



Queen's University  
Belfast

Centre for  
Educational Development

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# REFLECTIONS

## About *Reflections*

*Reflections* is published once a semester by the **Centre for Educational Development** and provides a forum for discussing learning and teaching initiatives in Queen's. We aim to balance articles from the various support units within Queen's with contributions from academic staff and guest writers.

We lead this time with an article by Professor Sally Brown, Emerita Professor and former Pro Vice Chancellor from Leeds Metropolitan University, focusing on assessment at Master's level, which was the subject of her well-received interactive keynote and workshop at the CED conference in June 2012. We report on the results of Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), also discussed at the conference, with the national picture provided by Paul Bennett of the HEA and the Queen's perspective provided by Richard Millen, Acting Head of Student Affairs.

Queen's twelve 2012 Teaching Award winners are featured in this issue. Queen's most recent results on the NSS are put into context by Pat McNally from CED and we hear from Careers Employability and Skills about their recent Service Quality Award. Tim Crawford from the Learning Development Service highlights developments in Maths support for students, and there are updates from Civil Engineering on new developments in assessment and feedback, under the auspices of the e-AFFECT project. Dr Jonathan Skinner updates us on Arts Care – an innovative and creative national charity that places artists in residence in hospital settings – which recently celebrated its coming of age party with an international conference involving Queen's staff and students, international speakers, as well as arts health workers and other key health care staff.

## Contributing to the next *Reflections*

We would very much welcome contributions for our next issue of *Reflections* to be published in Spring 2013. Contributions can take several forms:

- **Articles** on an aspect of teaching and learning or student support (generally 500 – 1,000 words);
- **Shorter "newsflash"** items, e.g. reporting on a recent event or advertising a new venture or upcoming event (100 -200 words);
- **Responses** to previous articles or to recent developments in H.E.

Contributions can be submitted via e-mail to Linda Carey, (l.carey@qub.ac.uk) or e.mcdowell@qub.ac.uk in the Centre for Educational Development.

**Linda Carey,**  
Editor of *Reflections*.



*We are exceptional*

## Learning about Masters level assessment: the Assimilate project

By Professor Sally Brown, National Teaching Fellow and Emeritus Professor, Leeds Metropolitan University

There is a growing interest in improving student satisfaction at postgraduate level, with assessment seen as a key aspect of the Masters-level student experience. At the same time, universities concerned about caps on undergraduate student numbers are increasingly seeking to build up their Masters level programmes, which are seen as a potential growth area. Authentic, fit-for-purpose assessment practices are likely to enhance the attractiveness of these programmes.

Our £200,000 Assimilate National Teaching Fellowship project commenced in 2010, designed to explore innovative assessment at Masters level. We aimed to offer the sector greater awareness of diverse practice in assessment at taught Masters level, and to provide a catalyst for future development of assessment in this area. Our rationale was based on the assumption that fit-for-purpose assessment will lead to enhanced student learning experiences, that is, assessment for, not just of, learning (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007).

Our professional experience and the relatively limited available literature in the field suggested that most assessment in current use at Masters level relies principally on traditional methods particularly unseen time-constrained exams, essays, theses and other written assessments. We expected initially to find less



**Professor Sally Brown**

richness and diversity of assessment compared to undergraduate level, but we were nevertheless hoping to find examples of good practice to share, and both expectations have been confirmed.

Using various research mechanisms, we have assembled a good range of UK and international case studies of Masters level assessment among which are some very interesting examples of innovation, including an example from Jude Stephens of Queen's University Belfast. We were particularly impressed to find highly creative approaches to Masters level assessment, innovative alternatives to dissertations and examples of ways of assessing that fostered employability. We have also collected some overviews, from different nations, of approaches to Masters level assessment. These have been compiled into the principal project output, the Compendium which is available in hard copy from Leeds Met and electronically on the Assimilate website.

We have been particularly exploring the basic question of what comprises Masters level compared to undergraduate level assessment, and this has become central to our qualitative approach, exploring shared conceptual constructs within the sector.

To make sense of our data, including our interviews and project notes, we have used a combination of Activity Theory and Q-methodology to help us to model our research participants' practices and perspectives, which has proved extremely interesting. The concept of Activity Theory highlights the complex interactions and relationships between individual and community. Engeström (2000) comments that, "a collective activity system is driven by deeply communal motives. The motive is embedded in the object of the activity". Engeström (1993) suggests that the object in Activity Theory functions as the 'problem space'. In our case the 'problem space' was, in effect, the university context, where Masters degrees and assessment methods can be seen as 'tools' to work on their students' educational needs and to provide the outcomes required. Students can thus be seen as the 'object' of Masters level assessment activity.

