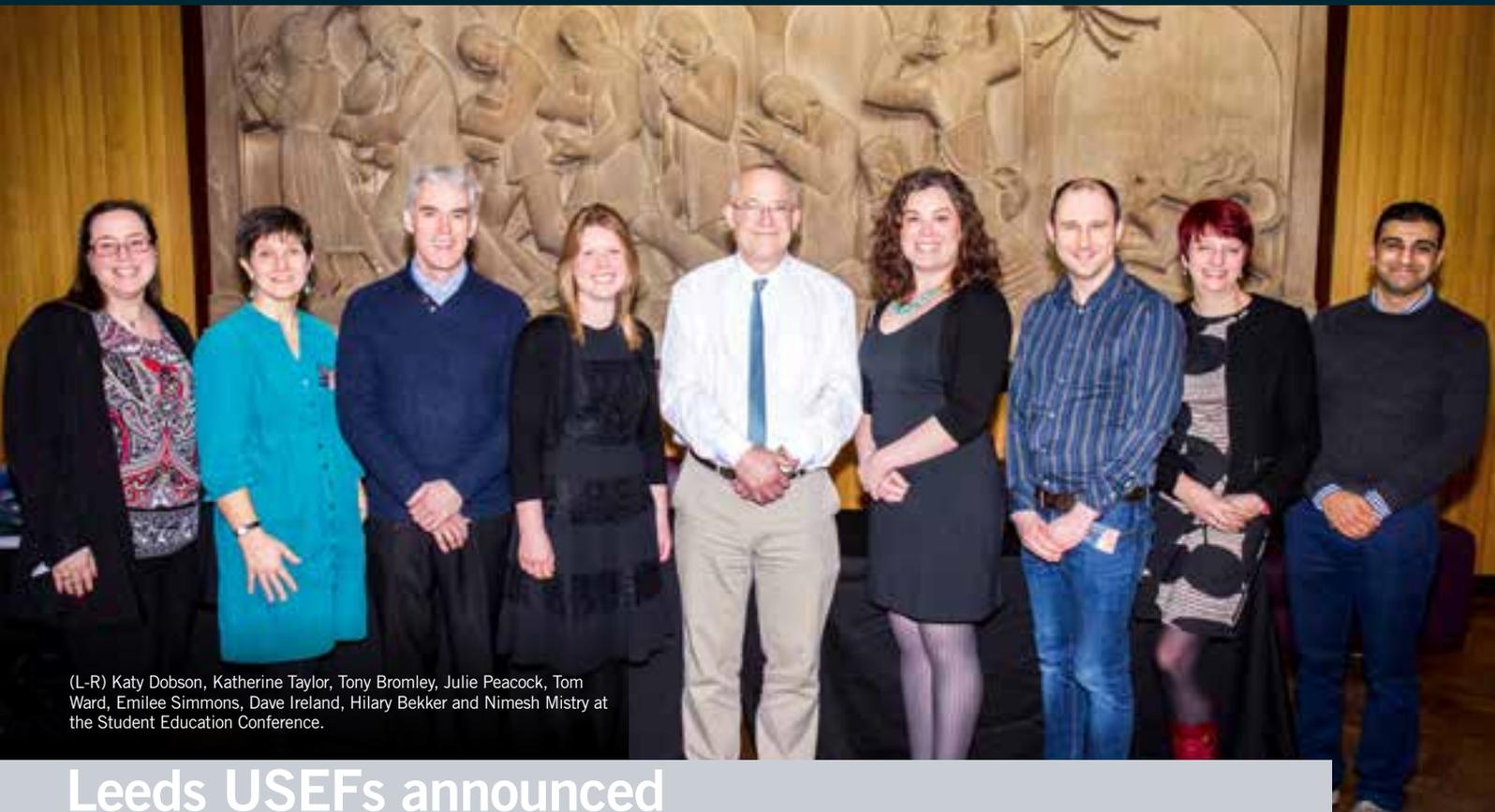




Student Education Bulletin

Issue 19
February 2017



(L-R) Katy Dobson, Katherine Taylor, Tony Bromley, Julie Peacock, Tom Ward, Emilee Simmons, Dave Ireland, Hilary Bekker and Nimesh Mistry at the Student Education Conference.

Leeds USEFs announced

Recognising student education achievements at SEC/DigiFest 2017

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Education) Tom Ward announced the 2016/17 University Student Education Fellowship (USEF) awards at the Student Education Conference on Friday 6 January 2017.

The USEF scheme is open to all staff who teach or support learning. Full fellowships are supported by project funding of £15,000 in total, with an additional annual honorarium of £1,000 for three years. Developmental fellowships are supported by project funding of £4,000 in total, with a one-off honorarium of £1,000 for one year.

Award winners are selected by a committee (chaired by Tom Ward) of Faculty Pro-Deans for Student Education along with representatives from the Student Education Service. The committee always receives a large number of excellent applications from across the University, so selecting award winners is always challenging, and the committee would like to congratulate all who applied for the excellent work they submitted for consideration.

This year, full fellowships were awarded to: Nimesh Mistry (MaPS); and Emilee Simmons (LUBS).

Louisa Hill (LUBS) also had the developmental fellowship she was awarded last year increased to a full award.

Developmental fellowships were awarded to: Katy Dobson (Lifelong Learning Centre); Tony Bromley (OD&PL); Dave Ireland (FAHC); Hilary

Bekker (FMH); Julie Peacock (Environment); and Katherine Taylor (Language Centre).

Awards have now been made to 159 staff since the scheme was launched in 2001. To find out more about the scheme and award holders' project details, visit: www.sddu.leeds.ac.uk/learning-teaching/reward-and-recognition/university-student-education-fellowships/

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SEB20 publishes in May 2017 (copy deadline 31 March 2017)
SEB19 also available online at teachingexcellence.leeds.ac.uk

Student perspectives

Melissa Owusu, LUU Education Officer
Jess Reed, LUU Welfare Officer



Melissa

I have been working with the University on the implementation of the attendance monitoring system in the new academic year to help ensure that it is a system that works for both students and staff. Alongside this, I have been looking into the policy that underpins attendance monitoring with Jess Reed (LUU Welfare Officer), in order to ensure that any attendance-monitoring system has a strong

pastoral element to it that considers the wellbeing of students. In addition, I have been undertaking efforts to ensure school reps have visibility across campus as often students are not aware of the role and that they can give feedback regarding their academic experience to their reps.

