field of Early Childhood Studies (my subject discipline) it means that most children are either studied from a WEIRD perspective or they are studied with WEIRD-influenced theories and approaches (Packer, 2021). Specifically, we expect all children in our care to attain WEIRD benchmarks, receive WEIRD parenting and to attain a WEIRD way of life, regardless of their background and context. In much of our lives, we barely recognise that there is any other alternative.

This was not exactly new knowledge to me: I knew that universities were viewed in the world of philosophy by Bourdieu as a field that facilitated the habitus in society (Grenfell and James, 1998). This means that society is socially constructed as a system (habitus) and within this system, several institutions are the field elements (such as school, police, justice system, universities etc). Within this system there are winners and losers. The losers are often marginalised communities of varying descriptions. Freire (1970) states that education either functions as an instrument to facilitate integration into the present system or it deals with the practice of freedom. In order to promote this freedom, we must deal critically with reality to participate in transformation. This means that to decolonise, we must adopt an anti-racist approach; we must recognise the socially constructed nature of racism and be prepared to disrupt the narratives of old thinking (Kendi, 2022). Anti-racism also means to educate yourself by reading and

taking courses, working to change policy and to lobby with other organisations with the same aim (Evans and Evans, 2022). Within the field of Early Childhood Studies, it means questioning our own biases and putting our children's needs first over our own philosophies (Kendi, 2022).

From this point in my research, I began to talk about my findings, I gathered groups of staff, discussed it several times with students and even took the research to a national conference. I was frequently asked if I was worried about upsetting people by making them feel guilty about the historical acts that colonialism deployed. I also encountered the veil of denial that Hooks (2003) identifies in her book, stating that much time is spent in anti-racism workshops and seminars breaking through the denial of white people to understand structural and systemic racism. This includes the idea that racism no longer exists or that all lives matter, when discussing the Black Lives Matter movement (Love, 2019). No one would dispute that all lives matter but when one group is harmed more than the others, we should pro-actively discuss the issue (Kendi, 2022). What is clear, is that this veil of whiteness is the centre of the structure of inequality, and it allows racism to continue (Love, 2019).

What was also clear to me was my emotional reaction to talking about decolonisation. I felt a strange sense of anger and fear when researching and discussing the issue. Maybe this was not surprising considering my own WEIRD background or the wider political ideology and climate. While my course and students (as Higher Education courses with no apprenticeship affiliation) were not under the Ofsted umbrella, I was reminded of their clarification statement in 2022. This stated that;

Where schools wish to teach about specific campaigning organisations, they should be aware that this may cover partisan political views. These are views which go beyond the basic shared principle that racism is unacceptable, which is a view schools should reinforce. Schools should ensure this content is taught appropriately by taking steps to offer pupils a balanced account of opposing views on these points. Partisan political views must not be promoted to pupils, including by encouraging pupils to support campaign groups advocating such views (Department for Education, 2022).

This was further reinforced in a statement by MP Oliver Dowden (2022): "We have made it clear to schools... that it is illegal to teach the concept of 'white privilege' as though it were undisputed fact". The white privilege Oliver Dowden is referring to, is the notion that there are certain things you do not need to worry about because of the colour of your skin. Europeans place themselves at the apex of civilisation, democracy and reason. In opposition, colonised people are inferior, lacking, absent and therefore non-human (Morreria

et al., 2020). This also means that the maintenance of racism is a result of society's ignorance and denial of its existence (Kendi, 2022).

The emotions I was encountering are part of white fragility which includes fear, guilt and anger when called out for racism. Understanding this phenomenon and confronting them within yourself is a key part of anti-racist practice (Evans and Evans, 2022). I definitely felt angry at points of my research, especially as I learnt that throughout history entire communities had been stripped of their personhood in the name of colonial practices (Faloyin, 2022). I was particularly angry when I read about the race for Africa, which included many countries deciding together that they should conquer and claim the land. This was done as it was believed that the fate of Africa could not be left to the Africans themselves (Faloyin, 2022). Another example was when I learnt that at certain times, we believed that this was justified as Africans were inferior as their brains were smaller. This was based on visual inspections and not scientific evidence (Gordon, 1948, cited in Fanon, 1952, p.13).

Disrupting my own narrative enabled me to learn about several other linked concepts, such as othering. This is where someone is constantly reminded of their difference. This is especially poignant, when you consider that to be WEIRD is to be in the Global minority (15%). This means that the use of the term BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) is statistically inaccurate. The usage of the term BAME (or any minoritising language) assumes dominance by perpetuating language of oppression, and places Global Majority in a subordinate position (Campbell-Stevens, 2021). In addition, the concept of racial weathering is pertinent to this debate, which is the biological impact of racism. Racial weathering can be caused by the stress of racial trauma and means that DNA degradation can occur (amongst other things) and this will reduce someone's life expectancy (Sikka, 2022).

What started as a research exercise to ensure compliance with new subject benchmarks, spurred a deep ontological and epistemological shift within me. I was born and raised in the 1980s within a major city in the Southwest. My hometown of Bristol is famous for the Bristol bus boycott where a boycott of the buses was launched because the bus companies would not hire Black or Asian drivers (The Black Curriculum, 2020). I was amazed that I knew nothing of this monumental event as a result of my years within schooling. I learnt that decolonisation of your mind is a process of reconnecting with the past to understand the positioning of the present. This includes returning in history to reclaim what was lost but moving forward (Campbell-Stevens, 2021). I remember my own encounters witnessing racist incidences and reconnected with the anger and fear linked to these events. I acknowledged my own inability to previously challenge racism or micro aggressions from any reasoned or researched viewpoint. Instead, I became one of those people who would challenge (as I knew it was

wrong), but I did so in a way that did not promote dialogue. This meant that I was not changing hearts or minds - I just became someone who people would say: 'You cannot say that in front of Louise' (after a racist opinion was expressed). While this acknowledged that I was challenging the status quo, to raise people to be anti-racist, there is a need to prepare them for racism. This includes armouring them with the facts and teaching them about racist structures and philosophies (Kendi, 2022).

It is suggested that Britain today is part of two competing traditions. One rooted in freedom and equality and the other who views these terms as rhetoric to be violated whenever it serves to preserve power (Akala, 2018). The long-standing impact of this journey is worth little to me unless I am able to change myself and my deep rooted and systemic attitudes. Whiteness asks us to understand that there is nothing inherently 'right' about me because of the colour of my skin (Kendi, 2022). I do not possess any special attributes, skills or values but I am, by society's construction, given a different position. This means that I simply do not have to worry or experience certain things. I challenge my own stereotypical assumption that the western world is leading the advancement of science and technology (Faloyin, 2022). I can educate myself that Africa is not a country, but a continent made up of 54 countries, with over 2,000 languages and 1.4 billion people who make up approximately 18% of the population (Faloyin, 2022). Pemberton (2023, cited in Grenier and Vollans, 2023, p.98) suggests that I can be excited to learn and engage in discussion about race and contribute to the momentum of change I wish to see in the world. Most importantly, I can acknowledge that there is a considerable gap in my knowledge of global history, based on a narrow view that I have been taught. I can also continue to reflect and learn; this means I must listen to diverse perspectives. I am not the white saviour that can alone (or should) promote social justice with my words and actions. Moreover, I must educate myself and talk about my emerging knowledge; I can join groups on the same mission; I can disrupt the narratives of old and be humble to other experiences.

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Fine Art

The Artist and the artwork: an evidently manifest relationship

Introduction

This article presents some thoughts about how art is made and by whom. There are also some thoughts about status and visibility. Each thought could be elaborated, refined or quashed. It is an emergence. It is a part of a process.

Art being a product made by an artist seems straightforward enough. It has been so, within the Western culture, for centuries. This connection is underpinned by the signature, in its various forms, from Ghiberti's likeness appearing on the baptistery doors in Florence (Ghiberti, 1425-1452) [figure 1] and Sofonisba Anguissola's self-portrait (Anguissola, 1556) [figure 2], to Caravaggio's signature appearing in the blood of his depiction of John the Baptist (Caravaggio, 1608) [figure 3], and everything before and since. Sometimes subtle, sometimes ostentatious, these attributions have built careers, sustained reputations and secured financial valuations. It is not only these practical and commercial interests that are served by the signature. The signature feeds into the narrative of the artist genius, the artist prodigy, the myth of the artist and so on (Kris and Otto, 1999, pp. 124-128). Thus, the artist as a cultural phenomenon is born, more than mere maker of aesthetic things. The mystique that surrounds the artist has long been the subject of art too. Durer or Rembrandt's self-portraits go beyond the 'signature' self-portrait of Anguissola or Ghiberti, yet are not the expression of identity or self-narrative to the extent of Caravaggio or, say, Frida Kahlo. Durer and Rembrandt's self-portraits carry, amongst other things of course, the expression of an artist genius, a cultured being, a tortured or soulful individual. More mythmaking. But like the generic bronze general on horseback, it is the deeds, or processes, of the worthy subject that also carry weight. We see it culturally in the photographs of Francis Bacon's studio (Ogden, 1998) [figure 4] and the popularity of artist stories such as the movie made of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2003) or Martin Gayford's *The Yellow House* (2006) about Van Gogh's time in Arles. More mystique, more tortured genius. As long as the processes meet the expectations of the myth of the artist, the processes are fit



Figure 1: Gates of paradise (Ghiberti, 1425-1452)



Figure 2: Self-portrait near the easel (Anguissola, 1556)



Figure 3: Beheading of St. John the Baptist (Caravaggio, 1608)



Figure 4: Francis Bacon's 7 Reece Mews studio, London (Ogden, 1998)



Figure 5: Painted bronze (Johns, 1960)

to make art about too. The general is on horseback after all, not at home having a cuppa.

Jasper Johns' *Painted Bronze* (1960) [figure 5], Robert Gober's *Untitled* (2005-6) [figure 6] or Fischli and Weiss' *Polyurethane* installations [figure 7] all show parts of the artist studio. Even Gavin Turk's *Nomadic Existence* (2003) [figure 8] indirectly references the working practices of the artist. Unlike the documentary photographs of Bacon's studio, this is the art itself. Johns' humble coffee tin repurposed to store brushes,

or the ordinariness of Gober's tin of paint not only allude to the starving artist in the garret, making do, but the illusion of painted bronze or painted glass evokes the artist genius through the tale of Zeuxis and Parrhasius: artists prized for their ability to fool through their command of illusion. Fischli and Weiss' (1992-2000) studio is a fake too, with an illusion designed to fool, then impress. Some myths, like the starving artist, seem like a thing of the past when considering the careers of Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst, and the market as a whole. Meanwhile, other myths, such as the artist-chemist are enduring. What the artist does is transform. And while the relationship between artist and artwork remains largely intact, there is no reason to see the magic disappear yet.

It is worth noting here that there are other factors at play. The materiality of the work for a start. Turk and Johns use bronze. There is that general on horseback again. But even where bronze is not used, such as with Fischli and Weiss, there is a gallery context too. Carol Duncan (1995) and Brian O'Doherty (1999) have both written about the ability of galleries to have a transformative effect on their contents. The objects within are to be scrutinised closer than everyday objects, even if they appear to be everyday objects. And because the objects mentioned above are of the artist studio, they suggest the mechanics of that transformation too: O'Doherty (2007, p. 18) suggests that objects in an artist's studio are 'subject to alteration and revision. All are thus potentially unfinished. They - and the studio itself - exist under the sign of process'. With the material, subject, illusion, authorship and presentation-contexts of these objects, we are presented with a complex interplay of artistic alchemy.



Figure 6: Untitled (Gober, 2005-6)



Figure 7: Untitled (Tate) (Fischli and Weiss, 1992-2000)

Within the established relationship between art and artist, Bruce Nauman's actions are based on the premise that art is what an artist does. Nauman's *Setting a Good Corner* (*Allegory and Metaphor*) (1999) [figure 9], however, takes this premise beyond a context of making or exhibiting art. There is no studio. There is no gallery. Nauman is working on his ranch, making a fence. Martin Herbert (2008, p. 71) puts it thus: 'Nauman is talking here about an art of living, of dailyness: patience, preparation, establishing a foundation, taking advice, thinking in stages, doing the (literally) boring stuff, over and over.' While the video, the evidence of this act, is itself an artwork which speaks of patience, preparation and the rest, it is the act itself which is the patience and the preparation. Herbert (2008, p. 71) goes on to say that 'it's increasingly rare to have those experiences where something you thought wasn't art becomes it', surely talking about the act as the art, rather than the video shown in a gallery. In order to recognise the

context for this, we can take a brief detour outside of a Western cultural narrative. Let us consider the practice of making kolams [figure 10], a form of housework from Tamil Nadu (Dohmen, 2001, pp. 9-18). With the aesthetic quality of these daily floor drawings, alongside the value placed on the skill of the maker and the lack of a utilitarian function, it is not surprising that, from a Western perspective, we find ourselves in a position where it is easier to comprehend kolams as art,

Figure 8: Nomadic existence (Turk, 2003)

rather than as housework. Meanwhile, watching Nauman fix a fence may be easier to relate to as maintenance than art. This has something to do with functionality and perceived symbolism no doubt. The opposite position, one where the kolams are maintenance and Nauman's fence is art, is held by context rather than by presence alone.

The location? Perhaps, but art can be on the streets and Nauman's fence is art in the field as well as a record in a gallery. So, perhaps not. It is primarily in the status of the artist. Or, more precisely, the connection between artwork and artist. The makers of kolams do not consider themselves artists as Nauman does. This is due to different cultural conceptions of art, and culture itself (Ray, 2001) around the globe. So, maybe this does have something to do with global positioning; location and status. This is referencing what I have previously called the global-art fallacy - but I digress, this is not the subject of this essay. My point here is to suggest that 'artist' is not a fixed designation, and neither is 'art'. While this implies there is room to disrupt the relationship between the two, I am interested here in seeing how disruption can occur *within* that relationship.

The relationship between art and maintenance is more overtly present in the works of Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1973). She undertook maintenance work and framed it as art [figure 11]. Her performative work involved a community of maintenance workers in various ways, such as the artist shaking workers' hands and thanking them. The word maintenance is key here. Helen Molesworth (2008)



Figure 9: Setting a good corner (Allegory and Metaphor) (Nauman, 1999)

points to how maintenance exists between the public and private spheres. While domestic labour is wholly private, maintenance happens *to* the public realm, but often happens *in* private. This opposition serves to emphasise the lowly status of housework and maintenance. Note how the visibility of the kolam-maker's street drawings may position housework in Tamil Nadu on a comparatively higher status, if we accept visibility as a marker of status. Ukeles raises the status of maintenance to art whilst simultaneously manifesting the 'Duchampian legacy of art's investigation of its own meaning, value and institutionality' (Molesworth, 2008, p. 173). So, at once there is a potential conflict in utilising the relationship between art and artist to legitimise traditionally non-art activities as art, whilst challenging the very system that enables this to happen at all. To some extent, it cancels itself out.