Q-methodology involves participants rank-ordering a set of statements according to the extent to which they agree or disagree with them and can be used:

**'explicitly as a means of gaining insight into the immensely diverse (and often contested) ways in which people, as individuals and as members of groups, communities and collectivities, make sense of the lifeworlds they inhabit' (Stainton-Rogers, 2011, p152).**

The 'concourse' of 48 statements for sorting was derived from reviewing the research notes, the case studies, guidance on quality and standards for Masters level programmes from the Quality Assurance Agency and relevant literature in the field.

These individual rankings by the research participants were then subjected to correlational and factor analysis to interpret diverse and shared perspectives on the issue. We identified five groupings of respondents ('factors') in our study who grouped around the following broad viewpoints:

**Factor 1:** The innovative assessment and accreditation of learning for complex real life / workplace applications requires assessment training for both staff and students.

**Factor 2:** Standards and consistency cannot be guaranteed by any means, but flexible assessment criteria and innovative assessment methods have their uses.

**Factor 3:** Introducing innovative assessment methods can be powerful but requires new perspectives on learning with institutional support and encouragement for successful wholesale change.

**Factor 4:** Clear guidance to students in the form of high quality assessment criteria and timely tutor assessment feedback can help students to develop the skills that they and also employers want.

**Factor 5:** Improving assessment methods does not necessarily require a paradigm shift in thinking, but stakeholder consultation is important as benefits are not guaranteed and one size does not fit all.

By taking note of these different perspectives, we argue it is possible to tailor developmental activities to enhance assessment at Masters level. More information about the project can be found on the project website at <https://sites.google.com/a/teams.leedsmet.ac.uk/assimilate-2012/>

Along the way, the project identified a number of features of good Masters level assessment that include:

- Offering highly authentic assignments, constructively aligned to programme outcomes;
- Having multiple assessments which build incrementally to final submission. This tends to offer more support to students than a single final dissertation;
- Offering plenty of feedback opportunities, giving students the chance to benefit from advice to improve performance;
- Using assignments that require teamwork and group activity as well as individual effort;
- Providing opportunities for peer engagement and peer feedback;
- Providing assignments that foster employability, since many students undertaking Masters programmes are aiming to enhance their career opportunities;
- Engaging employers in designing, undertaking or assessing assignments, providing incentives to students and also on occasions making direct links to potential future employers;
- Enhancing and supporting assessment through the uses of relevant technologies including using virtual learning environments, wikis and blogs.

Of course any project of this kind concludes just at the point when it gets really interesting: since we completed the project we have heard about a number of other innovative approaches and there remain plenty of unanswered questions and further avenues of study to pursue. Nevertheless, we trust that the work will be of interest to others and hope that it will advance in some small way understandings of the under-researched area of Masters level assessment.

### Sally Brown

National Teaching Fellow

Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy

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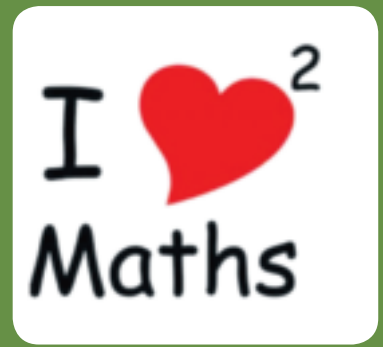
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# Maths Support in QUB



By Tim Crawford, Learning Development Service

Maths support within the Learning Development Service began almost two years ago, offering free one-to-one appointments, drop-in sessions and workshops on topics such as calculus, algebra, vectors, trigonometry, mechanics and statistics. The service has enjoyed steady growth and this highlighted the importance of adapting to student need.

Accordingly, in spring 2012 a successful application was made for funding from the Higher Education Academy to enhance the maths support service. The purpose was to enable us to promote maths support at a multi-disciplinary level and ultimately equip students with the mathematical skills necessary to fulfil their academic potential. This was to be achieved through three strands: the development of an internal maths support website, the training of postgraduate learning development assistants, and conducting an evaluation of support provision.

The internal maths support website has been developed to host a variety of online mathematical resources. It may be accessed at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/AcademicSkills/MathsSkills/>

We also have paper-based materials available in our maths resources area on level 1 of the Student Guidance Centre (see fig. 1).

The training of our postgraduate Learning Development Assistants encompassed informal guidance through the 'Tutoring in a Maths Support Centre' guide, published by Sigma, and attendance at an HEA STEM workshop for postgraduate students who teach.