Further, I am working on ensuring there is a sustainable model for the Why Is My Curriculum White? project as this will make sure the work continues to have a successful legacy after my time in post. Jack Palmer (LUU Union Affairs Officer) and I have been sharing some of the Union's biggest impacts across the past year with senior staff in the University and the University Council including; 900 interactions with our Student Advice Centre and over 700 hours of volunteered work from our academic reps.

The Leadership Race has now finished. The six new officers who will take over for the 2017/18 session are: Chloe Sparks (Welfare); Zak Kaf Al-Ghazal (Education); Jess Bassett (Activities); Jack Palmer (Union Affairs); George Bissett (Community); and Natasha Mutch-Vidal (Equality & Diversity).



Jess

This semester there's a lot going on in the welfare world! Over the last few weeks, I've been completing the process of setting up a Wellbeing Advisory Board in partnership with the University, which should be a really good opportunity to ensure both LUU and the University are getting ideas from students on the big welfare issues facing the student body and getting feedback on projects in progress.

I've also been working on a project looking at personal tutoring, which is an area that comes up time and time again as a cause for concern from both students and staff. In the next few weeks, surveys will be circulated and focus groups set up to help get a clearer picture on how those involved feel about personal tutoring from all sides.

Another area I've been working on is mental-health provision here at the University. This is a really big issue for students – at our last round of student forums, we had a student pass policy asking LUU to lobby to University for more mental-health support. Mental-health provision and suicide prevention have been top priorities for me since coming into the role: last semester I ran a campaign called Don't Bottle It Up to try and encourage people to talk more about how they are feeling; and this semester I am planning some more work around suicide awareness and prevention both on campus and externally, by looking at the suicide strategy that Leeds City Council has in place to see how it might be expanded to include the student population in Leeds.

B

Meet the Student Cases team

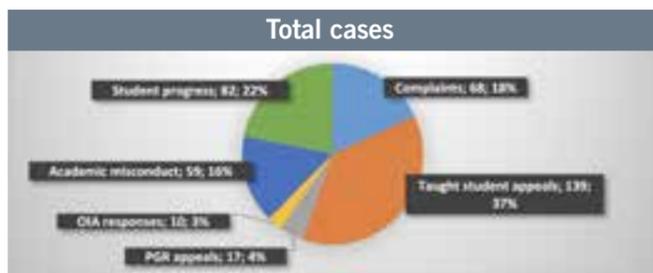
Rebecca Dearden, Secretariat



(L-R) The Student Cases team are Alison Usher, Catherine Cho, Cheryl Cox, Rebecca Dearden, and Guy Dixon

The Student Cases team (which forms part of the University's Secretariat) is responsible for the administration and progress of all types of academic appeals and complaints; allegations of cheating and plagiarism; unsatisfactory and referred students; issues of student progress; academic disciplinary matters; and a student's fitness to practise.

The team is also responsible for responding to complaints which have been lodged with the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education – the sector's ombudsman – by students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the University's internal procedures.



The team works closely with staff at LUU's Student Advice Centre, along with colleagues in Student Operations and Student Support. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that lessons are learned from individual cases and that – where appropriate – this is reflected in changes to policy and practice.

Although the numbers of complaints have not risen dramatically in the last year or two, the team has experienced an increase in the number of difficult and litigious cases, and those that involve issues of disability and health. The team will continue to address these matters during the rest of this session and beyond.

Other key priorities for the team are: to review the processes which govern the approach taken when concerns are raised about a student's fitness to study; and to work with the Student Education Service in providing students with clear information on published processes and procedures.

The Student Cases team is available to provide advice on cases on an *ad hoc* basis. The team also delivers workshops that cover both student complaints and academic appeals, and can provide bespoke sessions to schools or services on request.

Guidance on the application of University procedures will be the focus of articles in future issues of the Bulletin.

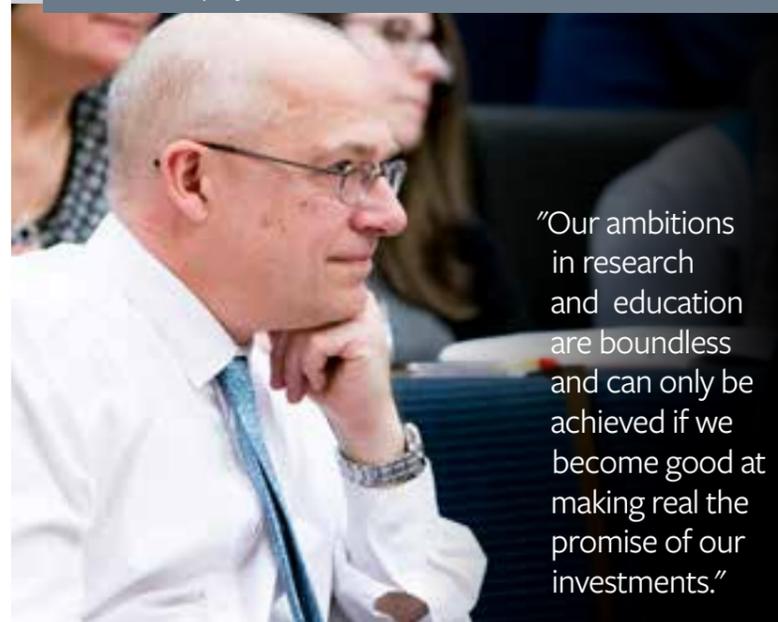
Further information

More information on the work of the Student Cases team is available at www.leeds.ac.uk/secretariat/student_cases.html

B

Emerging themes from SEC/DigiFest 2017

Tom Ward, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Education)



"Our ambitions in research and education are boundless and can only be achieved if we become good at making real the promise of our investments."

The Student Education Conference and Digital Festival 2017, which took place on 4 and 5 January 2017, brought together over 400 colleagues from across all faculties and divisions under the theme of **Spreading the word: Student education storytelling**. It was inspiring to see so many colleagues from all over the campus gathered to share ideas and learn from each other about education.

The Digital Festival keynote speaker was the CEO of FutureLearn, Simon Nelson. He gave an important overview of the ways in which digital technology is transforming higher education. As this market matures, with the emergence of new for-credit and high-quality modules run with a viable business model alongside the high volume MOOCs, it will have more impact on life inside universities. Much of this powerfully illustrated Amara's law that the short-term change flowing from disruptive technological change is consistently over-estimated, while the long-term impact is consistently under-estimated. A specific theme of great relevance to Leeds was how the changes spearheaded by MOOCs are now feeding into life on campus, opening up the possibility of genuinely blended learning models and giving us new tools to transform education being delivered in a more traditional setting.