Roland Barthes (2012) declared the death of the author, but there was still an implication that there needs to be an author. Fundamentally, the artist remains pivotal in the creation, or assignation of art. If that which is deemed art can simultaneously exist and have its existence questioned, because of the actions, or non-actions, of the artist, then it may be the very relationship between art and artist where art resides. That relationship is not simply the connection between a person and a visible product, but in the processes, preparations, thoughts and reflections, and general good housekeeping that contribute to art becoming.

EVIDENTLY MANIFEST(O)

Doing nothing is art.

Thinking about doing something is art.

Preparing to do something is art.

Doing something is art.

Evidence of doing nothing, thinking about doing something, preparing to do something or doing something is evidence of art.

The evidence might be art itself.

The evidence might only be evidence.

Does the art need evidence?

Must art be manifest?

Figure 10: Floral designs at the Osmania University College for Women, Hyderabad, January 2018 (Clark, 2018)



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Figure 11: Washing/tracks/maintenance: outside (Ukeles,1973)



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Level 4 HNC Construction and the Built Environment

Performance enhancement of concrete produced with treated demolition waste aggregates (summary of PhD research project)

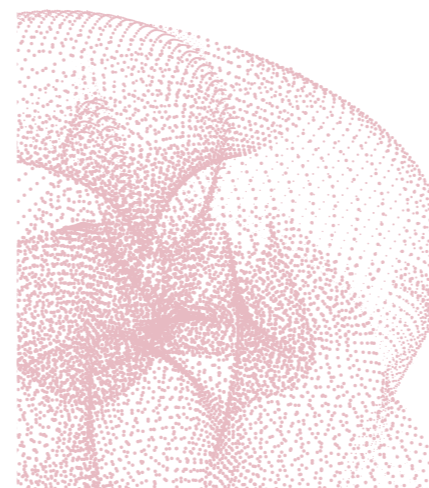
Introduction

The rise in global warming has become one of the significant issues and concerns worldwide due to the massive carbon dioxide emission (Lu *et al.*, 2019). The estimation of the average increase in temperature is 1.1 °C due to the industrial revolution (Lu *et al.*, 2019). The construction industry contributes approximately 39% of the annual global carbon dioxide (Ali *et al.*, 2020).

Concrete has become a versatile leading material for various construction purposes in the past century. Its utilisation includes buildings, roads, dams, piping, lighting poles and retaining structures. Its annual global production is around 20 billion tons, making it the most widely used artificial material globally (Tošić *et al.*, 2017). Concrete's high production accounts for 8% of the overall global carbon dioxide gas emissions (Tošić *et al.*, 2017). Natural aggregate occupies three-quarters of concrete volume, and it is enormously consumed as one of the primary constituents of concrete (Naqi and Jang, 2019; Neville, 2011).

Moreover, because of the ripple impacts of the rapid and extensive growth of the construction industry, massive landscaping problems, deforestation, excessive waste, environmental pollution, ecological discontinuity, and imbalance in biodiversity have surfaced (de Brito and Saikia, 2013; Ghanbari *et al.*, 2017).

The construction industry activities generate large amounts of waste, and according to Redling (2018), about 3 billion tonnes of construction and demolition waste (CDW) is generated globally every year. Europe produces approximately 850 million tonnes of CDW (Tošić *et al.*, 2017), while nearly 18.8 and 21.2 million tonnes of hard demolition waste were generated in the UK in 2014 and 2015, respectively, and this quantity is predicted to continue to increase annually (Sharman, 2018).



The dumping and landfilling of CDW have rapidly and enormously led to a series of issues to the environment because CDW may contain hazardous materials (Lu, 2019). Even though several countries recycle around 80% of CDW, such as Japan, Netherlands, and Germany, developing countries have an average recycling rate of 20% to 40% (Tam *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, promoting the use of recycled aggregate (RA) from the CDW into new concrete as a replacement for natural aggregate (NA) is an essential priority. This would reduce carbon dioxide emissions and contribute significantly towards preserving the environment by minimising the depletion of natural resources (Silva *et al.*, 2014).

Rodrigues *et al.* (2013, p. 440) stated that the construction industry could achieve its sustainable development if the reduction in the consumption of natural aggregates is to be carried out simultaneously with the increase in the utilisation of the CDW materials. Recently, the utilisation of RA from the CDW in civil engineering applications has gained a huge interest worldwide, and studies on their possible use in new concrete have been carried out extensively over the last two decades.

With the advances in technology in the manufacture of

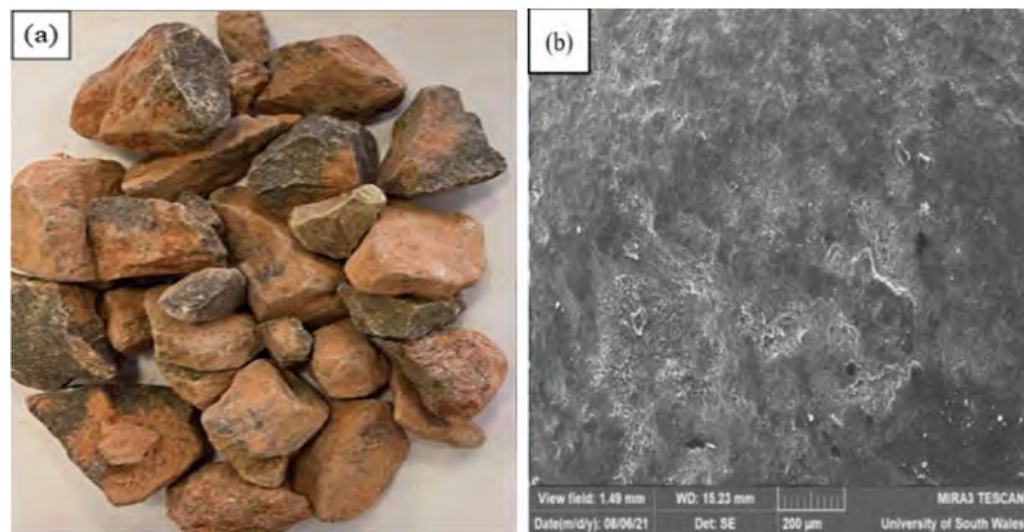


Figure 1: (a) Natural aggregate used in the research, (b) Scan Electron Microscopy image of surface texture for one particle of NA of 10mm size

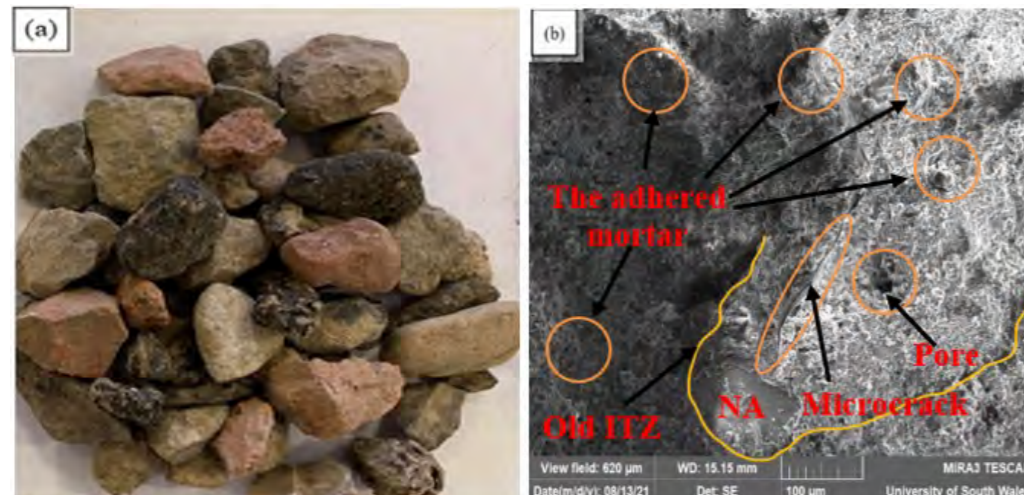


Figure 2: (a) Recycled aggregate used, (b) Scan Electron Microscopy image of RA (recycled concrete aggregate) of 10mm size.

crusher machines and the developed recycling process of plants, it is now possible to obtain RA from large portions of CDW at a reasonable cost. Figures 1 and 2 show natural aggregate and recycled aggregate, respectively. Figure 3 shows some building rubble in Jordan that could be recycled for utilisation into new concrete production.

The vast majority of recycled aggregate plants in the UK follow Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP) protocol, which is a guideline established by Smiths and Sons (Bletchington) under the guidance of the Environmental Agency and WRAP and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Guidance for notes (Smiths and Sons, 2015). It aims at ensuring the quality of the produced aggregates from the inert waste by demonstrating the framework procedures to produce recycled aggregate. Nonetheless, currently, there is no clear statement on the performance criteria with limitations or any performance-related approach or technical guidelines that demonstrate the utilisation of RA in the British and European standards, which highlights the lack of codified provisions and uncertainty on the incorporation of recycled aggregates in concrete production. If RA is to be successfully utilised in the construction industry in

high-grade applications, further research is required to establish a better understanding of the enhancement of the structural performance of RAC.

A significant number of studies examined the effects of RA on concrete (Sagoe-Crentsil, Brown and Taylor, 2001; Batayneh, Marie and Asi, 2007; Etxeberria *et al.*, 2007; Rahal, 2007; Behera *et al.* 2014) and revealed that replacing NA with RA in concrete reduces the compressive strength of concrete by 30% to 40%. This is ascribed mainly to the poor engineering properties of RA due to numerous factors, primarily the presence of the adhered mortar and the weak old interfacial transition zone (ITZ) on the RA surface (Gonzalez-Corominas and Etxeberria, 2014). Other factors include pre-loading, accelerated weathering, processing costs, and the constituent of different materials with different engineering properties (i.e. bricks, glass, rounded stones, recycled concrete aggregates) (Gonzalez-Corominas and Etxeberria, 2014). Therefore, RA possesses low

density, low strength, high water absorption, weak ITZ, weak bonding, micropores, and microcracks compared to NA (Bru *et al.*, 2014). This negative effect of RA on concrete resulted in its use only in non-structural applications such as road bases, blinding concrete and footpaths (Tam, 2009). Consequently, studies with the aim of enhancing the quality of RA and RAC have been carried out extensively over the past decade to produce high-quality RA and ultimately expand RAC application into high-grade concrete.

Problem Statement

Although there are considerable amounts of studies and findings that deal with the use of recycled aggregates in concrete production either as partial or full replacement for natural aggregate (Ajdukiewicz and Kliszczewicz, 2002; Poon *et al.*, 2002; Katz, 2003; Etxeberria *et al.*, 2007; Tam *et al.*, 2007; Kou *et al.*, 2011; Talamona and Tan, 2012), recycled aggregates constitute less than 3 percent of all aggregates used worldwide at present, due to the poor quality of their properties and lack of technical specifications (Collery, Paine, and Dhir, 2015). Moreover, based on the literature, it is currently well-established that the incorporation of recycled aggregate at high replacement levels in concrete leads to significant adverse effects on concrete properties, including strength, durability, and structural performance (Pacheco-Torgal *et al.* 2013, pp. 304-329; Omrane *et al.*, 2017; Liu *et al.*, 2019).

Consequently, techniques including processing (Bru *et al.*, 2014; Pepe *et al.*, 2014), treatment methods including removing the adhered mortar and strengthening the adhered mortar (Shayan and Xu, 2003; Zhu *et al.*, 2013; Al-Bayati *et al.*, 2016), batching techniques (Tam *et al.*; 2005; Elhakam, Mohamed, and Awad, 2012; Xu *et al.*, 2018), and incorporating of mineral admixtures (Ann *et al.*, 2008; Omrane *et al.*, 2017; Bui *et al.*, 2018; Nuaklong *et al.*, 2018;) have been introduced recently to recycled aggregate concrete to enhance its quality. Nevertheless, the present scientific understanding of the effects of replacing 100% RA from the CDW treated with different treatments such as removing the adhered mortar, strengthening the adhered mortar, batching techniques, and the combination of these treatments on the mechanical, durability, and microstructural properties of recycled aggregate concrete (RAC) is quite limited.

Furthermore, the vast majority of the previous studies investigated the replacement of recycled concrete aggregate (RCA), whilst minimal studies examined the incorporation of recycled aggregates from the CDW at 100% replacement level. Accordingly, there is still an urgent need to investigate different types of treatment methods, utilising different batching techniques, exploring the combination of existing treatment methods, and examining their effects on enhancing the mechanical, durability, and structural reliability of CDW RAC, which in turn would



Figure 3: Building rubble in Jordan (Qasrawi and Marie, 2013)

help to overcome the present high level of uncertainty associated with the structural application of such material in concrete production.

The overall significance of this research stems from achieving sustainable development through resolving the environmental issues associated with the construction industry activities by promoting the utilisation of RA in concrete production. Many of the previous studies examined recycled concrete aggregate produced in the laboratory or recycled concrete aggregate produced by crushed concrete members (i.e. slabs, beams, columns). Nevertheless, scant studies are available in the literature in terms of the effects of utilising RA from the CDW on concrete properties. It is anticipated that the outcome of this research will undoubtedly add promising and enriching data to the literature and specifically to the construction industry regarding the effects of different enhancement and treatment methods and their combinations on the performance of concrete produced with 100% RA from the CDW.

Aims and Objectives

The main thrust of this research is to evaluate the effects of different enhancement and treatment methods in enhancing the mechanical properties, durability properties, and microstructure of concrete produced with 100% recycled aggregate from construction and demolition waste, with the overall aim of promoting the use of recycled aggregate in the construction industry. In view of this, an innovative regime of various treatment methods, batching techniques, and their combinations were developed to enhance the engineering properties of recycled aggregate and recycled aggregate concrete.

Methodology

The present study involved the examination of the following six main phases, as shown in the breakdown structure of the experimental methodology adopted:

Phase I Carried out preliminary tests on the sourced recycled aggregates, which included particle size distribution, Aggregate Impact Value (AIV), Water Absorption (WA), density, particle shape by flakiness index, particle shape by shape index, Los Angeles (LA) abrasion coefficient, roundness and sphericity, constituent of recycled aggregate.

Phase II Investigated the influence of the different treatment methods adopted from Regime A (water treatment methods) and Regime B (strengthening the adhered mortar) on Aggregate Impact Value (AIV) and Water Absorption (WA) of recycled aggregate. It also involved evaluating the best performed batching techniques on the main mechanical properties of plain concrete, properties of the fresh concrete (workability; slump and compaction index), and properties of the hardened concrete (i.e. compressive strength and density). Once Phase II was completed, selective analysis of the best performed treatments was carried out to select the best treatments for further experimental investigations. The effects of trials of a combination of treatment methods were also included.

Phase III This phase examined the mechanical properties of concretes produced with the different select treatments from Phase II, i.e. slump, density, and compressive strength at various water to cement ratios, 0.4, 0.45, 0.5, 0.55, and 0.6. Afterwards, further selective analysis was conducted to select the best treatment methods for further experimental investigations.

Phase IV Examined the mechanical and structural performance of plain concretes produced with the finally selected treatments. It involved slump, density, compressive strength, tensile splitting strength, flexural strength, modulus of elasticity at three water to cement ratios, 0.4, 0.5, and 0.6.