A summative evaluation of maths support provision was carried out in June 2012 focusing on the effectiveness of the tutoring provided through drop-in sessions and one-to-one appointments, and including feedback on the updated website. There were 634 respondents and an analysis of responses indicated current strengths and areas for future development. Overall, 86% considered the service quite or very useful and 90% indicated they would recommend the maths support service to other students. In addition, feedback from the survey reinforced the benefits of what we do; e.g. **"it gave me confidence to continue my studies", "I got the highest mark for the module", "helped me to pass... module which was holding back my degree progression"**.

The evaluation has informed plans for future development: the extension of the drop-in service to other locations on-campus, increasing access through extension of opening hours to early evenings, and the creation of an online forum for students to post

mathematical queries to be answered by our tutoring team. Through embedding awareness and usage of maths support across the various University departments, the project will serve future growth of this valuable academic skills support service.

I wish to express sincere thanks and gratitude to Dr Ciarán Mac an Bhairst from NUI Maynooth for his advice and support in implementing the project and also to our dedicated team of postgraduate assistants.

## FORTHCOMING EVENT

Through participation in the Irish Mathematics Learning Support Network, the Learning Development Service is hosting their 2012 annual workshop on Friday 7th December 2012 on the theme of 'Promoting Learning Support and Engagement with Mathematics'. For more information regarding the programme and the call for contributions please visit <http://supportcentre.maths.nuim.ie/mathsnetwork/node/21>

Figure 1: Maths resource area.





# National Student Survey: Good news and future challenges

By Pat McNally, Centre for Educational Development



The National Student Survey (NSS) 2012 results have provided good news for Queen's. They show a significant improvement on previous results and most notably in the two areas where effort has been concentrated since 2011, Assessment and Feedback and Academic Support. In these respective areas, 71% and 81% of final year students recorded 'definitely agree' and 'mostly agree' responses to the associated questions<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, the Overall Satisfaction score of 87% is a 4% improvement on last year and reflects the general upward trend in performance over the past few years.

Table 1 shows the University's performance in all seven standard areas of the survey and the response to the newly introduced area of Satisfaction with the Students' Union. It also enables comparison with the top quartile within the sector, the sector average and the Northern Ireland average. This year, the University has used percentage scores rather than following the practice of previous years where ratings were converted to number scores with 5.0 as the highest possible score. This change is designed to facilitate easier comparison within the sector and has been prompted by some notable external influences:

- The newly introduced Key Information Sets (KIS) available on the Unistats website give responses to the core NSS questions as percentage scores;
- The Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) benchmark<sup>2</sup>, introduced in 2011, compares institutions' responses to question 22 (overall satisfaction), expressed as a percentage, with their sector adjusted benchmark;
- The methodology used in Sunday Times League Tables also focuses on percentage scores.

TABLE 1: NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY, 2012

	Queen's University			All Institutions		
	2010	2011	2012	Top Quartile	Sector Average	NI Average
Teaching	86	86	<b>88</b>	90	86	86
Assessment and Feedback	59	62	<b>71</b>	74	70	71
Academic Support	74	76	<b>81</b>	83	79	81
Organisation and Management	77	79	<b>81</b>	84	77	81
Learning Resources	80	86	<b>90</b>	85	82	88
Personal Development	80	82	<b>84</b>	82	81	85
Overall Satisfaction	85	83	<b>87</b>	90	85	87
Satisfaction with the Students' Union	N/A	N/A	<b>82</b>	71	66	71

The University's NSS performance relative to other Russell Group (RG) universities has resulted in rankings of:

- 2nd in Personal Development, just 1% behind Glasgow, the sector leader
- 4th in Learning Resources
- 4th for Satisfaction with the Students' Union
- 5th with York in the Assessment and Feedback area, just 5% behind Cambridge, the sector leader
- 9th with Durham in Academic Support
- Approximately mid-way in the group of 24 RG universities for Teaching, Organisation and Management and Overall Satisfaction.

The relatively strong NSS results have also contributed to the University's ranking at 26th place in the Sunday Times University Guide, an improvement of 20 places.

The NSS results form a section of the KIS data which can be accessed from our Course Finder pages or directly from the Unistats website. The screenshot overleaf shows a sample of how the data appears. It is not yet possible to assess the influence that KIS may have on prospective students' university choices but having already been described as 'Go Compare for universities', it is important that the University maintains a strong performance in the NSS.

<sup>1</sup> Assessment and Feedback is covered by questions 5-9 and Academic Support by questions 10-12 of the 23 attitudinal questions that make up the core of the NSS questionnaire.