The Student Education Conference keynote was given by Pauline Kneale from Plymouth University, who talked about the power of cross-institutional and collaborative partnerships. We heard about the development and growth of the Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory (PedRIO) and the power of developing a research-publication culture in education. This brought together a positive way to view both REF and TEF as potentially useful external forces for the development of the educational culture in a university.

Among the sessions I attended was a presentation of the outputs from a project on inclusive teaching practice (link below). This important work ranged from technical issues on using course design to ensure that all students can engage fully right through to current debates on how the content of the curriculum is shaped. This important work interacts with several discussions and issues both internal and external: changes to the Disabled Student Allowance; finding ways to move beyond the deficit model; meeting the increasingly complex needs of our students; working with the thoughtful Why Is My

Curriculum White? campaign led by Melissa Owusu. I was impressed by the way in which this work has developed – a good example of partnership working that, moving forward, I hope gains wide interest.

Talking to people at the conference more generally made clear that all the sessions and workshops had been well received, and I was delighted to see the great diversity of issues raised by colleagues from many different disciplines and divisions.

I had the great pleasure of congratulating the many award winners – new Fellows of the Higher Education Academy and newly announced National Teaching Fellows – and I also presented the 2017 University Student Education Fellows (see cover). It was great to celebrate such an array of richly deserved success.

The organisers also kindly gave me the opportunity to discuss some of the bigger-picture issues facing the University over the next few years, which I will briefly outline below.

The last few years have seen significant investment in digital technology and expertise, in the libraries, in the physical estate, and in people. One of the driving forces of the next few years will be to see real returns on that. In improved educational experiences, in growing digital fluency and confidence, in creative solutions to the squeeze on facilities – and in real diversification of our income streams. Institutional digital fluency and confidence will find expression in making a success of our Online Distance Learning programme, and becoming strategic in how to best use current and future physical facilities to support learning. Our ambitions in research and in education are boundless, and they can only be achieved if we become good at making real the promise of our portfolio of investments.

As I've mentioned before, complexity also emerges as a critical issue. We rightly are able to offer our students an intellectual feast of enviable proportions – but the simple metrics of how many programmes we offer, perhaps most seriously of all how many modules we provide tell a difficult story. Our average number of students per module is significantly lower than the comparable figure for most of our competitors, and this translates into huge staff workloads and real concern about the complexity of our timetable and of our exam timetable.

The Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence is funding two major projects on assessment, and we have a well-developed assessment strategy. I hope these will join in many other discussions and projects taking place across the campus on how to be sure the huge effort that goes into assessment is well used in support of learning.

It was a pleasure and an inspiration to take part in this conference, and I am grateful to the organisers for all they did. We all look forward to its continued development under the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence.

teachingexcellence.leeds.ac.uk/news/simon-nelson-speaks-at-the-secdigifest-2017-conference/
teachingexcellence.leeds.ac.uk/news/watch-pauline-e-kneales-full-keynote-speech-at-secdigifest2017/
www.sddu.leeds.ac.uk/learning-teaching/inclusive-teaching-practice/

B

Developing Quantitative Skills for Students: Q-Step at the University of Leeds

Chris Forde, LUBS



“Our goal is to offer students in the social sciences – and across the University – more opportunities to develop their quantitative skills.”

us with valuable insight and direction into what will work best in their particular areas.

The University of Leeds is one of 15 universities that has been given funding to develop quantitative skills and training in the social sciences as part of the national Q-Step initiative.

Funding by the Nuffield Foundation, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) will ensure that, from 2014-2019, the Q-Step Centre at the University develops and delivers specialist undergraduate programmes, new modules, work placements, workshops, and a range of aspiration-raising activities to promote quantitative skills. Expertise and resources will be shared across the higher education sector through an accompanying support programme, which will also forge links with schools and employers.

The Leeds Q-Step Centre has built momentum around curriculum developments across participating social-science faculties (Environment, ESSL and LUBS). New variants of programmes in some schools and faculties now offer students the opportunity to transfer on to ‘with quantitative methods’ pathways at the end of Level 1 of their studies.

In the School of Politics and International Studies, for example, students on four degree programmes can now make the change to a ‘with quantitative methods’ pathway, with key modules at Level 1 designed to spark their interest in and understanding of the use of quantitative techniques in their subject area. They then undertake a minimum of 80 credits of quantitative-based modules at Levels 2 and 3, concluding with a capstone 40-credit dissertation, where they use quantitative methods and techniques.

Similar pathways are being planned for degrees within Leeds University Business School and in a number of other schools. In some other schools, such as Sociology and Social Policy, emphasis has been placed on embedding quantitative skills more deeply throughout the curriculum through the adaptation of existing modules and the development of new ones.

What is clear from talking to all 15 Q-Step centres, is that there is certainly no one ‘best’ approach to developing quantitative skills in the social sciences. Here at Leeds, the approaches vary depending on the existing mathematics and numerical skills of students, staff capacity around quantitative skills, and the existing content and learning outcomes on individual programmes. Our Executive Committee, made up of representatives from across participating schools and faculties in the University, provides

To support programme development, a range of new Q-Step modules across the social sciences are being developed, whilst other modules are being adapted to bring out their quantitative content and their potential for quantitative skills development.

New modules at Level 1, run by Q-Step staff, give students a basic understanding of statistics and data in the social sciences. These modules, made available for students across the University through the Leeds Curriculum Discovery strands, give them invaluable hands-on skills in data analysis from the start of their degrees.



A range of quantitative-based modules at Levels 2 and 3 are also available within the three participating faculties, which gives students greater insight into the use and application of quantitative methods in specific subject areas. Our goal is to offer students in the social sciences, and across the University, more opportunities to develop their quantitative skills.

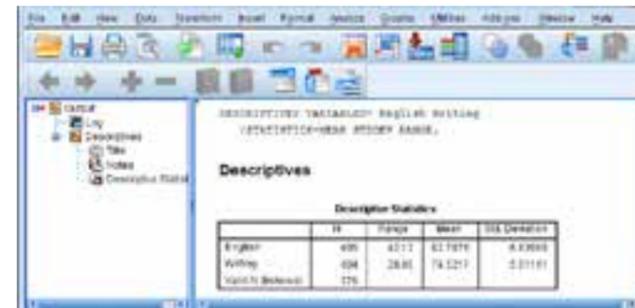
Alongside curriculum developments, Q-Step at Leeds also runs a Summer Research Project Placement Scheme. With the support of Faculty, Q-Step and Footsteps Fund Alumni funding, this scheme provides a great opportunity for research staff and second-year undergraduate students to benefit from collaboration on a live research project.