Phase V Evaluated the durability performance, water absorption, resistance to freeze-thaw, and sulphate attack of concretes produced with the finally selected treatment methods at 0.4, 0.5, and 0.6 water to cement ratios.

Phase VI Included investigations on the microstructure of the finally selected treatments by means of two main techniques, namely, direct observation by scanning electron microscope (SEM) and Energy Dispersive Spectrometer (EDS).

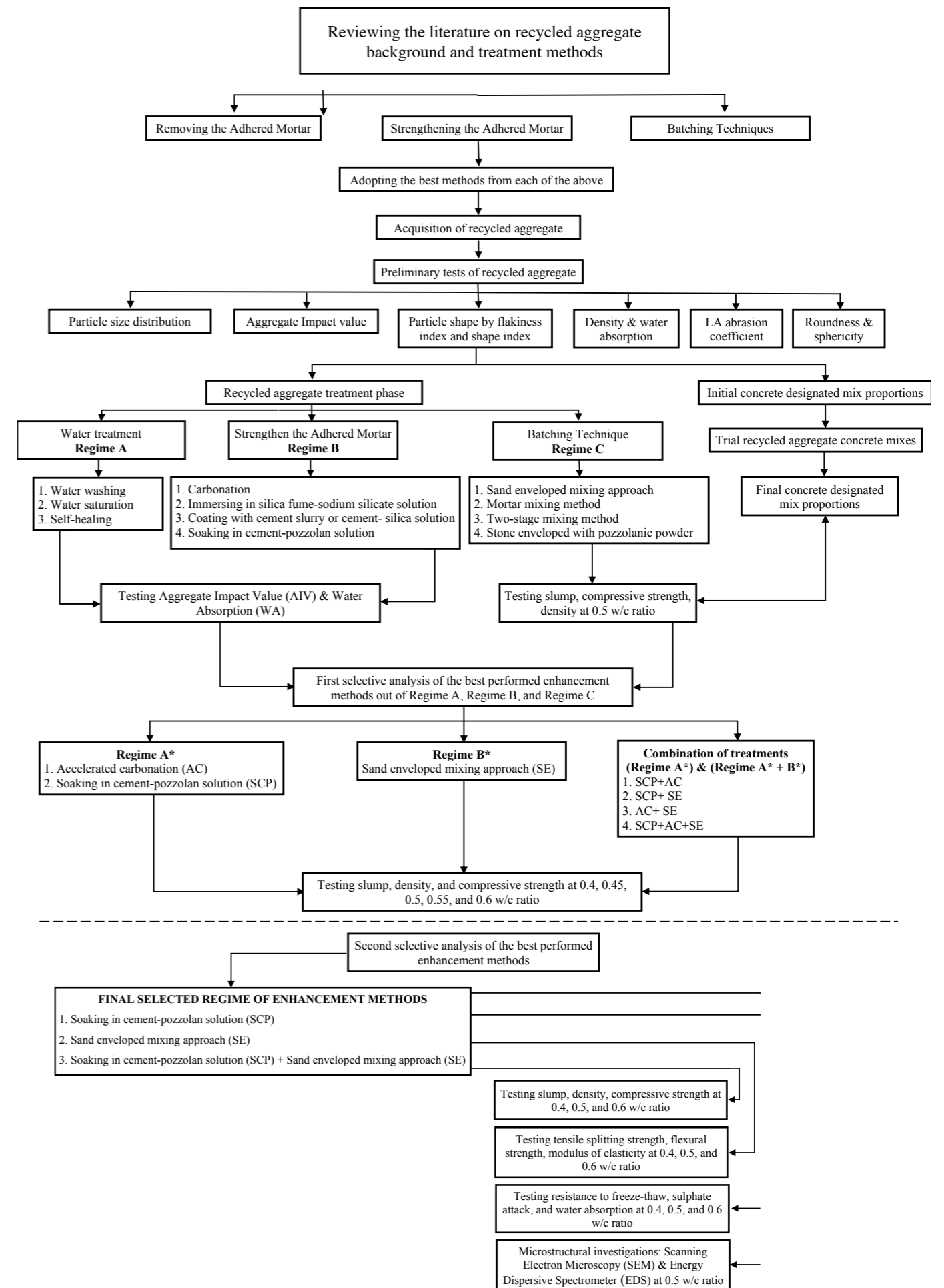


Figure 4: Breakdown structure of the experimental testing programme utilised for this research

Contribution to the Existing Knowledge

The main scientific contribution of this research is demonstrated by achieving the set key aims through the successful completion of the objectives of this research. Thus, better agreement and understanding on the engineering performance of concrete produced with 100% treated RA from the CDW. Although there are extensive amounts of studies in the literature that deal with the performance enhancement of RAC using different treatment methods (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2017; Ahmed and Lim, 2021; Alqarni *et al.*, 2021; Bui, Satomi and Takahashi, 2018; Fang, Zhan and Poon, 2021; Hanumesh *et al.*, 2018), this research is considered one of the earliest attempts at investigating the effects of different sole treatments and combination of other treatments, on the mechanical, durability, and microstructural properties of concretes produced with 100% treated RA from the CDW. Wang *et al.* (2021) argued that the influence of RA with different constituents (i.e. recycled concrete aggregate, recycled clay brick aggregate, bitumen, and natural stone) on the short-term performance (compressive strength, tensile, and flexural strength) and the long-term performance including the durability properties of RAC should be investigated. Accordingly, the contribution to knowledge in this research is demonstrated by enriching the literature review with full-scale study data on the performance enhancement of concrete produced with 100% recycled aggregates from the CDW using a developed innovative regime of various treatment methods batching techniques, and their combinations. The material performance of treated RA and RAC produced with treated RA is considered a great asset to the construction industry, recycling plants, and relevant institutions to help promote RA utilisation in new concrete.

Research Results

The treated recycled aggregate demonstrated an enhanced Aggregate Impact Value of 15% and reduced Water Absorption of 3% compared to the untreated recycled aggregate with 17% and 6.1% Aggregate Impact Value and Water Absorption, respectively. The enhanced recycled aggregate concrete mixes showed an increase in the 28-day compressive strength of up to 46MPa suitable for structural applications, compared to the control untreated recycled aggregate concrete that exhibited 35MPa. The enhanced recycled aggregate concrete mixes also achieved enhanced tensile splitting strength, flexural strength, elastic modulus, and sulphate and freeze-thaw resistance. The improved engineering performance of the treated recycled aggregate concrete is attributed to the strengthened interfacial transition zone, better overall interlocking of the treated recycled aggregate with the new cement paste, filled-up pores and micro-cracks, reduced porosity, and compacted dense microstructure. The application of the proposed innovative regime of enhancement methods is anticipated to promote the use

of recycled aggregate in the construction industry and provide a better and deeper scientific understanding of the performance of concrete produced with 100% treated recycled aggregate from the construction and demolition waste for structural applications.

Practical Implications of the Research

The reuse of recycled aggregate or waste aggregate from the construction and demolition waste greatly influences the environment as the process of demolition consumes around 2-3% of energy, and about 2% of carbon emissions are generated during the demolition process (Pu *et al.*, 2021). Thus, the reuse of recycled aggregate can contribute significantly to the preservation of natural resources.

The enormous and rapid growth in the construction industry world wide in the last century in terms of urbanisation has resulted in a significant rise in the amount of waste. Consequently, the use of RA from the construction and demolition waste can be a promising and sustainable option for the construction industry, which would help in achieving sustainable development.

Furthermore, the successful use of RA into new concrete can save the environment by protecting soil and avoiding contamination of ground water by reducing or eliminating landfilling of the construction and demolition waste, and hence going towards a cleaner and greener environment.

Nonetheless, the current main application field for RA and RAC is limited to non-structural applications due to the inferior quality and engineering performance of RA and RAC compared with NA and NAC. For instance, the RA was generally used as filling material, substratum improvement for roads, pavement, and gabions, in Germany. In the United Kingdom, the RA was mainly used for bulk fills, base or fill for drainage structures, road construction, pavements, kerbing, noise barriers and embankments, and as foundations for bridges. In Australia, the RA was also widely utilised for paths, footpaths, cyclepaths, and parking bays (Wang *et al.*, 2020).

Nevertheless, the results of the present study showed that using the adopted treatment methods can significantly enhance the engineering properties of the RAC, and expand its application to structural concrete. The findings of the present research can be of great interest to stakeholders, such as recycling plant owners, relevant government sectors and bodies, the construction industry, design engineers, and researchers.

There are a number of research gaps in the literature such as the lack of studies on the effects of utilising RA from the CDW on RAC engineering performance and very limited studies on the effects of different batching techniques on RAC compressive strength, durability, and structural performance.

Furthermore, there are a limited number of studies examining the durability performance of RAC with treated aggregate from the CDW including, freeze-thaw resistance and sulphate attack. Accordingly, the results of the current study can be added to the current literature and contribute to the current knowledge by filling these research gaps found in the literature.

The sole use of the treatment method of soaking RA in cement-PFA+SF solution can be adopted by the recycling plants on site for mass production. Whilst the sand enveloped mixing approach can be carried out anywhere, e.g. it can be used by end users to produce a better quality RAC for structural applications.

Cost Analysis

Several factors play a significant role in promoting the use of recycled aggregate in the construction industry in comparison with natural aggregate. These are cost efficiency, environmental impact, performance, sustainability, and durability. Table 1 shows the price breakdown per concrete mix. It is clearly notable that the untreated RAC mix has a lower carbon footprint and lower price per cubic meter compared to NAC. Nevertheless, based on the durability performance in this study, the untreated RAC exhibited poor durability properties compared to NAC.

Therefore, there was a need to carry out treatment / enhancement methods in order to enhance the quality of RAC. However, several factors should be considered when selecting the type of enhancement methods. As shown in Table 1, soaking RA in cement-pozzolan solution prior to mixing (SCP mix) increased the cost and the associated carbon footprint of the end product by 93% and 17%, respectively, compared to the untreated RAC. On the contrary, the utilisation of sand envelope batching technique (SE mix) kept the same cost and the same carbon footprint compared to the untreated RAC.

Figure 5 shows the cost analysis of the various enhancement methods against several aspects related to untreated RAC. It can be seen that the use of bi-combination of enhancement methods (SCP+SE) obtained the best performance in terms of durability properties and compressive strength at 28-days. Nevertheless, the sole use of batching technique (SE) seemed a better choice in terms of other influencing factors such as cost efficiency, carbon dioxide footprint, simplicity, application time, and feasibility.

In view of this discussion, it is quite important to consider the cost-efficiency, sustainability, and efficiency of enhancement method for RA and RAC. Although treatments such as soaking RA in cement-pozzolan may increase the cost and CO₂ emission for RAC, it is still a better choice compared to other treatments utilised by other researchers, i.e. acid treatment, and heating treatment. To this end, in order to successfully promote the use of RA in the construction industry, several factors should be considered, specifically the feasibility of the treatment method to be used in practice at bulk production.

To this end, Figure 6 and 7 show a flowchart that can be adopted by either RA producers or end users to use enhanced RA properties that can be suitable for structural applications. The flowchart firstly follows the WRAP protocol in processing of RA and then proceeds with guidelines on treating RA and/or enhancing RACs.

Table 1: Price breakdown of the different concrete mixes and the associated embodied carbon dioxide footprint

Mix	Constituent						Concrete cost (£/m ³) ^a	Cost / NAC1	Cost / RAC2	kg CO ₂ e / m ³ concrete ^b
	OPC	PFA	SF	NA	Sand	RA				
Estimated Price (£/t)	150	650	550	40	40	15	-	-	-	-
NAC1 (£/m ³)	67	-	-	58	27	-	152	100%	-	450
RAC2 (£/m ³)	67	-	-	-	27	19	113	74%	100%	437
SCP (£/m ³)	83	48	41	-	27	19	218	143%	193%	530
SE (£/m ³)	67	-	-	-	27	19	113	74%	100%	437
SCP+SE (£/m ³)	83	48	41	-	27	19	218	143%	193%	530

^a Tentative price for each concrete ingredient including SF and PFA were obtained from searching through trading local suppliers.

^b The estimated embodied carbon footprint was calculated based on the data given in The Inventory of Carbon and Energy (ICE) (2019) and excluding transportation.

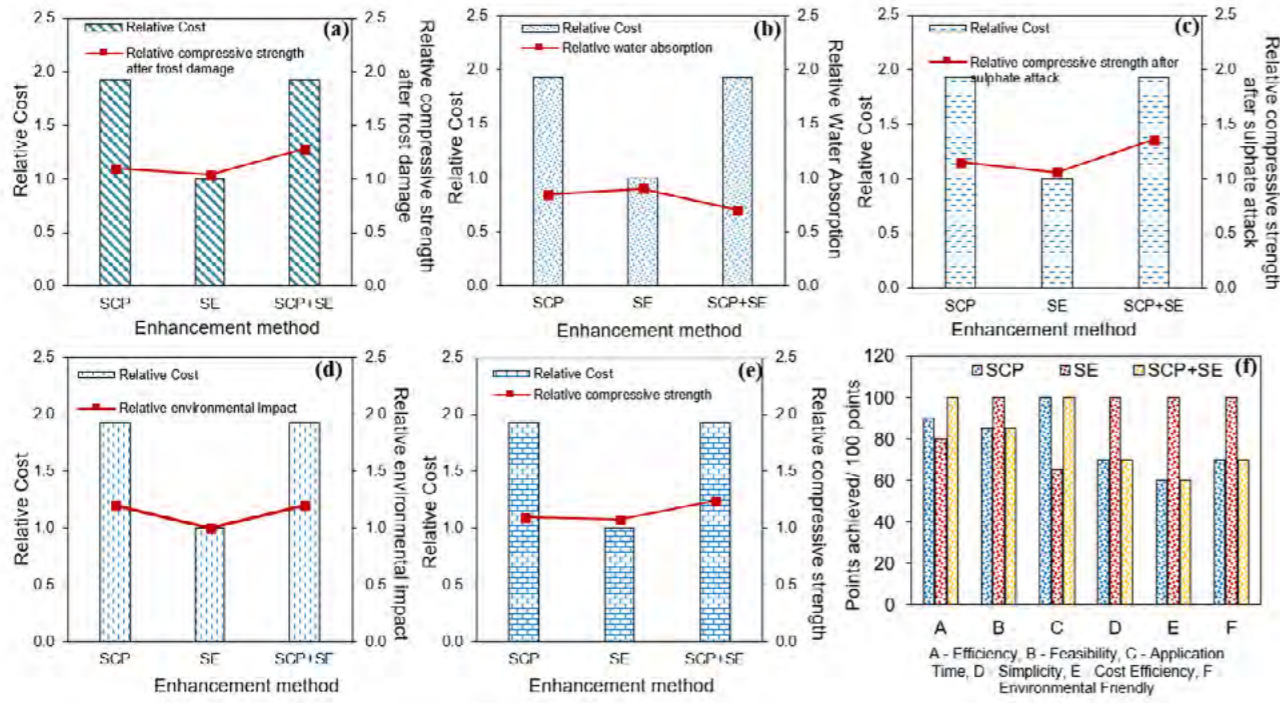


Figure 5: Cost analysis of the various enhancement methods: (a) cost vs. compressive strength after 20 cycles of freezing-thawing, (b) cost vs. water absorption, (c) cost vs. compressive strength after exposure to sulphate attack, (d) cost vs. environmental impact, (e) cost vs. 28-day compressive strength, (f) other influencing factors