<sup>2</sup> (HEFCE) introduced the NSS benchmark to address concerns that unadjusted results could not be used responsibly to compare whole institutions. The 'sector adjusted benchmark' for question 22 takes account of sources of variance such as subject mix and student characteristics. This score is compared with the actual response to question 22 to give either a positive or negative result. This year, the actual score of 87% was 2% higher than the HEFCE benchmark providing further endorsement of the University's strong performance in the NSS.



Screenshot from Unistats website.

What factors have contributed to the improved NSS performance and how can this progress be sustained? What good practice can be shared across Schools? These questions are at the forefront of planning as the next survey opens to a new cohort of final year students on 21 January 2013.

Through the Directors of Education (DE) Forum, Schools are sharing experience and practice about how best to engage students in the survey and how to respond to student feedback from the survey. The following actions are viewed as contributing positively to NSS outcomes:

- Strengthening staff-student partnerships at School level through dialogue between staff and student 'reps' about NSS results and the courses of action that are being taken within Schools to address issues identified through the survey;
- Collaborative presentations to final year students by School staff, Students' Union (SU) and subject 'reps' to enhance student awareness of the NSS that include examples of how student feedback has been acted upon to improve 'the student experience';
- Co-ordination of communication by Schools, the SU and student 'reps' to encourage student participation in the survey. It is anticipated that in 2013, the student-led marketing campaign will make increased use of social media.

Across the University a number of initiatives are also contributing to bringing about improvements in the NSS results.

- Early in the process, Schools have been encouraged to check their target lists to ensure that the correct students are included in the survey.

This checking procedure should now be standard practice in Schools as it is an essential step in ensuring the accuracy of the target population. This, along with marketing and promotion activities, made an important contribution to increasing the overall response rate to 75% in 2012 (from 65% in 2011).

- At an institutional level, the Supporting Student Attainment Action Group (SSAAG), established in 2011, continues its work in supporting Schools and subject areas to raise performance. The Students' Union (SU) is represented on SSAAG and collaborates in several education-related initiatives working closely with student 'reps' in Schools to provide timely information, support and encouragement.

- The SU is at the forefront of the NSS marketing campaign and actively participates in a student-led 'Education Programme' which seeks to develop a sense of pride in the University and its Schools, demonstrate how it compares with other institutions and how it is responding to student feedback.
- CED continues to support teaching and learning across the University through its programme of staff development and the dissemination of good practice. More specifically, the JISC funded e-AFFECT Project (e-Assessment and Feedback for Effective Course Transformation) is working with programme teams from different Schools to bring about institutional change in the process and practice of assessment and feedback. Over the three year lifespan of the project, all Schools will have an opportunity to participate. In 2011-12 (Phase 1), work commenced with Civil Engineering, English and Psychology. This year, (Phase 2) a further eight Schools are involved.

At its most fundamental level, the NSS results reflect 'the student experience' and this is distilled from a wide spectrum of learning experiences. We have gained greater appreciation of factors that affect students' participation in the NSS survey and of how they arrive at their judgements. This is helping many Schools to devise creative solutions to address underlying issues.

If you would like more information about the NSS 2012 results, full details have been shared with Heads of Schools, Directors of Education and School Managers through the Student KPIs SharePoint site.

For details of the NSS questionnaire and general information about the survey, please visit: <http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>

For details about Key Information Sets (KIS), please visit: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/kis/> and <http://www.keyinformationsets.com/>

To access the Unistats website please go to: <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

For information about CED courses and the e-AFFECT Project, visit the CED web pages <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/EventsandCourses/> and <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/e-AFFECTproject/>

"Making it count: Reflecting on the National Student Survey in the process of enhancement", a report recently published by The Higher Education Academy contains case studies and discussion about the challenges and opportunities of using NSS for enhancement. It can be downloaded from:

[http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/nss/Making\\_it\\_count](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/nss/Making_it_count)

To discuss any issues relating to the NSS 2013, or to share your experiences of what has worked in your context, please contact:

**Pat McNally** [pat.mcnally@qub.ac.uk](mailto:pat.mcnally@qub.ac.uk)

# Surveys for Enhancement: The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

By Dr Paul Bennett, Head of Surveys, Higher Education Academy



Dr Paul Bennett

For Universities seeking to enhance the learning experiences of their postgraduate students, obtaining reliable information about those experiences and how they compare with those found elsewhere, is a useful starting point. Student experience surveys provide one important source of

that information and, since 2009, institutions from across the UK have participated in the Higher Education Academy's annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES).