“The ability to work with data is more or less a core requirement for anyone in a managerial role these days, and for many of us in our daily lives. I am determined that all our graduates should possess at least a basic grounding in quantitative methods and Q-Step is an important step towards achieving this.”

Robert Partridge, Director of Student Opportunity

In 2016, Q-Step ran 23 exciting research projects across the Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts, with students spending four weeks during the summer on a paid placement, preceded by an intensive week-long statistics and data-skills course.

In 2016, this also included three externally hosted projects with the Chamber of Commerce and the charity Epilepsy Action. Co-ordinated by our Q-Step administrator Andrea Denny, this has been one of the big success stories of Q-Step. A number of students have presented their findings from their projects at international conferences and at University events (see case study, right). At a celebration event for the 2016 placement holders, a number of students reported that the placement had shaped their choices for their third-year dissertation topics.



Each year, the Q Step team also delivers short courses, run by the Q-Step lecturing team of Danat Valizade (LUBS) and Albert Varela (SSP). A regular course in Advanced Quantitative Analysis using R is designed to help build capacity amongst staff and PG research students across the Social Sciences.

Q-Step is also involved in a number of exciting interdisciplinary collaborations with the Leeds Institute of Data Analytics (LIDA), and student societies, notably the Student Data Labs and the Leeds Data Science Society. Aspiration-raising activities have also seen Q-Step deliver a range of activities for schools, including an event in November 2016 as part of the ESRC Festival Of Social Science. Run by staff in the School of Law, this day-long event looked at how quantitative research can help students develop informed arguments about anti-social behaviour, accessing the criminal justice system, discrimination in sentencing, and bail decisions.

Further information

For more information about Q Step at Leeds, visit www.qstep.leeds.ac.uk or email Andrea Denny on a.j.denny@leeds.ac.uk

For more information on Q-Step nationally visit www.nuffieldfoundation.org/q-step

For details of the Leeds Data Science Society, visit <https://leedsdatasoc.wordpress.com/>

For details of Student Data Labs, visit <https://studentdatalabs.com/about/>

Case study

Chasing Fraud and Profit: researching anti-fraud initiatives in the Global South

(Or 'The experiences of a 2015 Q-Step Summer Research Intern')

Nataliya Mykhalchenko – a third year International Development student at the School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) and a Q-Step Summer Research Intern – presented her research findings at a talk at the University of Leeds in May 2016.

Nataliya spent five weeks over the summer of 2015 working alongside Jörg Wiegatz on a research project titled 'The Political Economy of anti-fraud measures in the Global South' (funded by the British Academy / Leverhulme Trust and the Sir Ernest Cassel Educational Trust Fund). The project analysed the various drivers, characteristics and repercussions of the anti-fraud measures in the Global South, particularly in Africa. Nataliya analysed how these dynamics played out in various African countries and successfully completed the internship. She later produced blogs reflecting on her experience and highlighting the main findings of the research, which were published on the University's Centre for Global Development (CGD) and the Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE) websites.

In the talk, which gathered people from a variety of disciplines across the University, Dr Wiegatz provided some context to the research, highlighting: the recent surge in anti-fraud activity in the Global South; the issue of fraud itself; and the relationship between current fraud trends and neoliberal restructuring. Nataliya then presented the most interesting findings from her research, and made some suggestions for further research. The Q&A session that followed was filled with interesting and probing questions. Dr Wiegatz's research is ongoing, and this year another intern will research anti-fraud initiatives in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and countries in the Caribbean. This work is complemented by three other students who will research initiatives in Africa and Asia; the funding for their work is provided by POLIS (as part of the POLIS students as researchers programme) and ROAPE.

Nataliya found her Q-step placement very valuable, giving her the opportunity to gain research experience that allowed her to participate in a real academic environment and deepen her research capabilities.

Further information

Find out more at www.qstep.leeds.ac.uk/2016/06/2015-summer-research-project-student-presents-research-findings/

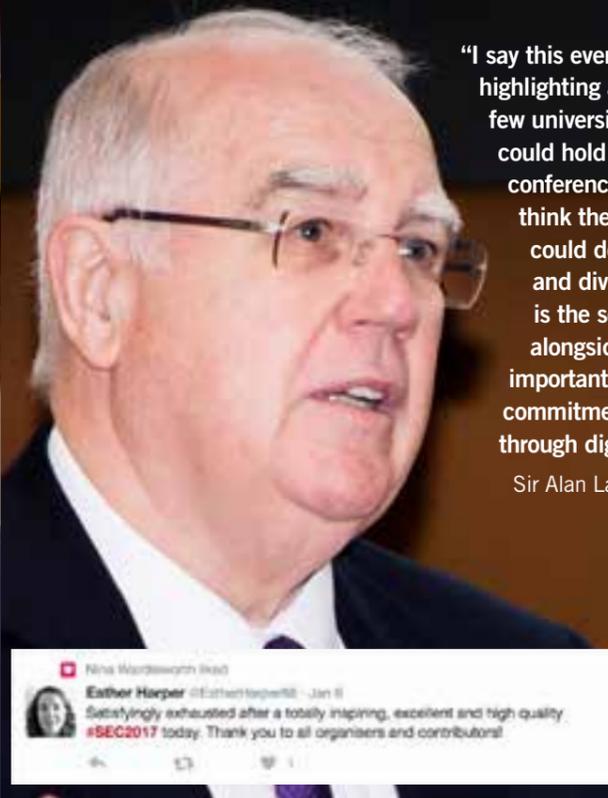
The Student Education Conference & Digital Festival

Reflections from SEC/DigiFest 2017



"Telling stories is a great theme for a conference. It helped people to reflect on their activity as well as explain the practice and process of their education enhancement. The discussion and questions in the sessions I went to was particularly thoughtful, and it was great to have plenty of time for networking in Parkinson Court. Many thanks for asking me back! Leeds colleagues will always be very welcome at PedRIO events."