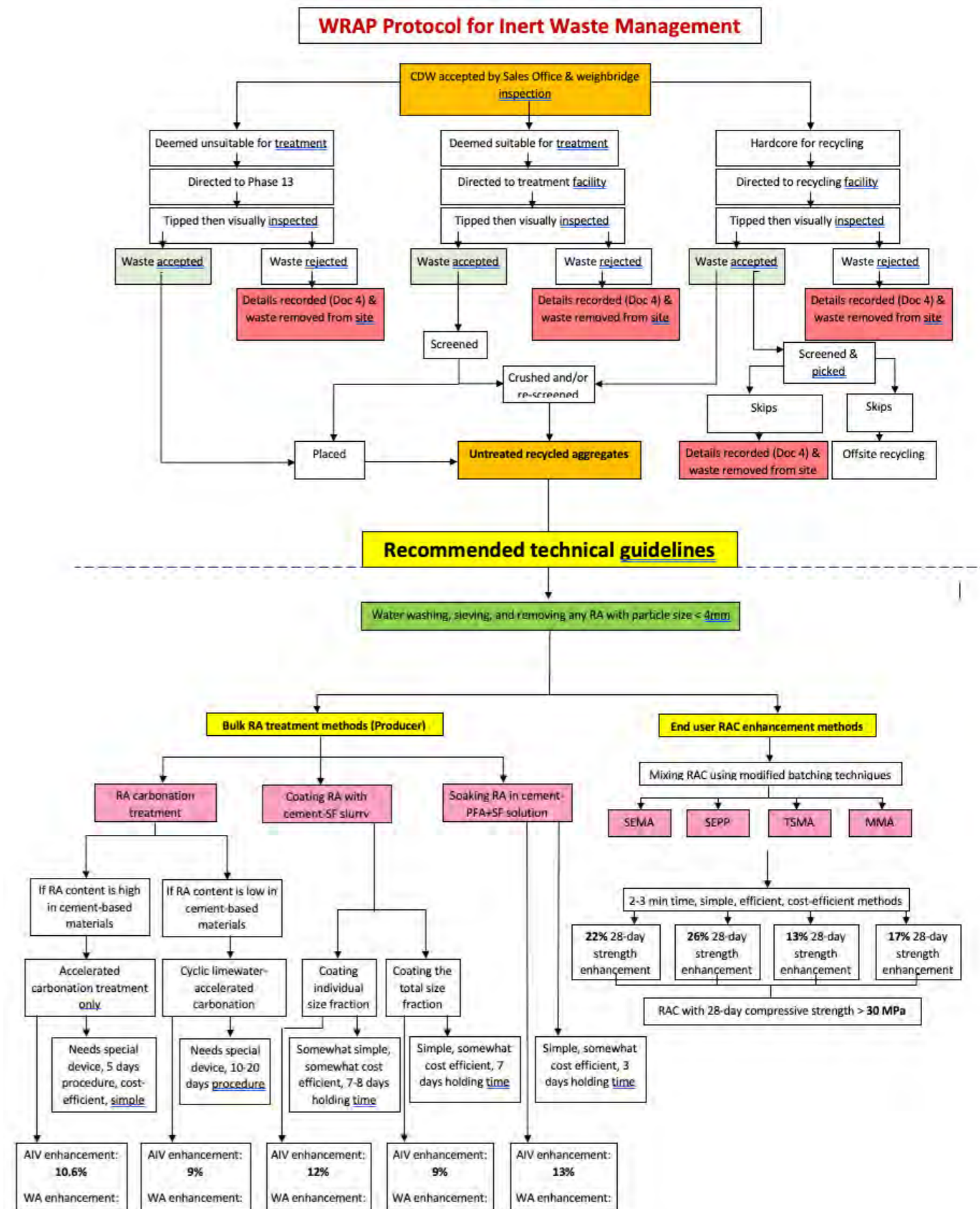


Figure 6: Technical guidelines for processing RA via WRAP protocol and then enhancing RA and RAC performance by the RA producer or end user

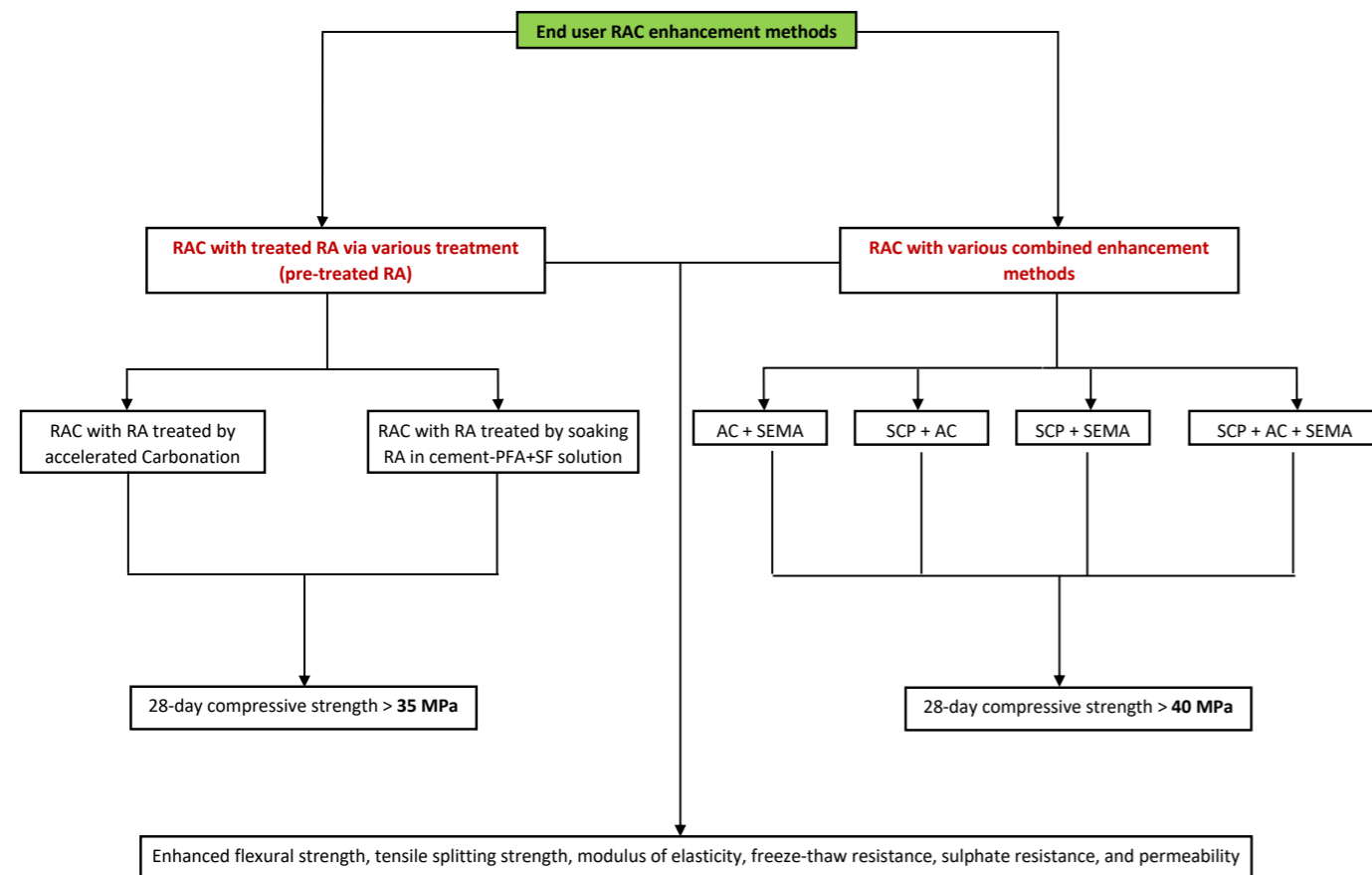


Figure 7: Technical guidelines for RAC performance enhancement by the RA producer or end user

Academic achievement

The outcome of this research resulted in three papers that were published in high-impact and peer-reviewed journals.

1. Al-Waked, Q., Bai, J., Kinuthia, J. and Davies, P. (2022a) 'Enhancing the aggregate impact value and water absorption of demolition waste coarse aggregates with various treatment methods', *Case Studies in Construction Materials*, 17, article number e01267. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cscm.2022.e01267>
2. Al-Waked, Q., Bai, J., Kinuthia, J. and Davies, P. (2022b) 'Enhancement of Mechanical Properties of Concrete with Treated Demolition Waste Aggregate', *Journal of Building Engineering*, 58, article number 105047. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.job.2022.105047>
3. Al-Waked, Q., Bai, J., Kinuthia, J. and Davies, P. (2022c) 'Durability and Microstructural Analyses of Concrete Produced with Treated Demolition Waste Aggregates', *Construction and Building Materials*, 347, article number 128597. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conbuildmat.2022.128597>

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GOOD PRACTICE ARTICLES

RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP SHOWCASE 2022-2023



EL DINGSDALE

International and Education Projects
Co-ordinator

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Quality, Teaching and Digital Innovation



The Turing Scheme

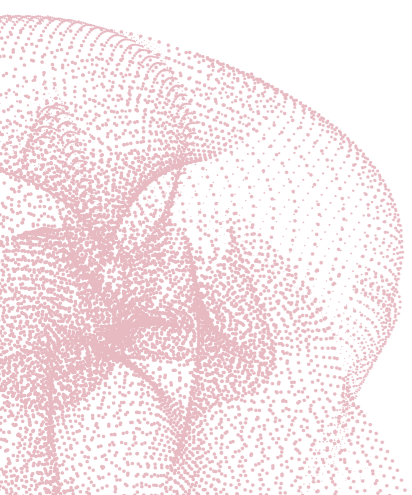
What is the Turing Scheme?

The Turing Scheme is the UK government's programme to provide funding for international opportunities in education and training across the world. Participating in a Turing Scheme Placement gives students the chance to develop new skills and gain international experience and boosts their employability. Students can develop professional practice, a wide range of soft skills, and language skills. They can build relationships with international peers, gain fresh ideas and gain a better understanding of other cultures.

Costa Rica – A-Levels and International Baccalaureate

A group of high-achieving A-Level and International Baccalaureate students partook in a 15-day trip to Costa Rica, which offered a unique opportunity for hands-on learning and personal growth. The opportunity was designed to enhance the students' understanding of environmental conservation, sustainable development, and cultural diversity.

During the mobility scheme, the students took part in a range of activities, including wildlife observation, eco-tourism, and community service projects.



'I know I have made memories to last a lifetime, widened my horizons, and now have an undeniable hunger to explore the rest of the world!' (Madison - International Baccalaureate).

The students spent a week with the host families and staff of The Lighthouse International School in San José, enjoying an immersive opportunity to interact with this local community and gain a deeper understanding of the culture and history. The following week, they adventured across the country, being able to further appreciate the wildlife, habitats, and culture of the country.

'Arriving in Costa Rica for the first time was amazing, all the flights and queues were definitely worth it' (Gracie - International Baccalaureate).

The students volunteered for two days at the Pacuare Nature Reserve, helping to prepare the areas for turtle hatchlings. The rest of the time was spent exploring the incredibly beautiful natural wonders the country has to offer, including the Poas and Arenal volcanoes, bathing in hot springs, trekking through the rainforest, and visiting both the Caribbean and Pacific Coast.

Mississippi - Nursing, Childcare, Business, Digital, and Construction

In April 2023, a group of Nursing, Childcare, Business, Digital, and Construction students travelled to Raymond, Mississippi, to study alongside students at the Hinds Community College. Bridgwater and Taunton College's long-standing partnership with Hinds allowed the students to sit in on lectures at the College and partake in industry placements, alongside cultural visits to places such as Memphis and New Orleans.



'The flights were long and felt long - it took around 10 hours to fly to Mississippi, but that soon becomes a distant memory as you are thrown straight into a busy and friendly environment' (anonymous).

The host families made everyone feel very welcome, taking time to find out what interested the students, so they could arrange activities that they would like to experience, for example, bowling. A lot of the students and staff have remained in contact with the hosts, which shows how much mutual respect there was from both groups.

'Differences between life and culture in America and England was really interesting' (Evie - Nursing).

The work placements for the business students were interesting and varied: seeing factories, banks, and business enterprises, and always being made to feel very welcome and encouraged to participate in activities. Staff were knowledgeable and supportive and had a strong interest in how the USA work environment compared to what we experience in the UK.



Cultural visits involved travelling to nearby cities to see Elvis' home in Graceland, the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, and New Orleans for a swamp tour. Staff and students embraced the culture, keeping an open mind when visiting the symbolic places.

South Africa - Sports

Following a successful application to run a Turing Scheme project, Level 3 Sport and Exercise Science and Level 3 Sports Coaching students were able to go to Port Elizabeth, South Africa, to volunteer for the 'United Through Sport' charity. The charity looks to educate and inspire children within deprived township areas. The students coached football, rugby, netball, hockey, tennis, and cricket in six different primary schools and then ran a tournament for these children in which students and staff fundraised to provide trophies and lunches for the children. Alongside coaching, the students also taught maths and English in the classrooms, further developing their leadership skills.



Course Leader and Mobility Lead Jonny Hunt said:

After the last South Africa residential in 2020, we were unable to return in 2021 due to the pandemic. Therefore, this felt like an extra special opportunity to be able to provide our learners with this brilliant opportunity, and to continue our partnership working with United Through Sport. The Mobility was a huge success where our students have come back humble, appreciating what they have in the UK after spending two weeks in the townships. It is also great to see that our donated sports kits are being given out by the charity to the children that need it most, continuing the positive impact we had even after we have returned to the UK.



'The mobility was a once in a lifetime experience that allowed me to learn so much and enjoy a new culture and create so many lasting memories. The children in the schools were filled with so much joy and that made us as coaches want to deliver fun and engaging sessions to give them the best experience possible.

This opportunity was a rewarding experience that I will never forget, and I would go back in a heartbeat!' (Tyler - Sport and Exercise Science).



Norway - Art and Design

In April 2023, students from our Applied General Extended and Foundation Diplomas had the incredible opportunity of spending fifteen days living and studying alongside students in Stavanger, Norway. Bridgwater and Taunton College have a long-standing relationship with Bergeland College in Stavanger, which has been in place for 25 years prior to the Turing Scheme Mobility. A previous partnership with Bergeland College had ceased due to funding cuts. However, through the Turing Scheme, we were able to propose a new way of continuing our work together.



Outside of the educational experience of studying alongside their Norwegian counterparts, we were also able to facilitate the chance for two students to experience their first flight, and for some students this was their first time leaving the UK and travelling to another country. We were also able to take the students to climb the Preikestolen Mountains, staying in a traditional Norwegian turf roofed cabin and visit a range of galleries and museums, including a canning factory that showed the old industries of



time in their lives at the Konserthus, and a range of street art which broadened their cultural understanding of the creative arts.