PTES is completed by those studying for taught Masters degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas, while doctoral and research Masters students answer the biennial Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). PTES delves into a range of learning experiences, including teaching and staff, depth of learning, assessment and feedback, course organisation and management and skills and professional development. The survey also collects demographic and course data – kept confidential of course – which allows the experience of different groups of students and disciplines to be analysed.

Unlike the undergraduate National Student Survey, individual Universities' results are not published and so can't be used to form league tables. Of course, understanding how results compare with those of competitors can be an important starting point for enhancement activity. PTES thus enables Universities to compare their results anonymously with the average scores of 'benchmarking' groups – such as Russell Group Universities. But confidentiality is maintained, allowing institutions to treat survey results as useful indicators of experience, rather than definitive public measures of quality. This distinction is especially important at postgraduate level, where the small and specialist nature of many courses and diverse student cohorts, means raw survey scores should be compared with caution. And as with any survey, results are best interpreted in conjunction with qualitative and contextual information and best used as a starting point for exploring and solving issues with postgraduates themselves.

The HEA provides analysis of the national results, highlighting key issues for postgraduate provision

nationally, and helping Universities benchmark their own performance. The national results for PTES 2012 were first presented at the Differentiated Experience of Taught Masters Conference held at Queen's University Belfast in June 2012 and later published in the national report available at [www.heacademy.ac.uk/ptes](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ptes)

54,640 students from 83 Higher Education Institutions across the UK participated in PTES 2012 representing around a quarter of eligible taught postgraduates. Indeed, convincing taught postgraduates to answer the survey can be a challenge, with many often spending only a short time at their institution, a significant proportion of them studying part-time and/or remotely, and a diversity of programme durations and start and end dates. Nonetheless, response rates are on the rise – we hope not solely due to prize-draws for ipads – and results show reliability over time.

Nationally in 2012 the majority of students reported a positive experience, with experiences of staff, skills and professional development, and learning resources being particularly well thought of. Fewer students (though still a majority) were happy with their experiences of assessment and feedback – especially its timeliness and help in clarifying things – and a significant minority wanted more contact time with staff. Since 2009, the percentage of students reporting a positive experience across the dimensions of the learning experience has consistently improved (although it should be noted that the profile of institutions participating in PTES has also changed each year).



Expectations and experience varies considerably between student groups, however, and it is vital that Universities are sensitive to diverse postgraduate needs. For example, looking at the reasons why full-time and part-time

# Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2012: Queen's Results

By Richard Millen, Acting Head of Student Affairs

students chose their particular degree programme, it is striking just how important flexible delivery is to the latter. Encouragingly, though, part-time students (as well as distance learners who tend to be part-time) report a more positive experience of course organisation and management than their full-time, face-to-face counterparts, indicating that the need for flexible delivery is often being met. They are also more likely to report better experiences of assessment and feedback, suggesting perhaps that more traditional courses with large numbers of face-to-face, full-time students could learn something from the design of programmes typically delivered at a distance and/or to part-timers. Again, while the survey results provide a useful pointer, further investigation into the cause of these effects is important.

## Reasons for studying this qualification at this institution, by mode of study, UK results 2012



In recent years, the focus on undergraduate education – and divergent policies on tuition fees across the UK – have perhaps meant less of a policy focus on postgraduates. That appears to be changing with particular attention now being paid to the information needs of prospective postgraduates across the UK and research even being undertaken into the feasibility of a public 'national student survey' of taught postgraduates. While there are questions over the desirability and practicality of the latter, it is nonetheless clear that taught postgraduate provision is on its way up the sector's agenda, and we hope that PTES will play a key role in informing those debates and institutions' responses.

PTES 2013 will be open between 1 February and 13 June.

*As outlined by Paul Bennett in the previous article, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) collects feedback on the experiences of current postgraduate taught students on a range of relevant topics. The survey ran from March to June 2012 and had a national response rate of 24.5%; Queen's had a higher response rate of 28.0%.*



This article highlights the major findings from the responses of students at Queen's and benchmarks these against the HEI sector and the Russell Group universities. The survey has eight major sections, one section which provides ratings for the student experience

against expectations and seven sections which seek responses to 39 questions on topics ranging from quality of teaching to learning resources.

However, before reviewing the results in the eight sections, some other feedback is interesting to note. Firstly, the four main motivations for taking up a postgraduate taught programme at Queen's are 'to improve employment prospects' (62.2% of respondents; note respondents could select multiple answer options); 'to progress in current career path' (61.5%); 'for personal interest' (51.0%); and 'to enable progress to a higher qualification such as a doctorate' (40.7%).