Professor Pauline Kneale
SEC keynote



"I say this every year, but it really is worth highlighting again: there are very, very few universities in the country which could hold a student education conference on this scale, and I don't think there's another university that could do it with such an interesting and diverse a programme. This is the second time SEC has run alongside DigiFest – which is also important as it demonstrates our commitment to student education through digital learning at Leeds."

Sir Alan Langlands, Vice-Chancellor



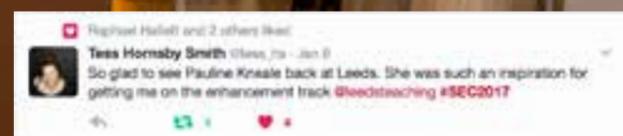
"I've attended the Student Education Conference for the past few years and it has always provided me with ideas and innovations that I have been able to feed into my own teaching.

This year I was fortunate to receive a University Student Education Fellowship (USEF) – see cover – and a Teaching Enhancement Project from the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence (LITE), so I particularly wanted to gain inspiration to apply to these initiatives.

My USEF will be used to develop a widening-participation project and this year's Digital Festival focused on MOOCs and open education with an inspirational talk by Simon Nelson, FutureLearn CEO, followed by a panel discussion. It was great to hear how MOOCs are opening up teaching from Leeds to learners that we wouldn't be able to connect with from non-traditional pathways. The most popular MOOCs were those that related research to current global challenges; a key theme in many MOOCs from Leeds. On day two, I learnt about some of the great outreach work in Engineering undertaken by Nikolaos Nikitas. His opening remark that 'research is one of our best outreach weapons!' was followed by some excellent outreach experiments designed by student partners. Both sessions showed me the value of using research-led teaching and student partnership, and I shall take that forward into my USEF project.

Something I always notice at SEC/DigiFest is that the breadth of teaching enhancement activities that occurs across the University is also combined with a supportive culture for those involved in student education. At the LITE reception on Thursday evening, Rafe Hallet was clear that a key mission of the Institute is to support teaching and learning across the University. It was great to see this being put into action by using the reception to showcase new teaching enhancement and educational research groups across the University. I was inspired by this to use my project with LITE to engage with the student education community here at Leeds – and beyond – and will share its outputs at future Student Education Conferences. Watch this space!"

Dr Nimesh Mistry
School of Chemistry
USEF, LITE Teaching Excellence Project Leader



Thanks to SEC/DigiFest, we've organised quite a few training sessions with staff who came to visit us on our stand. We'll use those sessions to demonstrate how they can use LeedsforLife to help their personal tutees. Being an exhibitor was a great networking experience and an excellent opportunity to see all the great things going on at Leeds. It's also been a really effective way to increase awareness of what LfL offers.

Fern Davidson-Averill, Student Opportunity Ambassador

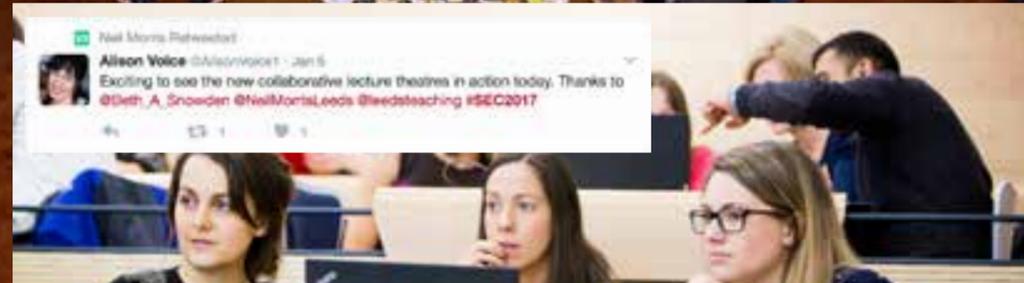
SEC/DigiFest 2017 in figures:

- 422 registrations
- 1 DigiFest keynote; 1 DigiFest panel
- 1 SEC keynote; 1 SEC panel
- 1 LITE showcase with 9 speakers
- 35 parallel sessions
- 13 workshops
- 47 exhibitors at 22 stands

And most importantly:

- 580 cups of tea and coffee, and
- 378 lunches to keep it all going!

Join us:
@leedsteaching
teachingexcellence.leeds.ac.uk



Inclusivity – what does it mean, what does it look like?

with an introduction by Mel Prideaux, School of Philosophy, Religion & History of Science

The notion of inclusivity runs like a thread through all our statements about student education. From the Leeds Partnership, via the Leeds Curriculum and various LUU campaigns, to our policies on everything from assessment to recruitment – it is part of our institutional framework to ensure that all students at Leeds are included, recognised and supported on their journey. However, it is not always easy to know what inclusivity 'looks' like – either in terms of practical activities, or – equally importantly – in the philosophy underlying our work together. Here, two of our 2017 Student Education Conference workshop leaders give us an insight into ways to think about inclusivity. Firstly, Jenny Brady introduces us to resources that support inclusive learning and teaching – particularly around curriculum design. Adriaan van Klinken then gives us an insight into a new project that takes an international perspective on what it might mean to be truly inclusive around sexuality.

These two complementary pieces encourage us to think both about practice and also about *why*. Why do we organise our learning and teaching this way? Why should we do it differently? These two insights into thinking about inclusivity will help inform the conversations we have about it, and support innovation and development in this area.

Being inclusive in curriculum design Jenny Brady, Disability Services

A set of guides promoting inclusive learning and teaching is now available. The guides – entitled *Being Inclusive in...* – were developed in partnership between Disability Services and Organisational Development & Professional Learning, supported by a cross-institutional working group and LUU. They align with the UK Professional Standards Framework and cover all of the activities involved in learning and teaching. The online resources also feature videos of students and staff talking about inclusive learning and teaching and can be found at www.sdduonline.leeds.ac.uk/inclusiveteaching/

Several of the guides focus in particular on aspects of curriculum design: *Being Inclusive in Module and Programme Design*, *Being Inclusive in Designing Curriculum Content* and *Being Inclusive in Designing Assessments*.

Being inclusive means taking into account the range and variety of backgrounds and learning needs that students may have. Inclusiveness helps keep students engaged and motivated, and enables them to think about how they learn best and to take ownership of that learning. It allows them to feel respected, valued and welcomed as part of the University community.

Being inclusive needs to start at the design stage. It is vital to ensure learning outcomes are clearly articulated to students, and prospective students, from the outset and are achievable by a diverse group. This means checking that the skills, knowledge and attributes required are not likely to pose any unnecessary barriers to any groups or individuals where these are not genuinely linked to the subject or discipline. Pre-course Information is a key element of this as it enables learners to understand what additional support they might need to achieve the learning outcomes and allows them to assess for themselves their suitability for the course.