'I really enjoyed the street art tour. It gave me perspective on the city and the art within it, I also discovered a lot of places around the city which are great for art and experiencing culture' (anonymous).

Los Angeles – Creative Arts

Our students worked alongside students from Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, following a variety of timetabled sessions in new creative arts areas, including creative action community garden projects and toy design projects. Creative skills were supplemented by visiting galleries housing the work of the most famous artists in the world.

'I am much more culturally aware... I made friends from college whereas before I didn't know anybody outside of my course. It was enlightening to know more about arts education in a different country and take part in some of their classes' (Lauren Guest - Level 6 BA Fine Art).



Stavanger and the oil museum which charted the rise of their modern-day industry. We travelled by boat through Fjords, experiencing the otherworldly and majestic geography of the country. The students were also able to experience a contemporary dance show for the first

Media make-up students undertook research and development projects at Ben Nye Professional Make-Up; MUD (Make-Up Designory) – the feeder college for Hollywood TV and Film; and mingled with Oscar nominees to see first-hand their work on films such as *Elvis*, *The Batman*, *The Whale*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Visits to Universal Studios and Warner Bros Studios also gave the students a full picture of what it is like to live, study and work in Hollywood. The skills they learn here at University Centre Somerset have a clear pathway to the top of their chosen profession!

They were soon navigating their way to and from the college just like the Los Angeles-based students and made many friendships along the way that continue across the Atlantic. It was a demanding schedule, but we still had time for cultural experiences within Los Angeles. The Lakers basketball game was one of the highlights.

Many of the students have plans to go back to California for further study or work in the future and were pleased to welcome Corrine Sussman, a Hollywood Make-up Artist and Journalist back to Taunton, to do an industry-based workshop with our current and prospective students as our relationship with Hollywood goes from strength to strength.

'I think the Turing scheme has benefited me to expand and explore areas that I would not necessarily do and trying out new things, meeting new people in a different environment' (Mae - Level 6 BA Creative Digital & Graphic Design).



Norway – Health & Social Care and Childcare & Education

A group of students from the Level 3 Health & Social Care and Level 3 Childcare & Education courses spent 14 days on mobility to Stavanger, Norway, where students partook in industry placements including schools, nurseries, and care homes. This provided them with a great insight into the organisational differences of care and educational systems in Norway, and how the social policy and their care system is structured and managed.



Stavanger is a vibrant city in southern Norway, which provides a great base to explore the culture and industry of Norway. Built around a port, it offers a mix of city experiences and opportunities to explore further into neighbouring areas and across the Fjords.

'We visited a nursing home called Stokka Sykehjem; it was really interesting to learn how their homes work and what responsibilities each person has. Each floor of the home was specifically designed for different purposes, e.g. emergencies, dementia, individuals with physical barriers, to support individuals without a safe place to go to' (Evie - Level 3 Health & Social Care).

'We had a lovely day! Visiting the ambulance and firefighting service, and practising CPR on adults and children, it was a little tricky to learn in Norwegian, however we gave it our best go!' (May - Level 3 Childcare & Education).

Conclusion

The International and Projects team creates opportunities for both learners and staff to broaden their horizons, acquire important life skills, increase their self-confidence, and boost their employment prospects. For any queries, please email: erasmus@btc.ac.uk.



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Reflections from our engagement in the Advance HE College-Based Higher Education Network

Introduction

Since early 2023, University Centre Somerset (UCS) has been one of the member organisations involved in the newly formed Advance HE CBHE (College-Based Higher Education) Network. The key outputs from this Network have culminated in the launch of the CBHE Scholarly Activity and Research Toolkit and the national conference. The conference was held on 10th July 2023 at Sheffield College and was named as the Festival of Scholarly Activity and Research. We were very honoured to be part of this inaugural event as delegates and presenters, sharing best practice of the UCS scholarship journey over the last decade, and the progress made to date.

This article presents some highlights from the activities that the Network has been involved in since its inception, with references to key literature. The main contents of the Toolkit will also be explored, as well as how it can support the CBHE sector in advancing its engagement in scholarship and demonstrating the richness of good practice. We will also share some reflections from the Festival at Sheffield, the main themes and hot topics explored by the wider community of CBHE practitioners. Along the way, our reflections from engagement in the national Network will also resonate with the UCS journey in progressing the research and scholarship ethos.

Historical engagement at a national level

During the Open University (OU) Institutional Reapproval, held in January 2023, University Centre Somerset (UCS) received five key commendations, one of which highlighted that UCS 'proactively works to facilitate sharing of good practice amongst HE staff across the disciplines; support for CPD, staff research and scholarship' (Open University, 2023). It also commended the 'culture of evidence-based continuous improvement in response to a changing external landscape' (Open University, 2023). The OU panel

recommended that we share our good practice in this area with the wider sector. The Advance HE CBHE Network and Festival later in the same year seemed like the perfect opportunity to do just this.

In terms of research and scholarship, UCS has continuously grown its research ethos over the years. From the historical perspective, we were early adoptees of the Association of Colleges (AoC) Scholarship Framework by being involved in its Scholarship Project (2015-2018), which was funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE – now the *Office for Students*) Catalyst Fund. It involved 40 colleges, including UCS, and the authors have shared the outcomes from this work in a previous edition of this publication (Peters and Osborne, 2018).

The key aim of the Project has been 'to support the development and embedding of a distinct college higher education scholarly ethos across the sector' (Association of Colleges, 2018). Although the AoC Project has since ended, it provides a publicly available Framework with toolkits, guidance notes, self-assessment tools and various schemes that can be accessed and re-purposed by CBHE institutions and individual practitioners.

Since the pandemic years, the CBHE sector felt that a new active network should be formed to continue generating ideas, sharing best practice, inspiring and motivating each other to help advance the sector's engagement in scholarship. To support this endeavour, Advance HE, together with the project team from University Centre Leeds, initiated the creation of a new CBHE Network. This collaborative space was launched via Advance HE's Collaborative Development Fund. The Network opened in March 2022, and at the time of writing a year and a half later, it has over 100 individual members from approximately 60 institutions nationwide, with these numbers rapidly growing.

Advance HE CBHE Network

The Advance HE CBHE Network meets online twice a term with the aim to 'share practices, solutions and build stronger links with the Advance HE community' (Advance HE, 2023a). Alongside this, the Network discusses and debates the challenges that CBHE institutions face in response to an ever evolving HE external landscape; how they adapt in light of these changes and meet the requirements as set out by regulatory bodies and governance. Driven by the sense of togetherness, the Network is in a better position as a collaborative community 'to embrace opportunities and shape the future of education' (Advance HE, 2023a). To enable practitioners to continue their discussion outside the set meetings, the blog 'The Power of Networks' was launched, alongside the 'Advance HE Connect' online collaboration space.

Key themes

The Network explores a range of themes during its meetings. It considers a complex and wide range of provision in CBHE as there is 'no one size fits all' and discusses a lot of emerging themes and challenges faced by the sector (Advance HE, 2023b). Some of these include developing the sense of 'HEness' within the CBHE environment; Advance HE Fellowships; exploring opportunities for CPD and engagement in research and scholarship. Amongst other emerging themes, the Network focuses on marketing CBHE as a unique sector in the changing educational and employability market; learning about changes affecting CBHE; and working on collective initiatives. Jo Tyssen, the former Chair of the Network and the project lead, notes that CPD, research and scholarly activity have been one of the key interest areas for the Network, 'particularly in developing an HE culture and community' (Tyssen, 2022, p. 14).

Advance HE Fellowships

The Network enables CBHE practitioners to work more closely with the Advance HE community by sharing and exchanging ideas, exploring collaborative working practices and gaining a better insight into the Fellowship application process. This is particularly important to CBHE staff as they familiarise themselves with the new UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) that was launched in January 2023. The role of the UKPSF has always been to demonstrate 'a clear profile of professional competencies expected of the contemporary academic' (Lawrence and Hall, 2018, p. 438).

In order for the UKPSF to address the demands of the modern-day teaching and learning landscape, its dimensions and descriptors have been revamped since its previous edition in 2011. The revised UKPSF now places more emphasis on inclusivity, the effectiveness and impact of teaching and the actual context in which the learning takes place (Advance HE, 2023c). A greater focus is also placed on the use of digital technology, alongside the exploration of professional values, support for students and collaboration (Advance HE, 2023c). The Network has received informative and insightful guidance in relation to the Fellowship application process from Advance HE during the online meetings and at the Festival of Scholarly Activity and Research in Sheffield.

Our close collaboration via this Network also led to a presentation delivered by Advance HE at the UCS Research and Scholarship Conference, held in August 2023. The Advance HE Membership team provided UCS staff with an overview of the new UKPSF, including the general principles, benefits and categories of Fellowships. They also guided our staff through the application process and highlighted useful toolkits and further support available to HE practitioners (Taylor and Igi-Ehon, 2023).

The sense of 'HEness' in CBHE

Other supportive work that the Advance HE CBHE Network undertakes is around the concept of 'HEness' or creating an HE community in FE settings. The Network participants discuss and debate the best approaches and mechanisms that help achieve the sense of 'HEness' within colleges, from a physical and cultural dimension. In fact, the HE ethos, otherwise referred to as 'HEness', was well researched by Lea and Simmons as early as 2012, who explored the term from the lenses of 'autonomy'. They analysed unifying and differentiating forces in culture between universities and CBHE at the time, with references to curriculum, pedagogy and research. The authors identified a number of unique aspects about the CBHE sector with many colleges, for example, developing their own scholarly communities of practice and peer review systems (Lea and Simmons, 2012). Although universities have always been known for the ability to validate their own degrees, a lot has changed for the CBHE sector since then. Some colleges are now progressing to seeking Bachelor Degree Awarding Powers (BDAP) and demonstrating a much higher and more significant level of autonomy.

There are conversations in the Network about the barriers that practitioners still face in the sector due to their dual roles and potential confusion in their professional identities. This refers to switching between teaching in FE and HE, a lack of sense of belonging, balancing time and other commitments, the number of teaching hours, pastoral and administrative demands, leaving less hours for research and scholarship. Such conversations resonate with the same barriers explored within academic literature over the last two decades (Young, 2002; Burkill, Rodway Dyer and Stone, 2008; Medcalf, 2014; Feather, 2016; Purves, Pulsford and Morris, 2023). In addition to this, Tyssen (2022) summarises feedback from the Network and identifies additional barriers: physical spaces in buildings not always representing HE; resources and capacity restraints on CBHE providers; marketing issues; burden on providers from regulators, and others.

Despite some of these barriers, there is a sense in the Network that considerable progress is being made to help CBHE staff progress in their research and scholarship journey and add to the overall sense of 'HEness'. These examples include colleges sharing experiences of holding HE and/or scholarship conferences; with some priding themselves on the launch of internal research publications or considering them in the near future. More staff are gaining Advance HE Fellowships and connecting with the wider Advance HE community to support the development of their CPD.

Support for CPD, research and scholarship

Although Brigwater and Taunton College (BTC) / UCS has a well-established internal annual bidding round to support its staff with seeking funding to carry out projects, a new development at a national level will be very much welcomed. It will also enable staff to develop their external funding bidding skills and raise their professional and academic profiles at a national level. Applying for large-scale external research funding can be seen as highly competitive and time-consuming for busy CBHE practitioners, sometimes with an added demand for cross-institutional collaborative approaches. Therefore, smaller national funding pots could be a preferred option.

Alongside this, the Advance HE CBHE Network regularly discusses CPD opportunities for CBHE staff. Tyssen (2022, p.14) notices that some CBHE providers already have established processes, guidelines and frameworks to support staff CPD and scholarly activities, whereas for others these initiatives are still in their infancy. She highlights a number of initiatives that the Network has explored since its inception. Some of these include more experienced staff supporting early-career staff; annual research journals and conferences; sharing good practice from staff and student support groups; a virtual repository to tap into resources; sourcing and applying for grants (Tyssen, 2022). Kadi-Hanifi and Keenan (2021) and Purves, Pulsford and Morris (2023) are also noting the change in culture in CBHE as providers are enabling and supporting their staff to progress to a higher-level of study, with some even supporting PhDs. At UCS, a number of these proposals have already been established and thriving since 2013, and the authors have shared this good practice at the Festival of Scholarly Activity and Research in Sheffield.

The Network has also been discussing some scholarship promotion initiatives that could be shared across CBHE. There are conversations about launching a CBHE Research Journal; an online collection of artefacts; collaborative research interest groups and annual CBHE research and scholarly activity conferences (Tyssen, 2022). Some of these network-wide initiatives have already come to fruition, namely, the framework, the national conference, online collaboration space and a blog. Another plan in the pipeline is the development of an Advance HE scholarship fund to enable CBHE practitioners to bid for individual funding to undertake small-scale research.

Bachelor Degree Awarding Powers

Bachelor Degree Awarding Powers (BDAP) are also on the agenda within the Network, with some colleges nationwide having already gained them in their own right, with either time-limited or permanent powers (Chowen, 2023). This development has become possible as the CBHE sector is in a unique position to help fill the current labour skills

shortages by developing talented employable graduates. Ridley (2023) argues that colleges are 'at the heart of future prosperity' and 'are far more than "feeder material" for universities'. Due to the shifting educational and skills landscape, he goes on to emphasise that universities and colleges need to work in collaboration and partnership with mutual respect, 'with both parties valued for what they are bringing to the table' (Ridley, 2023).

BTC/UCS put in an application to the Office for Students for BDAP in July 2023. Having awarding powers would enable UCS to move beyond simply writing its own degrees, as it does currently, but would enable BTC/UCS to award them in its own right. There are still very good reasons for wishing to collaborate with university partners and others in some subject areas. However, having the ability to award degrees and qualifications, would mean that the College would no longer need to persuade another institution to agree to validate all of its higher education qualifications and to fit into that institution's timeframes and processes for validation. This would enable a faster turn-around time in order to meet employers' needs, get Higher Technical Qualifications accredited and be ready to offer micro-credentials when the Lifelong Learning Entitlement enables students to receive finance at modular rather than just full qualification level.

The partnership with the OU over the last decade has prepared UCS well for demonstrating how it meets the BDAP requirements. This devolved model of working has meant that UCS has established its own policies, procedures and working practices such as its involvement with research and scholarship.

The fact that BTC/UCS has an approved Access and Participation Plan and therefore needs to monitor and evaluate its success, also contributes to its engagement in research. Research projects are commissioned by the UCS Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee to explore the impact of activities/interventions on students. This is particularly important in relation to evaluating the impact of activities on those from underrepresented groups to access higher education, succeed on their course and progress into employment or further study at the end of their course.

These research activities are part of meeting the BDAP overarching criteria of 'a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems' (Office for Students, 2023a, p.5). The focus of the Advance HE CBHE Network in this area will help to identify and share good practice in the creation and development of a cohesive academic community not only within the individual colleges that engage, but across the institutions in this wider network.