Secondly, the main reasons for respondents selecting Queen's are the 'overall reputation of the institution' (53.3% of respondents; note respondents could select multiple answer options); 'the location of the institution' (49.6%); 'having studied at Queen's before' (37.4%); 'the institution's reputation in the particular subject area' (30.8%); 'the flexible delivery of the programme' (25.5%) and 'the reputation of a particular department' (21.5%).

## Moving onto the review of feedback from the major sections of the survey:

*Experience against Expectations* - in terms of exceeding expectations the highest rated areas are 'Learning resources', 'Overall experience of the course', 'Skills and personal development' and 'Quality of teaching and learning'. In terms of met/exceeded expectations only 'Assessment and feedback' scores less than 80% at 79.2%. Queen's has higher ratings than those in the sector in each category in terms of met/exceeded expectations.



# Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2012: Queen's Results (continued)

By Richard Millen, Acting Head of Student Affairs

	Below my expectations (%)	Met my expectations (%)	Exceeded my expectations (%)
Quality of teaching and learning	13.1 (13.9)	13.1 (13.2)	73.8 (72.9)
Assessment and feedback	20.8 (20.9)	17.6 (18.2)	61.6 (60.9)
Organisation and management	16.4 (19.2)	18.9 (17.8)	64.7 (63.0)
Learning resources	7.3 (9.7)	16.4 (17.8)	76.3 (72.5)
Skills and personal development	7.8 (8.2)	17.7 (18.5)	74.5 (73.3)
Career and professional development	11.4 (11.5)	19.6 (20.6)	69.0 (67.9)
Overall experience of course	9.6 (11.4)	14.5 (13.7)	75.9 (74.9)

Note: UK HEI sector responses in brackets

*Quality of Teaching and Learning* - response ratings range from 70.5% to 84.5%. Very positive views are expressed regarding teaching staff expertise and enthusiasm, and students find their courses intellectually stimulating. Contact time is lowest rated at 70.5%, with teaching support received from staff at 73.9%. In five of the seven questions, Queen's rates higher than both the sector and the Russell Group universities. Overall 38.9% of respondents at Queen's (38.3% UK HEI sector) rate the quality of teaching on their programmes as consistently good, 55.6% (54.3% UK HEI sector) as variable but generally good, 5.3% (6.4% UK HEI sector) as variable but generally poor and 0.2% (1.0% UK HEI sector) as consistently poor.

*Assessment and Feedback* - response ratings range from 59.8% to 75.8%. Criteria, arrangements and marking receive favourable ratings but there are issues identified around the promptness, timing, detail and usefulness of feedback. There are similar assessment and feedback issues across the sector and with the Russell Group universities.

*Dissertation and Supervision* - response ratings range from 67.2% to 81.2%. Supervisors are rated highly for their skills and subject knowledge but less so for their advice on topic selection and guidance on literature search. The sector and Russell Group universities have similar issues with the lowest rated questions.

*Organisation and Management* - response ratings range from 70.3% to 79.3% with generally positive outcomes overall. Queen's has a higher rating than both the sector and the Russell Group universities in all questions except for the balance of core modules and options.

*Learning Resources* - response ratings range from 73.4% to 83.4%. The library and IT services are highly rated by postgraduate taught students, as are the learning materials made available to them. Queen's has a higher rating in every question when compared to the sector and Russell Group universities.

*Skills and Personal Development* - response ratings range from 70.9% to 83.3% with very favourable ratings for all items. Queen's has a higher rating in every question when compared

to the sector and Russell Group universities.

*Career and Professional Development* - response ratings range from 69.0% to 76.6%. Students are positive that the qualification, knowledge and skills gained will benefit them in their careers.

Overall, then, results from PTES 2012 are very positive with questions associated with the teaching expertise, enthusiasm, skills, subject knowledge and supervisory support of staff, the intellectual stimulation of their courses, the library and IT resources, learning materials and the development of research and transferable skills all achieving ratings of over 80%.

Queen's has higher ratings in terms of met/exceeded expectations than the HEI sector and the Russell Group universities in each of the seven categories under the 'Experience against expectation' section, with all but one of Queen's ratings over 80%.

Queen's has higher ratings than both the HEI sector and the Russell Group universities in 24 of the 39 questions in the other seven sections of the survey. 80% of the questions achieved ratings of over 70%, and in four of the seven sections - 'Quality of teaching and learning'; 'Organisation and management'; 'Learning and resources'; and 'Skills and personal development' - all questions received a rating of at least 70%.