When a curriculum is inclusive, students can see themselves as partners in a learning journey. It's important to provide a road map

of what will be covered and what to expect. Having the ability to revisit materials flexibly and in a variety of formats takes account of the different learning styles and paces that individuals may need in order to take new knowledge on board. Having materials in advance of teaching is extremely valuable to many learners – it helps them to prepare for and contextualise the content of a session, thus promoting greater engagement with learning.

Being inclusive also means offering a variety of assessment methods; this enables students to utilise their strengths and recognises that different assessment methods require different skills that may pose specific challenges. For example, those students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder may find it challenging to organise their time and focus for long periods on coursework, while students with dyslexia may find it difficult to write a coherent and well-structured essay under timed exam conditions. Neither the ability to estimate time effectively, nor the ability to produce written work under pressurised conditions, is likely to be a learning outcome in and of itself, but both are required for these different assessment types. Bearing this in mind during curriculum and assessment design maximises the opportunities for students to demonstrate their potential against the intended learning outcomes.

When designing curriculum content, it is important to recognise that our students may have different starting points in terms of their background knowledge and study skills, so these should be embedded into the curriculum at an early stage. Anticipating diversity and knowing about students' backgrounds will also help you to bring in examples and topics that students can relate to. For example, simply be aware that international students may struggle with UK-centric references unless these are fully explained.

There are enormous benefits to being inclusive in curriculum design. It promotes student satisfaction, engagement, attainment and retention, as well as encouraging more cohesion within groups. For staff, it can promote a more interesting, enriching and interactive experience with a reduced need for making individual reasonable adjustments for disabled students. Alongside these benefits are also a number of legislative and statutory requirements to adopt more inclusive methods. The Equality Act 2010 places an anticipatory duty on the University to provide adjustments in learning and teaching so that disabled students are not disadvantaged. By incorporating these considerations into curriculum design, we proactively accommodate disabled students as well as creating enhanced flexibility for all learners. New guidance from the Department for Education encourages universities to adopt more inclusive ways of doing things. This also reflects the values of our Equality and Inclusion Framework (2014-19), whose goal is 'everyone included, everyone involved'.

Queering the curriculum Adriaan van Klinken, PRHS

Together with my colleague Sarojini Nadar from the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, I am leading a small British Academy funded project focusing on queering the curriculum, specifically in the the study of religion (RS). Our motivation was that issues relating to LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) identities, politics and rights are controversial in many parts of the world. In South Africa, in spite of its progressive constitution safeguarding



LGBTI rights, LGBTI people often face social and political marginalization. In the UK, full LGBTI inclusion can still not be taken for granted. Religion is widely considered as one of the major forces fuelling negative perceptions about and attitudes towards LGBTI by promoting, implicitly and explicitly, heteronormativity and patriarchal gender norms. At the same time, religious leaders, faith communities and religious education teachers can play an important role in contributing to social change in this area. This requires a critical interrogation of religion at the intersections of sexuality, masculinity and gender in order to destabilise hetero-patriarchy.

Our project is based on the premise that the curriculum is a means for training students in understanding and interrogating religious beliefs and practices in relation to LGBTI issues. We thought it was pertinent to examine how they are currently being addressed in RS programmes in HEIs and to explore what changes in the curriculum might be required, and how they can be envisioned and achieved. Here, we reflect briefly upon the question of how we understand this notion of 'Queering the Curriculum', which raises some important issues for discussion with relevance for many other disciplines.

What do we actually mean by 'queering' the curriculum? The subtitle of the project might suggest that it is about the inclusion of issues around LGBTI identities and experiences in our teaching practices and in the design of the curriculum. This relates to one of the usages of the term queer, as an umbrella term for LGBT and otherwise non-heterosexual identities and communities. From that perspective, queering 'expands the circle' and 'creates an inclusive environment in HE for LGBTQ students and studies' (Hawley 2015).

One may think that a lot of progress has already been made in this area – on the campuses of most universities there are LGBT student societies, LGBT History Month is publicly celebrated, and our own teaching rooms are (we wish to believe) safe spaces for LGBTI students. Whether our curriculum is really inclusive remains a critical question. In the same way as black students have recently asked 'Why is my curriculum white?', LGBTI students may have reasons to ask why their curriculum is still so straight – as reflected in the texts they read, the topics they learn about, and the essay questions they choose from. Does the inclusion of LGBTI issues, in reality, not often mean that one lecture in a module, or one (usually optional) module in a programme, is reserved to address such topics?

Furthermore, whether our teaching rooms are really experienced as safe spaces by LGBTI students is questionable. Within the LGBTI acronym, the experiences of different groups – lesbian women, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and intersex people – may vary significantly. The levels of knowledge about and understanding of each group is very different, and so then are the levels of acceptance and inclusion. Transgender and intersex categories in particular are still surrounded by relatively high levels of ignorance, as well as stigma. Moreover, in the rather diverse (in terms of cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds) student bodies that make up

our teaching space, there exists a variety of opinions about, and attitudes towards, LGBTI issues and people, which again may affect the experience of LGBTI students, and which also may limit our own ability to make these spaces safe. So there is a whole set of questions to be asked about further improving the inclusion of LGBTI perspectives both in the curriculum and in our teaching practices.

However, and this is the second major question, is queering actually just about including LGBTI perspectives or is there more to it? The strategy of inclusion has been criticized by several scholars in queer pedagogy as a form of 'assimilationist politics' – a strategy that seeks to expand the definition of normal to include LGBTI people, instead of 'attacking and undermining the very processes by which (some) subjects become normalized and others marginalized' (Luhmann 1998, 143-44); this critique is informed by a second usage of the term queer, in which it is not just an umbrella term for the ever-expanding acronym of LGBTI, but refers to a radical political and theoretical perspective interrogating categories of sexual and gender identity and the related normativities and processes of normalization. From this perspective, the agenda of 'queering the curriculum' becomes much broader, and more radical, than merely including LGBT perspectives. In the words of Susanne Luhmann, queer pedagogy is 'concerned with a radical practice of deconstructing normalcy', to begin with heteronormativity, and thus is relevant to all students and subjects (Luhmann 1998, 151). Where 'queering' is usually understood in relation to sexual epistemologies and structures of knowledge and learning/teaching, queer is not necessarily about sexuality. Following David Halperin's famous capturing of the term queer as 'a positionality *vis-à-vis* the normative', queering can potentially entail an interrogation of norms, a critique of stable identities, and a deconstruction of binary structures and systems in any area. From this perspective, in recent years the intersections between sexuality and other categories such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity have been foregrounded in queer studies. Acknowledging intersectionality is also a way of preventing queer studies, and queer pedagogy, to be (or remain) as white, western and privileged as some of its critics argue it is. This underlines the importance not only of queering, but also decolonising the curriculum.