Distinctive nature of CBHE

The Advance HE Network emphasises the distinctive nature and uniqueness of the CBHE sector within an increasingly competitive HE environment. CBHE prides itself on providing focused nurturing and personalised student support, developing industry-focused graduate attributes and student preparation for employability and higher study. This learner-centred approach, based on strong interpersonal staff-student relationships, makes the sector stand out from the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Kadi Hanifi and Keenan, 2021; Purves, Pulsford, Morris, 2023). Lawrence and Hall (2018, pp. 451-452) go so far as to state that 'pastoral support and academic engagement they [CBHE staff] offer is exceptional ... [and] exceed[s] the support a student would experience in a university setting'. CBHE staff-student relationships are renowned for being 'mutually rewarding' (Lawrence and Hall, 2018, p. 455) and this extends to the support staff as well.

At UCS, the Learning Resources staff, Additional Learning Support staff, and Academic Coaches are all involved in supporting and nurturing students in their learning journey by providing academic and study skills support. A referrals system has been established between these teams to help students receive focused and timely support. Students are at the heart of the College's ethos and a new UCS Elevate framework has been launched to develop higher education (HE) students' personal and employability attributes. It consists of several strands that develop graduate attributes and prepare students for employment or higher study.

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UCS ELEVATE
Real Life Skills for Real World Success

As a University Centre Somerset student, I am...

- INDUSTRY READY**
 - I focus on real-life industry needs and raise my commercial awareness.
 - I undertake industry experience in real-world settings.
 - I pursue a clear and focused career path.
- HIGHLY SKILLED**
 - I acquire work-ready and highly valued practical skills.
 - I hone my high-level academic skills in writing, research and referencing.
 - I build a wide-range of digital skills to support me in life, work and study.
- PROFESSIONAL**
 - I refine my creative and effective problem-solving skills.
 - I prepare to be an influential leader and effectively network with others.
 - I set professional and personal goals in readiness for future success.
- EMPOWERED**
 - I grow as a confident communicator and dynamic presenter.
 - I strengthen my own resilience and independence while motivating others.
 - I collaborate as a team player and contribute to a growth-oriented culture.
- KNOWLEDGEABLE**
 - I develop in-depth knowledge in my subject area and learn from dedicated experts.
 - I exceed textbook knowledge by thinking critically and reasoning analytically.
 - I maintain a balanced physical, social, emotional, and mental well-being.
- COMMUNITY MINDED**
 - I champion equality, diversity, and inclusion, and treat everyone with respect.
 - I engage with the wider student community and contribute to my academic faculty.
 - I recognise my responsibilities as a global citizen and in creating a sustainable future.

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A unique blend of study skills sessions is delivered for UCS HE students via the Learning Resources staff who offer the HE Academic Development (HEADStart) programme. This forms part of UCS Elevate. It consists of a set of sessions, focusing on accessing, searching and evaluating information, developing students' research and referencing skills and academic writing. These are the core sessions within the programme, with more advanced sessions offered on literature reviews, journal article writing, and critical thinking and writing. These sessions are supplemented by the use of digital technology and a variety of apps to help engage students. The library staff use focused questioning techniques for gradual scaffolding throughout the library sessions. This helps to establish students' prior knowledge on the subject; to initiate discussion, inquiry, collaboration and critical thought; to challenge them to find the answers for themselves; to assess and measure their understanding of the subject, all of which leads to them being independent learners at HE level. The development of these skills also supports building graduate attributes and students' preparation for employment and higher study.

CBHE does have a distinctive nature and it is helpful that this is an area of focus within the Advance HE Network, so that this uniqueness can be recognised and embraced with understanding and pride. By recognising and developing its unique nature, those in CBHE can continue to find their own way with confidence.



The cover page of the Toolkit with a QR code (Advance HE, 2023d)

Advance HE Scholarship Toolkit

One of the key outputs from the Network's collaboration has been the development of the CBHE Research and Scholarship Toolkit. It is divided into several sections to enable CBHE practitioners to dip in and out and adapt resources relevant to them. It is aimed to be a supportive document to help HE staff enhance their engagement in research and scholarship, as well as for new staff and early-career researchers who may wish to find out more about research and scholarly activity. Just like the AoC Scholarship Project (2015-2018) and ourselves at UCS, this Network has also adopted Boyer's (1990) academic model of scholarship, which refers to the scholarship of discovery, application, integration and teaching. The scholarship of discovery advocates discovery through new research, which adds to the advancement of knowledge. The scholarship of integration focuses on integration of knowledge from different sources and disciplines, as well as integration of theory and practice. Application of scholarship refers to the implementation and application of new knowledge. The scholarship of teaching involves the search for innovative approaches and best practices to develop skills and disseminate knowledge. The toolkit explores Boyer's concepts and how they can be aligned

within CBHE contexts (Advance HE, 2023d) and provides examples on what constitutes research, scholarship or scholarly activity.

Notably, the Advance HE Toolkit places a strong focus on the decolonisation of research and ensuring that such research is fully inclusive. It links to external resources, urging practitioners to consider what they know about the history of the discipline in which they specialise; the authors they are citing in their research, the methodologies they are adopting and whether their references to literature come only from the global North or wider research outputs. It may encourage practitioners to re-evaluate their research and the sources they access or, in the words of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017), consider hyphenating the word 'research' into 're-search'. Such linguistic alteration can help staff become more research-savvy from a wider dimension, exploring research written in different languages, stemming from various cultures, voices and perspectives. Beyond its literal meaning of undoing colonialism, decoloniality is seen as an 'epistemological movement aimed at liberation ... of [our] way of thinking, knowing and doing' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 485). Practitioners need to approach research with open-mindedness and transparency towards accurate attribution of knowledge, and continuously work towards the decolonisation of HE syllabuses. From the decolonial perspective, this also means that reading lists and library collections need to be re-calibrated, with new academic resources added that previously did not feature in them. This points towards an 'additive' process, rather than a complete overhaul of collections.

The Toolkit also explores the barriers that CBHE staff often face in relation to engagement in research and scholarly activity, and potential solutions to counteract them. Other sections lead practitioners to exploring various types of activities that could be classed as scholarly activity. It goes on to provide guidance on 'the next steps' in 'mobilising outputs' internally and externally (Advance HE, 2023d, p.

24). These can vary from writing for an internal blog or a publication, to writing for a peer-reviewed external journal and participating in nationwide sector awards.

Additionally, the Toolkit provides links to external guidance on writing for an academic publication, such as for a peer-reviewed journal, dissertation, thesis or a book. It also refers to the key information for practitioners wishing to embark on the Advance HE Fellowship application journey and the routes they can take to apply. There is a useful section on enabling student-staff collaboration in research, or engaging students in becoming partners in research, and promoting and disseminating their research.

The Festival of Scholarly Activity and Research

The aforementioned Advance HE Toolkit was launched in time for the Festival of Scholarly Activity and Research held at Sheffield College in July 2023. It was a face-to-face, inaugural national conference enabling colleagues from the Network to learn about a wide range of scholarly practices within the CBHE sector and celebrate them. The event focused on widening participation and supporting students from under-represented groups; teaching and learning methods, strategies and tools; digital technologies; mental health and wellbeing and their impact on teaching and learning (Advance HE, 2023e). It was enlightening and insightful for the authors of this article to be part of the event both, as delegates and presenters, and to witness the wealth of activities taking place in the sector.

As with any other national conference, there is an administrative process to follow in order to be invited to present at the conference. The options to select from involved leading an interactive break-out session, a presentation in the main auditorium or a poster presentation. The authors chose to lead a presentation in the main auditorium focusing on the UCS research and

scholarship journey over the last decade. Following the selection of the presentation format, an abstract had to be drafted and submitted to the organisers in advance. In addition, all successful presenters were asked to submit their professional biographies and photographs. The programme was then published by Advance HE and an online registration link shared with the Network.

The Festival was opened by the keynote speaker Dr Nena Skrbic from the University of Huddersfield who presented on the concept of 'CBHE Practitioners as Researchers' (Skrbic, 2023). She launched the Toolkit and explored some of the 'myths and tropes' that often marginalise and make the sector less visible in terms of research and scholarship and divide it from research-active universities. The keynote speaker shared some of the barriers explored in the academic literature that sometimes prevent CBHE staff from engaging in scholarship. Alongside these, she also highlighted examples of good practice within some of the CBHE institutions that have developed coherent policies and frameworks to motivate their staff with engagement in research and scholarship.

Delegates were able to widen their understanding of what constitutes research and scholarly activity in CBHE. They explored the concept of 'practice research' in its contemporary sense. Although previously this type of methodology was predominantly in the creative arts and humanities areas, it is now inclusive of all disciplines. It provides new insights and meanings into the world we live in via the research lenses of practice, outside the more traditional models of research, and which might be more suitable to CBHE practitioners. Skrbic (2023) also promoted a number of academic journals that specialise in action research, which might be more accessible to CBHE practitioners for disseminating their action research outcomes. Opportunities to engage are also provided by the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). Through this organisation HE staff can engage in professional development opportunities, write for SEDA's quarterly magazine, take part in its awards scheme or participate in the blog and committees.

One of the well-attended and even oversubscribed sessions was by our colleagues from Bedford College who presented about Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the context of colleges. This is currently a hot topic in the educational sector, frequently debated and discussed at the Advance HE CBHE Network. The presentation explored how various AI tools can revolutionise teaching, learning and engagement with knowledge and research (Khan *et al.*, 2023). It highlighted how AI applications can support personalised learning, implement intelligent tutoring systems, automate repetitive administrative tasks and support data-driven decision making. However, AI additionally presents numerous challenges in CBHE as well. These refer to ethical issues, undermining academic

integrity, equity of access for students, privacy and security risks, biases, job displacements and growing overreliance on technology (Khan *et al.*, 2023).

This interactive session led to an open discussion by the practitioners at the Festival, exploring AI and ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer) in a type of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. It enabled attendees to consider the strengths and opportunities that these technologies present and where they can be successfully integrated into teaching and learning. The presentation also generated a lively discussion concerning the weaknesses and threats they present in light of ensuring transparent assessment and academic integrity. Some colleges were debating whether there is a need to continuously update their policies in relation to AI and ChatGPT given the fact that this is a constantly evolving subject. They considered that a generic statement within their assessment and academic misconduct policies might be a more suitable option. It was suggested that a further solution would be to simply have a college-wide statement in relation to AI that can be more easily updated without having to go through the whole process of getting a policy updated.

Our own presentation at the Festival provided an overview of the UCS scholarship journey and highlighted a range of initiatives that have been established over the last decade to support staff with their engagement in scholarship. The background was explored of having a scholarship and research policy for UCS based on Boyer's (1990) approach, as described above, together with policies for staff and students on research ethics. The annual bidding round was explained and the work of the Research, Scholarship and Ethics Committee in ensuring the launch of the bidding round and the production of the annual research and scholarship showcase publication, with significant support and editing from the Learning Resources Team. The research hub, a repository with information and guidance for staff, along with the back catalogue of research reports, was also explained to delegates. There are plans to launch the repository in a new Sharepoint site in the near future.

The presentation gave examples of specific research projects that have been carried out by BTC/UCS staff over a number of years. It also highlighted the fact that FE and business support staff are equally encouraged to engage in research and scholarship that enhances teaching and learning and supports the College's mission and strategic plans. Delegates responded very positively to the presentation and were particularly interested to learn of our success in including support staff in research. They were also interested in hearing about projects undertaken at UCS that involve students as partners in research with staff. Such projects related to the Access and Participation Plan, the Embedded Librarian project, decolonisation of the library collections, as well as through curriculum research projects.



Pauline Osborne and Jolanta Peters at the Festival of Scholarly Activity and Research in Sheffield

Since the presentation, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) panel described the engagement of UCS in research and scholarship as an outstanding quality feature (Office for Students, 2023b). The TEF panel report states: 'the evidence indicates that the provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students. The panel found this to be an outstanding quality feature' (Office for Students, 2023b, p.5).

Conclusion

We are very pleased to be part of the Advance HE College-Based Network and to witness such synergy amongst its members. It harnesses collegiality as a nationwide community of practice in addressing the challenges that the CBHE sector faces in the changing and constantly evolving educational landscape. To address them, it shares the expertise and good practice to help practitioners develop cohesive HE communities in FE colleges.

Our engagement in the Advance HE CBHE Network and the Festival of Research and Scholarly Activity has demonstrated that research and scholarship are of a particular importance to CBHE practitioners. They need to fully understand how vital this is to enhance teaching and learning and to progress in their professional careers as active researchers, which can take numerous forms in CBHE, such as action research, practice research and industrial updating. Through our continuous engagement with the CBHE Network, this will support our own journey of considering new practices in enhancing the research and scholarship ethos at UCS.

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Measuring the development of maths, English, digital and wider employability skills

Introduction

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) states in their Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in the Further Education (FE) and Training Sector that teachers should 'develop learners' mathematics, English, digital and wider employability skills' (ETF, 2022). During my four-year teaching career, I am confident in my ability to embed these skills within my lessons. My curriculum design supports my learners in developing these skills.



Figure 1: A poster explaining the BTC Advantage Skills (Bridgwater and Taunton College, 2023)

Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC) is a large Further Education (FE) college, spread across three campuses in the South West of England. At the College, I hold the post of Course Leader of A Level Law and Politics, and I am also a Teaching and Learning Coach. The college has over 3000 16–19-year-olds enrolled on FE courses.

Bridgwater and Taunton College (2023) have developed the 'BTC Advantage', which incorporates seven different personal development and employability skills. As illustrated in Figure 1, these seven skills include high aspirations, more confidence; more effective learner; community-minded; better communicator; safer, happier, healthier and more knowledgeable (BTC, 2023). These skills are highly sought-after employability skills, which learners can take forward when they enter higher education, training or the workforce. Teaching staff at BTC use the BTC Advantage as a framework for wider employability skills to incorporate into their learners' development.

The Problem

Progression of maths, English, digital and the BTC Advantage skills have always been considered when I have been designing activities and planning my lessons. I ensure that the skills are included in my plans of learning and that I am signposting to my learners when they are carrying out activities that promote progression in the skill. However, I have often found myself being unconfident that my learners were understanding how these skills were being progressed in my classroom. In tutorials, learners are not secure in their knowledge of the BTC Advantage skills and often struggle to identify them. Furthermore, ... when supporting tutees with their university personal statements, they often struggle to identify any employability skills or how they have demonstrated these skills at college.

Because of my concern about this, I have experimented with different interventions to combat this problem. Last year, I began adding where learners were progressing in maths, English, digital and BTC Advantage skills when relaying the lesson aims and objectives. This appeared to have an impact at first; my learners started to use the vocabulary of the BTC Advantage skills, and I felt more confident in their abilities to identify the skills. However, I noticed over time that despite my efforts to signpost these skills to my learners, they were passively listening and were still unsure of them during discussions in tutorials.

Whilst I was keen to rectify this issue, I was still unsure how to address it properly. During a discussion with one of my line managers, I admitted my concerns to him. I further added that I was not confident that my learners were internalising an awareness of the skills and would not be able to explain them to an observer. He suggested that perhaps I needed to consider changing my approach: rather than me signposting and telling my learners how these skills were embedded in my lessons, I could ask learners to tell me when they are developing in these skills.