In the 'Assessment and feedback' and 'Dissertation and supervision' sections, seven of the 12 questions received the lowest overall ratings in the survey. Whilst areas such as promptness, timing, detail and usefulness of feedback, advice in topic selection and guidance in literature search received ratings similar to those achieved in the HEI sector and the Russell Group universities, these are areas for further enhancement.



# Arts (Health) Care On the Move and Coming of Age

By Dr Jonathan Skinner, School of History and Anthropology

Over Easter, Arts Care - an innovative and creative national charity that places artists in residence in hospital settings – celebrated its coming of age party. Founded 21 years ago, it was fitting that the celebrations, in part a commemoration of excellence across the province, was led by an international arts health conference in the Lyric Theatre under the title 'Sustainable Creativity in Healthcare'. The conference attracted over 200 practitioners, key arts health workers, strategic Trust staff from Northern Ireland and England, Arts Council, City Council, students and staff from Queen's and the University of Florida (USF). The key speakers were Directors of the Lombardi Cancer Center in Washington (Professor Nancy Morgan), the Arts & Health Foundation Australia (Professor Helen Zigmond), the Centre for Arts in Medicine USF (Professor Jill Sonke) and the Institute of Nursing Research at the University of Ulster (Professor Brendan McCormack).

This was three special days of presentation, celebration and knowledge transfer with academic plenary talks, breakout panels on topics such as 'Arts in Health Evaluation and Research Development' and the 'Arts Relationship with Medicine', afternoon workshops of best practice with Arts Care artists, Clown Doctors, and creative workers from across NI, GB and the Republic. What was distinctive about the conference was that it was more of a movement. Quite literally, it blasted off with a dance experience in the Lyric's foyer with a disability dance troupe, and all of the plenaries were supplemented by a cartoonist by the side of the stage translating the key points and words into a deeply moving and lasting visual medium. In this way, and with a TwitterFall, and students snapping pictures, the conference moved into a public and inclusive international movement.

Queen's did more than host some of the panels and social events such as the Arts Care exhibition of work in the

Naughton Gallery. Professor Pascal McKeown, Director of the Centre for Medical Education spoke about the humanities and the medical student, specifically its integration into the curriculum as an attempt to counter the over-specialisation of students and their subsequent difficulty relating to patients. This is taking place through creative placements medical students can take with Arts Care where they sample the range of arts health engagements with patients. Dr David Grant from the School of Creative Arts, reported on an applied drama project with older people with dementia. Dr Nick McCaffery, a former anthropology graduate student of the School of History and Anthropology and a talented professional clown artist, articulated the boundaries between performance and therapy in his work. Ms Lauren Guyer, a current graduate student of the same School and a dancer artist, gave a physical presentation on the nature of social roles in all ability dance. Dr Jonathan Skinner, an anthropologist in the School and member of the conference steering group, convened a set of panels on the conference topic, with special features from current and former undergraduate students Emma Graham and Gail Ratcliffe on community work with children on troubled estates in Northern Ireland and how dance can become an opportunity to express, cohere and thus heal the self from extreme life traumas.

On the penultimate day of the conference, an evening showcase took place in Stranmillis College Theatre. Delegates were treated to an evening of the best of dance, music and singing in honour of Arts Care. Staff performers ranged from across the various Trusts. They also included the learning and physical disability dance companies Orbit Dance, and visiting companies Indepen-dance from Scotland, and Amici Dance

Company: the evening ranged from opera arias to piano recitals, to Carmen staged on wheelchair, and a large choreographic coming-together of the dance companies. The following day, after the plenaries, the conference closed with bus tours to Knockbracken Healthcare Park and the Mater, City and Musgrove hospitals to visit the art installations organised by Arts Care, to exchange ideas and to plan collaborations for the future.

Further details of Arts Care activities, conference resources and forthcoming proceedings will be available from their website: [www.artscare.co.uk](http://www.artscare.co.uk).



Conference talk and cartooning



Patricia Lavery launching the 'Care' project on the front of the Mater Hospital

# Queen's University Teaching Awards

In 2012, twelve Teaching Awards, including five in the Student-nominated category, were awarded to colleagues from across the University.

The Teaching Awards scheme has four categories – the Student-nominated category and three self-nominated categories for Experienced Staff, Rising Stars and teams. The Student-nominated Teaching Awards are promoted to students by the Students' Union. Students can nominate a lecturer by e-mailing the Centre for Educational Development (CED) with a short paragraph outlining why they and their classmates (a minimum of four per nomination) believe their nominated lecturer deserves an Award. CED then contacts the lecturer, informs him or her of the nomination and invites them to put forward an application for consideration by the panel.