During two workshops that were organised as part of the project it became clear that there are many exciting initiatives taking place to transform and queer curriculum and teaching practices. Further analysis of and reflection upon the various strategies is required, for which plans are currently being developed.

References

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- Luhmann, Susanne. 1998. "Queering/Queering Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy Is a Pretty Queer Thing", in William F. Pinar (ed.), *Queer Theory in Education*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 141–156.

Happy Stretchy People: new approaches to induction

Jenna Isherwood, International Student Office

Funding from a major gift to the University (following the sale of Mary Morris House) has been allocated for a suite of pilot projects to enhance the international student experience at Leeds. Key priorities include improving the quality of pre-arrival, orientation, induction and transition support for international students, as well as building community and supporting students' wellbeing throughout their time at the University.

Enhanced induction for taught postgraduate students

This project was inspired numerous pieces of research into the international student experience, as well as student and staff feedback about challenges faced by international PGTs as they adjust to life in a new academic and cultural setting. In particular we drew on research with international students at the University of Melbourne which indicated that connectedness, cultural stress, perception of academic progress compared to expectations, and perception of work-life balance can all be related factors affecting international students' wellbeing and success. Good connections with UK students can reduce cultural stress for international students, but we know from student feedback that this isn't always easy. And, while international students do face particular challenges around cultural adjustment, many challenges with transitioning to Master's studies are experienced by UK students too. As such, we wanted to explore how a more holistic induction programme which fostered intercultural interaction and a sense of belonging could help all students adapt to their new context, build networks, and develop strategies for making the most of opportunities and overcoming challenges.

Route to Masters pilot

For the first phase, we intended to pilot some new approaches that, if successful, could be rolled out to other schools and faculties.

In September 2016, we worked with the Institute for Transport Studies (ITS) to develop Route to Masters: an induction programme integrating wellbeing and community-building activities alongside academic and skills-related content, for both UK and international students together.

In a typical year, the Institute for Transport Studies has around 100 students on Master's programmes and 50 PhD students, including a large and diverse number of international students. Route to Masters built on the existing ITS induction programme, which included a variety of information sessions, an afternoon tea event and a field trip.

A new introductory session outlined the induction aims and encouraged students to think about their Master's experience as a journey and process of change, a narrative that was reiterated throughout the later sessions. Students heard advice from recent alumni and worked in teams to build modes of transport out of straws.

Workshops on wellbeing, change and transition, time management and intercultural skills acknowledged the variety of experiences and expectations students bring with them, and encouraged sharing and reflection as a means of preparing for the year ahead and building community within the cohort. Sessions also introduced students to central services such as Skills@Library and Student Counselling. Students took away 'little yellow stretchy people' from the change-and-transition workshop as a prop to remember strategies for adapting

positively to new challenges. Other new activities included a team quiz on the student handbook, a Campus Quiz organised with Get Out, Get Active, a networking drinks reception for new students, alumni, PGR students and staff, and a final feedback session.

All new sessions were designed to be interactive and to introduce students to the various ways of learning they would undertake on their course. Most had an element of group work or facilitated discussion, where students were mixed to give them the opportunity to meet new people at each session. The programme also actively encouraged the students to meet to go to other activities on campus such as international orientation and Leeds University Union events.

What students said

When asked what they liked most about attending Route to Master's, students feedback the following:

"The holistic view it had, how we got to know our fellow students and find out more about the campus and the services that are available. The tutorials and diagnostic were particularly useful."

International student

"The aim of getting to know each other a bit, and having skills beyond study / academic skills was ideal."

UK student

"Lots of opportunity to meet other Leeds PGT students, ITS staff, and other support services. Such discussion enriched my understanding of the course and of different cultures."

International student

"The stretchy people!"

International student

Feedback collected at the end of the end of students' first semester also indicated they continued to see these benefits:

"I think it was very helpful, in terms of time management and wellbeing. I was also more familiar with the course's academic requirements and what was expected of me ... I find myself telling friends who didn't attend it that, 'Oh, they told us during Route to Masters, that's how I know.' It helped me feel like a real student and gave me the confidence to cope with the rest of the year."

International student

What's next?

Following the success of Route to Masters, ITS will be embedding it into 'business as usual'. In September 2017, we plan to run a second round of Mary Morris-funded pilots with a small number of schools with different cohort sizes and demographics to ITS. Alongside this, another Mary Morris-funded project will develop a range of online pre-arrival and transition resources to give students more realistic expectations of life in Leeds and support their wellbeing during this period of significant change. This project will tie in with enhanced face-to-face provision and create exciting opportunities to deliver blended induction and transition support that students can access at their own pace.

Further information

To find out more about the Mary Morris programme, contact j.c.isherwood@leeds.ac.uk

B

Bold and ambitious pre-sessionals

Rosella Parsons (The Language Centre), and Bee Bond (LITE)



Summer 2016 saw a sector-leading, UEG-supported, innovation in the taught postgraduate (PGT) pre-sessional programmes offered through the Language Centre. The project, described as 'bold and ambitious' by the external reviewer, is creating a model that is unique within UK English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

The practical implications of changes to UK visa regulations and an increasing student demand for pre-sessional programmes converged with a heightened sense that the Language Centre could better cater to the specific and widely different disciplinary language and literacy practices that students would encounter as they progressed into their academic programme.

Taking a content-led approach to EAP curriculum development, the Language Centre worked with subject specialists across the University to develop three (four-week) into nine (six-week) content-based pre-sessional programmes. This included four separate programmes for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures; four programmes for LUBS; and one large programme to cover all STEM disciplines.

A mapping exercise was undertaken to match each of the 242 PGT programmes on offer across the University to one of the nine content strands we had identified.

Work to develop this involved co-ordination and development of a range of systems, particularly from Admissions and Student Support teams, to ensure students experienced a smooth transition as they moved from their Language Centre pre-sessional into their school.