Aims of the Intervention

When designing the intervention to this problem, I decided the following four aims:

- Learners should be able to identify BTC Advantage skills and be able to confidently explain them to observers.
- Learners should know how they are developing their maths, English, digital and BTC Advantages in their Law / Politics lessons.
- Learners should be able to use this knowledge of how they demonstrate these skills and be confident to communicate this in their applications for university study, further training or job vacancies.
- To use the data collected from my learners to identify which BTC Advantage Skills need to be more explicitly embedded into my lesson and curriculum design.

The Intervention

I decided to ask my learners to reflect once a week on their progression of maths, English, digital and BTC Advantage skills. During their last lesson of the week, I asked learners to spend between five and ten minutes filling out an online form. I chose this method as I saw it as a quick and efficient way to collect data, and I could compare trends over time. The 'weekly reflection form' asked the following questions:

1. What was the date on Monday of this week?
2. Select the BTC Advantage Skills that you feel you have made progress in this week in Law / Politics (select as many as you like!)
3. Please give details of where you have achieved/ made progress in these skills.
4. How have you achieved/ made progress towards your maths skills this week in Law/ Politics?
5. How have you achieved/ made progress towards your English Skills this week in Law/ Politics?
6. How have you achieved/ made progress towards your digital skills this week in Law/ Politics?

I also considered what I needed to put in place to help my learners fill out their weekly reflection form. I was confident that my learners could identify maths, English and digital skills such as 'arithmetic', 'speaking', 'listening' and 'use of IT'. However, I wanted my learners to consider other transferable skills than these more obvious ones. I therefore created displays around my classroom to remind them of other types of maths, English and digital skills that are transferable in Law and Politics as shown in figure 2.

There were some initial issues that arose and needed troubleshooting. After looking through the responses from the first week's reflection form, I noticed that my learners



Figure 2: Pictures of displays of Transferable Maths, English and Digital Skills visible in the Law and Politics Classroom

were not going into enough depth about how they were expanding their goals, but rather just listing what maths, English, digital or BTC Advantage skills they felt they had achieved or made progress with that week. To resolve this, in the second week, I modelled how I wanted my students to respond in their reflection and explicitly told them that I was looking for more out of their responses. This resulted in more in-depth responses thereafter.

I also noticed during the third week, that learners started to struggle to identify skills that they had progressed in. This was largely because I had stopped signposting to my learners the skills within my lesson design as I wanted them to think more independently. However, I decided to incorporate signposting when we were developing maths, English, digital or BTC Advantage Skills into my lesson and noticed my learners found it easier to identify and explain how their skills were developing.

Impact of the Intervention

Overall, I believe that this intervention was a success, as many of my intentions were met. Firstly, learners were much more aware of the BTC Advantage skills and how their Law and Politics lessons helped them to progress in maths, English, digital and BTC Advantage skills. This is evident in the feedback I have received from my recent developmental observations. During my observations, my line managers requested that I leave the room whilst they asked my learners a series of questions that included questions about their understanding and progression of the BTC Advantage skills. One of my line managers noted: 'Students often find it difficult to link their lessons to the BTC Advantage when

questioned during observations. However, this intervention that Karen has been using has had a significantly positive impact as the learners were able to confidently discuss these skills and how their Politics class helps to develop them' (Watson, 2023). This clearly demonstrates that the intervention worked, as learners were more confident in answering questions about BTC Advantage after this intervention was implemented, and, in particular, learners were able to express how these skills were improved in Politics lessons.

Another aim I set out to achieve was that I wanted my learners to be able to use this knowledge of their skills when they apply for higher education, training, or enter employment. Whilst it is too early in the academic year to measure this aim, my other line manager noted that 'the intervention helps learners to develop higher aspirations because they can easily demonstrate their maths, English, digital and BTC Advantage Skills when they apply for university, further training or in the wider world of work' (Harding, 2023). As the year progresses, I hope to find that my learners are more confident in recognising and demonstrating these skills in their applications.

My final aim was to identify gaps in my own practice where I am not progressing my learners in BTC Advantage skills. Figure 3 shows my learners' responses to question 2 regarding the BTC Advantage skills they believed they made progress in each week. The table shows data collected over seven weeks with a group of 35 first-year Law students. Whilst my learners can clearly identify they have developed 'More Knowledgeable', 'More Confident', and 'More Effective Learner', it is clear from this data that I

must ensure that I am empowering my learners to improve their skills to become 'More Community Minded' and 'Safer, Happier, Healthier'. This will aid me in developing my practice going forward, as these reflections highlight areas where I need to embed the BTC Advantage skills further.

2. Select a BTC Advantage skill that you feel you have made progress with this week in Law. (tick as many as you like!)

More Details

Higher Aspirations	35
More Confident	60
More Effective Learner	51
More Community Minded	11
Better Communicator	38
Safer, Happier, Healthier	17
More Knowledgeable	113

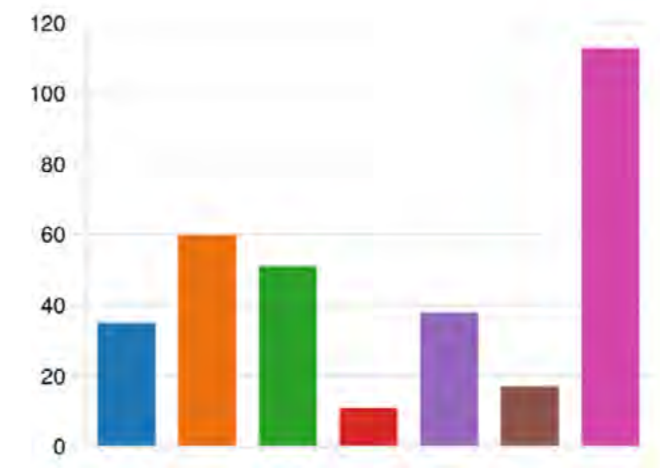


Figure 3: A graph showing what BTC Advantage skills learners believed they achieved or made progress on during their first-year Law classes.

Conclusion

Overall, this intervention was a success. I now feel much more confident that my learners can identify the BTC Advantage Skills and can also measure their development in maths, English, digital and wider employability skills. Furthermore, this has helped me to develop my curriculum design, to ensure that I fulfil the ETF's Professional Standards of ensuring the development of these skills, as I am able to identify which skills my learners need further development in. I hope that going forward, my learners will be confident in not only identifying these skills to universities and employers, but also be able to give them specific examples of where they have demonstrated the skills in their Law and Politics lessons. I plan to use this intervention for the foreseeable future.

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Creating and maintaining an academic library environment that is conducive to learning

Introduction

To best serve its users, it is crucial that an academic library has relevant and useful resources, adequate facilities, and that it provides support with key study skills such as referencing, researching and evaluating information. However, it is equally important that the library environment (the physical space it occupies) is conducive to learning. This article will explore what the term 'conducive to learning' means, why it is important to create an environment that is conducive to learning, and how such an environment can be created and maintained.

This article will not consider aspects which are largely fixed and often difficult and costly to change, such as the size and fixed location of the library. It will instead focus on changeable aspects of the library such as how it is used, its design and layout, lighting, heating, seating, colour scheme, and the behaviour of students using the library; including noise levels and the decision as to whether or not to permit consumption of food and drink.

That being said, transforming the changeable library environment will, of course, still incur cost. Nonetheless, as an article by Kiesling and Fox Jr (2021) notes, financial investment in an academic library environment can be shown to yield advantageous results for the academic institution in terms of increased student engagement and elevated levels of student retention. This is therefore a powerful advocate for further investment in academic library environments, perhaps even extending to higher cost renovation works or relocation to a more effective space in the future. This is especially relevant when considering the fact that academic institutions are becoming increasingly proactive (and therefore spending more money on), recruiting and retaining students who will go on to attain academic success at their institution. Therefore, the entire campus, but crucially the library as a key focal point of learning, needs to be an engaging space for students to learn in and achieve to the best of their ability. If this objective can be met, then the academic institution will

perform well in the academic marketplace and sums invested into making the library a functional and effective working space will have been well spent (Kiesling and Fox Jr, 2021).

What does 'conducive to learning' mean and why is it important to create an academic library environment that is conducive to learning?

The term 'conducive' is defined by the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2023) as 'making it easy, possible or likely for something to happen'. Therefore, the environment in the library must be such that students find it unchallenging to learn in. In other words, students must be able to concentrate and focus on learning activities (such as reading, writing and researching) whilst in the library. An academic library must be an environment that is conducive to learning, as it is a place where students expect to be able to come and work without distraction and disturbance, away from the busy and loud nature of communal areas on campus such as canteens and common rooms, and away from distractions found in the home environment. Academic libraries that fail to provide a suitable environment to accommodate this are doing their students a disservice and may be likely to see a reduction in student engagement, academic success and retention.

How is an academic library environment that is conducive to learning created?

When creating an academic environment conducive to learning, the first point to note is that it is beneficial to take into account student opinions. However, it is vital to be mindful to manage their expectations as to what is and what is not achievable around the time and budgetary constraints in place. This is illustrated by an article by Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes (2020), which describes the process of creating a student ideation learning space within a room in an academic library at the University of Oregon, USA. The creation of the space was initiated by students themselves, who proposed what they wanted to see included in the space through expressing their preferences during focus groups. The article commented that the project managers found this was challenging, as students lacked an appreciation as to what was achievable and what was aspirational. As a result, student ideas that were unattainable were revised into actions which could be undertaken as feasible compromises.

Kiesling and Fox Jr (2021) agree that obtaining feedback from students as to what they feel would make an academic library environment that is conducive to their own learning is valuable. They also assert that academic institutions need to obtain viewpoints from a diverse range of students, including neurodivergent students, so that an inclusive learning environment can be created. The term

'neurodivergent' is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2023), as 'having or related to a type of brain that is often considered as different from what is usual, for example that of someone who has autism'.

In terms of the design and layout of academic libraries, they must be discipline-neutral spaces, which welcome all students, regardless of what course they are studying (Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes, 2020). The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) outlines guidance for secondary school libraries on how they can support student learning but nevertheless, much of their advice can also be applied to college and university libraries (Shapner, 2014). CILIP states that academic libraries need dedicated areas or zones for lone, independent study and for group work, that can accommodate both small groups and larger classes. Where possible, silent study rooms should be provided for students who struggle to learn amongst any level of background noise. Academic libraries can also offer quiet areas or quiet times within the main library instead of, or in addition to, silent study rooms. Use of headphones within the library should also be encouraged as they provide a way of controlling noise levels, meaning that students who prefer to study to the accompaniment of music can do so without disturbing others (Shapner, 2014).

Kiesling and Fox Jr (2021) discussed the fact that many academic libraries are now implementing different zones within their building, and that such zones allow students to pick and choose which environment they find best to work in. For example, do they want to work in a brightly lit area or would an area with muted lighting suit them better? What kind of furniture would they like to sit on? Do they need a supportive chair to facilitate computer work, or would they prefer a more casual, armchair-style seat where they can do some leisurely reading? Are they happy to work with a level of background noise or do they need a quiet or silent space in order to concentrate?

Kiesling and Fox Jr's (2021) article also makes the point that academic libraries should provide multiple and varied zones to serve different purposes and specifically, that these zones should offer students a certain extent of visibility of other students at work in order to facilitate vicarious learning. Focus groups carried out by the authors found students remarked that observing other students studying, promoted their own self-efficacy and motivated them to carry out their own studying. This vicarious learning can be achieved by having open plan zones, such as tables and computers in the main library area, and separate study rooms which are largely private but can still be looked in on with no posters or displays obstructing the doors for safeguarding reasons (Rose, 2022).

Visibility into the library was also fundamental to students at the University of Oregon (Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes,

2020), with students commenting that they wanted to be able to see in and out of the room. This request was accomplished by removing the solid wooden door the room originally had and replacing it with a glass door. The glass door also provided the added benefit of letting light into the room.

The lighting in the library is also a core consideration. When lighting is too bright, this can affect concentration by causing some students to become restless (Shapner, 2014). Bright lighting can also affect students who experience sensory differences in ways such as causing distorted vision, whereby bright lights can appear to jump around (National Autistic Society, 2020). Conversely, if the lighting is too dull, this can present its own problems (Shapner, 2014). It can be a health and safety hazard, causing eye strain and increased probability of trips or falls.

Lighting that is either too bright or too dull, can cause issues for students with visual impairments (Shapner, 2014). There may be a need to have variation in lighting in different areas of the library, for example, areas for studying may require brighter light in order that students can view their study materials adequately, whereas an area for quietly reading fiction books, may require lower-level lighting to produce a more calming and relaxing ambience. This variation in lighting levels can be effectuated through use of spotlights, lamps and wall-mounted light fittings (Shapner, 2014).

It is also essential to consider the temperature in the library. The temperature at which individuals like to work varies, some prefer a warmer environment, whereas others prefer it to be cooler (Shapner, 2014). Nevertheless, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) (2023) states that 'the minimum temperature in an indoor workplace should normally be at least: 16°C'. Academic libraries can be counted within the definition of an indoor workplace due to the fact that there are staff employed there and that the users of the library will often be carrying out (academic) work.



HSE (2023) also outlines a number of measures that can be taken to make students more comfortable in an indoor working environment. These include providing air conditioning and/or fans, having the ability to open windows to circulate air through the room, installing reflective film or fitting blinds to windows to shield users from direct sunlight and ensuring workstations are positioned away from direct sunlight or heat sources to allow students to feel cooler in warmer temperatures. If students are feeling cold, actions that can be taken to allow them to feel warmer include providing heating (which may be in the form of portable heaters where safe and appropriate) and reducing draughts, whilst still taking care to ensure adequate ventilation is provided (HSE, 2023).

Colour choices in the library are particularly salient. Engelbrecht (2003) states that colour in a learning environment should be chosen to be functional and avoid over and under stimulation and eye fatigue, rather than to be aesthetically pleasing. Engelbrecht further suggests that cooler and subdued colours provide enough stimulation for concentration without causing distraction or inducing feelings of stress. Colours that Engelbrecht recommends for learning environments include beige, and pale or light greens. However, this is not to say that brighter and bolder colours never have a place in an academic library, as noted by Shapner (2014, p. 30) 'splashes of deeper colour are important in breaking up monotony'. In Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes' (2020, p. 376) article, in the student ideation space created in the main library at the University of Oregon, green panels were hung from the ceiling and placed on the lower portion of the walls on the side of the building (as seen in Figure 1) to add colour and evince an artistic flair to the room.

Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes (2020) also discovered that students would like to see artwork, particularly pieces produced by their peers, exhibited in academic libraries. This adds a decorative touch and also acts as a motivational and inspirational tool by allowing students to view work other students have created whilst studying at the academic institution.

Seating is a pivotal facet of academic library furniture. Getting the right seating for an academic library is a balancing act, as contrasting types of seating are required for different uses. On the one hand, supportive, traditional swivel chairs are needed for computer use but so too are more relaxed, casual seating to facilitate group work or individual browsing and leisurely reading. The danger is that by having comfortable seating similar to that used in typical social areas such as canteens and common rooms, this may imply to students that the library can also be used as a social area. Correct use of this seating requires library staff to clearly explain that students using this seating should be carrying out some type of academic pursuit (not merely

Figure 1: IDEA space post-renovation (Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes, 2020, p. 375)

socialising with their friends and peers) and to monitor and enforce this rule accordingly.

Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes' (2020) article included a particular focus on the type of seating students wanted to see in the library and found that they wanted portable and lightweight items that could be rearranged easily, making them suitable for both individual and group use. To accomplish this, sofa-style seats were purchased that can be used in isolation or pushed together for use in groups. An assortment of ottomans in varying shapes and sizes (as seen in Figure 2) were also sourced for their versatility, as they can be used both as seats and as tables. After the works had been completed and the space was opened to students, library staff measured its usage, as part of which they observed that seats and ottomans were being used flexibly and configured into many different arrangements as students had suggested they would be.



Figure 2: IDEA space post-renovation (Passehl-Stoddart and Snipes, 2020, p. 375)

How is an academic library environment that is conducive to learning maintained?

So far, this article has described how an academic library can create an environment that is conducive to learning in terms of its physical aspects. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the way an academic library is used is equally pertinent to how it looks and the features it has, such as heating and lighting.

Once an academic library environment that is conducive to learning has been created, it must be maintained, and this involves managing how the library is used. Library staff have an ongoing responsibility to challenge instances of unacceptable behaviour in the library in order to preserve a working environment for students who are trying to

study. Instances of improper conduct impede learning, they include but are not limited to: excessive noise, inappropriate and/or offensive language and consumption of food. Whilst some academic libraries allow students to eat, the library at University Centre Somerset has taken the decision not to allow this in order to keep the environment clean and hygienic and to protect resources from damage. It is imperative to create a distinction between learning areas and social areas, and the allowance of food can precipitate confusion as to the purpose of the library, by implying that it can be used as a social area. For this reason, students should eat their food in designated social areas such as the canteen or common rooms. Students are, however, welcome to bring hot or cold drinks with lids.

To maintain an academic library environment that is conducive to learning, assistance is needed from curriculum staff in supporting the enforcement of library rules to reaffirm the purpose of the library as a working environment. Curriculum staff are also paramount in ensuring the correct use of the academic library facility. As recommended by Shapner (2014), curriculum staff should not be using the library as a place to punish students who are badly behaved, as this will create a negative association.

Conclusion

This article has explored some of the ways in which academic libraries can create and maintain an environment that is conducive to learning using various methods. Strategies include utilising physical items (such as seating, lighting and heating), and enforcing correct use of the facility (an ongoing task which cannot be done by library staff alone and requires co-operation and support from curriculum staff). There are, of course, many more techniques which are beyond the scope of this article.

To conclude, it has been demonstrated that whilst transforming an academic library into an environment that is conducive to learning can be a costly undertaking; this investment will be rewarded by measurable student success and overall performance of the academic institution in terms of producing successful graduates and building a solid reputation enabling them to recruit future students.

This article also encouraged academic libraries to involve their students in decisions in regard to changes to physical aspects of the library. As they are the end users, their input is invaluable in ensuring the environment created will be helpful and well utilised. However, the article also cautioned academic institutions to be aware of the challenges presented by this and to take steps to manage student expectations as to what can practicably be achieved.

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The Agile College: how Bridgwater & Taunton College has used agile methodologies in the implementation of BTC ConnectED

Introduction

What are agile methodologies? Practitioners may have heard of these, but could they be utilising them in their working day to increase efficiency? The curation and implementation of BTC's new digital strategy has been able to utilise these methods to increase productivity.

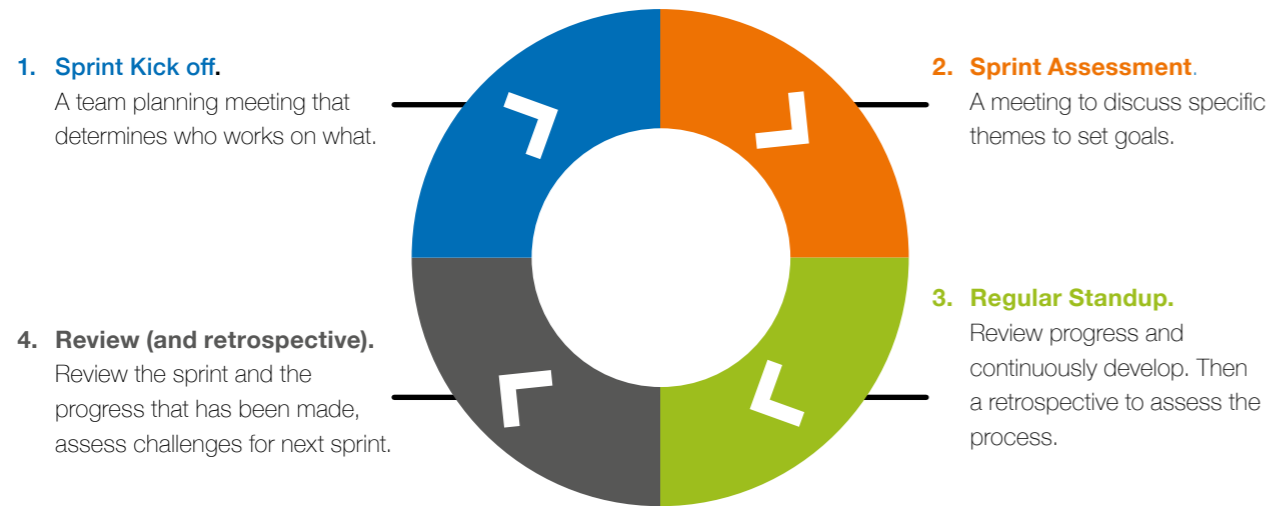
BTC ConnectED forms the strategy to implement the cross cutting 'digital' theme as part of the College's mission statement. This covers innovation within learning and teaching, staff development, business efficiency, and most importantly student success. The development of the strategy required a whole college approach coordinating between many stakeholders to ensure that the development has a holistic ethos. Agile methodologies seek to break down large or complex tasks into more manageable items to enable for effective planning.

Agile methods can be very effective when working across teams or staff that may have different priorities. Agile (2023) define 4 dimensions of agile working:

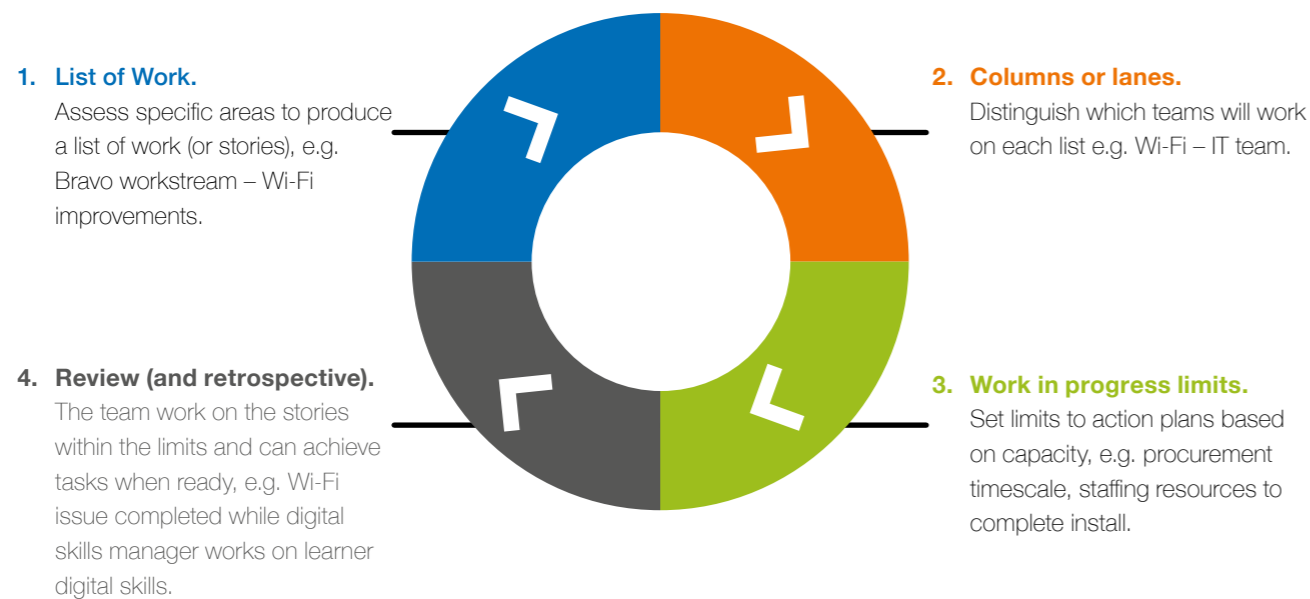
- Time (when do people work?)
- Location (where do people work?)
- Role (what do people do?)
- Source (who carries out the work?)

These areas allow for tasks to be assigned effectively to staff or teams to provide focused completion.

Using Sprints. Sprints are part of agile/scrum methodologies and are a way of breaking down tasks into smaller chunks and employing regular meetings to assess progress. This can be split into 4 key sections with teams or assessment hubs working concurrently from that initial planning meeting:



Using Kanban. Although similar to sprints, this method benefits from using specific Kanban boards to detail different workstreams, breaking tasks into different stories, columns, or lanes:



These methods can often appear similar in theory, however the implementation of this can vary widely and in the initial phases of implementation for BTC ConnectED the team decided to develop the Kanban methodology. Kanban can allow for greater flexibility and does not need to be restricted to one team and one iteration but visualises the whole workflow and enables the collaboration of multiple teams and individuals from multiple domains (Hofmann *et al.*, 2018). The BTC ConnectED development team were reflected in this description and through the utilisation of Microsoft Planner as Kanban boards, digital task assignment and monitoring of workstreams from a distance were able to take place.

Considering initiatives, epics and stories

Rehkopf (2023) suggests that overarching projects can be organised using a hierarchy of initiatives, epics, stories and tasks. Once the elements of the project have been broken down, a category can then be used as the main 'initiative'. An epic is the category layer below the initiative and will allow for the team to start to drive a particular focus for the project, this is a fantastic exercise to identify the 'why' to any project. The stories or tasks will become the operational outcome that is seeking to be put in place, with the sub task becoming the actions to achieve the outcome.

Figure 1 is intended to act as a demonstration of how Kanban could be implemented, however this is only one small example: in most Kanban cases, there may be multiple epics being used within an initiative. Agile methodologies are in their nature, agile, and therefore these can also be applied to many different scenarios. The intention of this report is to highlight working practices that could be adapted to suit the need of the reader. These could be utilised within any working area, whether that be within teaching, learning, and assessment, or even implemented within the planning phase of an event such as Open or Welcome Days.

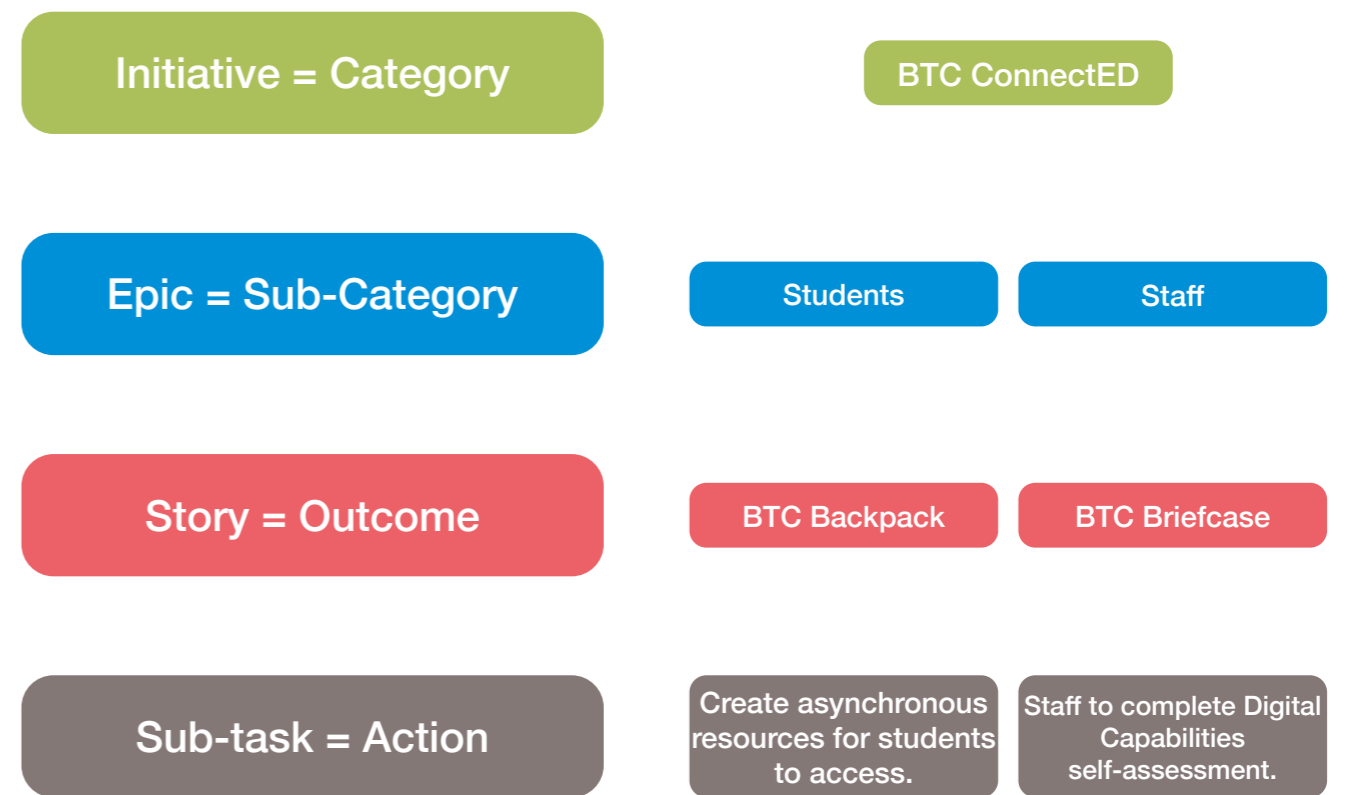


Diagram of the categories used when implementing Kanban, with relevant examples from the BTC ConnectED work stream to provide context.

References

Agile (2023) *What is agile working?* Available at: <https://agile.org.uk/what-is-agile-working/#:~:text=The%20Agile%20Future%20Forum%20whose,who%20carries%20out%20work%3F> (Accessed: 12 July 2023).

Hofmann, C., Lauber, S., Haefner, B. and Lanza, G. (2018) 'Development of an agile development method based on Kanban for distributed part-time teams and an introduction framework', *Procedia Manufacturing*, 23, pp. 45-50.

Rehkopf, M. (2023) *Epics, stories, themes.* Available at: <https://www.atlassian.com/agile/project-management/epics-stories-themes#:~:text=Stories%2C%20also%20called%20%E2%80%9Cuser%20stories,drive%20toward%20a%20common%20goal> (Accessed: 30 October 2023).



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