Within the Language Centre, it also involved the development of around 1600 contact hours of class time, taught to over 1000 students by 100 language teachers. Work for this began in January 2016 – having all programmes ready to run by July 2016 was an enormous undertaking, both administratively and academically.

Programme design

Subject-specific content was used to help students develop their language competence and ability to communicate at an appropriate academic level within their chosen field. Although each of the programmes had similar learning outcomes in terms of the development of language, the understanding of academic conventions and the ability to participate in academic discussion and debate, the approach taken differed according to the input and advice provided from the subject specialist.

Key foundational subject-specific texts were used to develop students' ability to read, follow and craft a written argument within their discipline. Subject lectures were given to highlight key areas in connection with these texts. Each of the programmes took on the form of a mini-module that prepared students for the kind of concepts, theories and knowledge they would be engaging with on their Master's programme, as well as the language they would be expected to use in order to do this well.

Highlights from across the various strands include: students writing case briefs in Law; groups delivering presentations in Business; a postgraduate research conference for STEM subjects, and a

symposium as part of the Communication and Society strand that provided students with the chance to make inter-departmental contacts and ask questions of staff in their future departments

The assessments students undertook also reflected the input provided by subject specialists, and either mirrored tasks within their school or focused on key aspects of learning that it was felt international students struggled to engage with (for example seminar participation).

Enhanced student and staff satisfaction

Another first for the Language Centre was our inclusion in the National Student Survey (NSS). Feedback collated from the NSS suggests an overall satisfaction rate of 90% with comments such as: "complied with my Major, which helps me smoothly transfer into the study once semester begins"; and "the course enhanced my confidence and skills in English learning, as well as helping me adapt to my new learning circumstances".

Equally important was the feedback from teachers, which suggested a more engaged cohort of students who were able to see a real value and purpose in the work they were doing. This seemed equally true for the teachers working on the programmes:

"I thought the symposium was excellent. It's the first time (and this is my sixth pre-sessional) that I have seen the transition between pre-sessional and Master's course. It made all the hard work seem really worthwhile."

Jean Wildwood, EAP practitioner (Language for Media and Society)

Future developments

The development of these programmes has encouraged much greater and continued collaboration between the Language Centre and faculties across campus. The decision has already been taken to offer two separate STEM-related programmes for summer 2017: *Language for Engineering* and *Language for STEM*, thus recognising and addressing the difficulty of covering the many differing linguistic and literacy demands of five faculties in one programme. The appointment of Joanne Shiel as Director of Language for Engineering Programmes in the Faculty of Engineering (moving from the Language Centre) also speaks of a commitment to address and further support international students as they transition into UKHE.

Bee Bond's fellowship appointment at LITE this year also connects strongly to the innovative and collaborative work undertaken. Her project aims to take the developments further and investigate the significant roles language plays in shaping discipline-specific knowledge and understanding. From this, she will work to consider the impact this might have on pedagogy, curriculum development and required teacher knowledge, both within the Language Centre and across the HE sector.

Further information

To find out more about the programmes available for summer 2017 go to www.leeds.ac.uk/preseasonal

B

The students helping Leeds to deliver digital learning

Carol Elston, Digital Learning Service

The Student Champions for Blended Learning project was initially funded by a University Student Education Fellowship. The aim of the project was to support blended learning within the faculties and to provide a coherent cross-University student voice for faculty / University blended-learning committees. This successful project is now in its third year and has been adopted by the Digital Learning Service (DLS). Students are recruited at the start of the academic year, one per faculty plus a co-ordinator. They then spend half of their allocated time supporting their faculty, and the other half working with the DLS and completing relevant training.

The Student Champion roles are verified for inclusion within the LeedsforLife Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) – participating students receive a reference on both their digital HEAR (within LeedsforLife), and on their HEAR certificate at graduation.

New student champions are welcomed with a networking lunch and a training session covering the topics of copyright law, considerations relating to the publishing of digital-learning materials, lecture capture, Box of Broadcasts (BoB) and iTunesU. Students also receive *ad hoc* training based on the projects they are working on, for example course reviewing or front-of-camera training.

As part of their faculty remit, student champions attend Faculty Blended Learning Group meetings or student/staff forums to present student feedback. The co-ordinator is co-opted as student representative on the Blended Learning & Learning Technology Innovation Group and also attends other University-wide groups involving digital and online learning.

In addition to these defined duties, students are encouraged to attend the Student Education Conference and Digital Festival. This year, Student Blended Learning Co-ordinator Fern Davidson-Averill (pictured below) was invited to be part of the Digital Festival panel discussion 'Embedding and scaling up online'.



Throughout SEC/DigiFest 2017, our student champions also provided staff with information about their activities from a stall in the Parkinson Court. They were surprised by the amount of interest they received from staff when discussing their varied projects.

During the past three years, students have been involved with a wide range of projects, including conducting surveys, developing online

resources and consulting on lecture theatre design.

Last year a number of the students also 'starred' in some of University's courses. They provided the student perspective for the *Studying in a Digital Age* module and several short FutureLearn courses designed for students making the transition from school to university.

All student champions are supported by their faculty Academic Champion for Blended Learning and are encouraged to participate in a faculty-wide project. Ahmed Al-Basha highlighted variation in the approaches and materials presented on School VLE Organisations within the Faculty of Engineering.



Ahmed (pictured above) looked at collating successful practice to help standardise pages for all the schools in the Faculty and developed a schedule for updating areas for specific individuals and/or teams. He was provided with viewer access to all Organisation pages within the Faculty and was able to identify a range of best practice; he then used these exemplars to create a template with enhanced navigation that all schools within the Faculty of Engineering can now use.

The Student Champions also worked together communicating through a Facebook page to collaborate on cross-faculty projects. These included a survey of broadband speeds in student accommodations, and testing instructions of how to access the Rosetta Stone software via the VLE.

The Student Champions also attended a focus group designed to identify improvements to the *Studying in a Digital Age* module following the initial pilot, and reviewed and provided feedback on a range of online courses.

As the DLS grows, our need for support and guidance from our students will also increase. It is clearly important to ensure that the digital learning we develop is in line with what is required by our student body, both on campus and at a distance. This is an initiative which benefits all involved and is likely to be supported for the foreseeable future.

Further information

To find out more about the Student Champions for Digital Learning, email Angela Holmes on a.e.holmes@leeds.ac.uk or contact the Faculty Academic Champion where you are.

B

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