The 2013 Teaching Awards are now open and further information and application forms are available on the CED website at

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/PromotingGoodPractice/QUBTeachingAwards/>

Details of the 2012 Award recipients and their accompanying citations are given below.

## Student-nominated Awards



### **Dr Philip Hanna, School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science**

This student-nominated Teaching Award is presented to Dr Philip Hanna, whose project-based approach to computer game-building very effectively develops students' employability skills and promotes independent learning. His students particularly commended him for his excellent teaching and personal dedication to them noting, "Phil would be seen in the labs frequently, sitting alongside students, advising them on their game, showing them innovative ways to code and problem solve and motivating students when they feel all hope is lost, all in his own personal time."



### **Dr John McAllister, School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science**

This student-nominated Teaching Award is presented to Dr John McAllister, whose dynamic curriculum promotes active, interactive and collaborative learning. His research-informed teaching approach is highly motivating and he uses his awareness of different learning styles to fully engage all of his students. His students noted that, "Dr John McAllister is an inspirational lecturer who continually motivates and encourages students to do their very best in their degree."



### **Dr Paul Murphy, School of Creative Arts**

This student-nominated Teaching Award is presented to Dr Paul Murphy who has developed a Drama curriculum that is research-led, promotes independent study and provides his students with a rich learning experience. He places high expectations on his students and provides them with the means to achieve those expectations. His students noted, "Paul Murphy gives 110% to us all as scholars and encourages us to do the very best we can with consistent and coherent feedback on a weekly basis. There is never a class unprepared for, nor is there ever a student unprepared to bring something to his class."



### **Dr Danielle Soban, School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering**

This student-nominated Teaching Award is presented to Dr Danielle Soban who has redesigned the Aircraft Design pathway and developed experience-based learning for her students. Her approach fosters independent learners and develops professional attitudes and employability skills. Her students particularly noted that, "Dr Soban endeavours to make difficult concepts more easily grasped, takes time to engage directly with students and solve difficulties, whilst ensuring all module content is as interesting and applicable as possible."



### **Ms Samantha Taylor, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences**

This student-nominated Teaching Award is presented to Samantha Taylor, an enthusiastic and thoughtful teacher of Anatomy whose students appreciate her ability to deliver difficult subject material in an effective and engaging way. Her use of extensive learning resources enables her students to develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the material needed for their future clinical practice. Her students noted that, "Ms Taylor has excellently conveyed her knowledge, understanding and passion for Anatomy in every class she's taught."



## Sustained Excellence category



### **Professor Mark Burnett, School of English**

This Teaching Award is presented to Professor Mark Burnett, a reflective, student-centred teacher who is providing an active and research-led learning environment to engage his students and nurture transferable skills. He is responsive to student feedback and uses electronic resources to bring historical texts to life and deliver a module that an external examiner described as 'a model in the field of Renaissance studies.'



### **Dr Martin Dowling, School of Creative Arts**

This Teaching Award is presented to Dr Martin Dowling who has used his interdisciplinary skills in music, history and sociology to develop a unique programme in Irish traditional music. He is an engaging and enthusiastic teacher whose range of teaching methods inspires active learning and appeals to a diverse student body. His use of accessible digital media engages the students as researchers and creators, and his use of educational podcasts provides innovative assessment opportunities.



### **Dr Simon Mawhinney, School of Creative Arts**

This Teaching Award is presented to Dr Simon Mawhinney for his composition teaching in the School of Creative Arts. He uses multiple teaching approaches to inspire his students and develop the high-level of composition skills required for professional practice. His live piano performances are engaging in the classroom and the performance of his students' material to outside audiences provides them with a real appreciation of life as a composer.

## Rising Stars



### **Mr Declan Keeney, School of Creative Arts**

This Teaching Award in the Rising Stars category is presented to Declan Keeney, a teacher of Film Studies. His approach is based on a well-articulated teaching philosophy that produces an appropriate balance of academic content and important industry skills. He brings his professional broadcasting experience into the classroom and uses a practice-based teaching approach to blend problem-based learning, technical instruction and traditional lectures.



### **Dr John Bothwell, School of Biological Sciences**

This Teaching Award in the Rising Stars category is made to Dr John Bothwell, an enthusiastic and student-centred teacher whose methods are very effective in developing active learners. His teaching philosophy is underpinned by his belief in the transformative power of a university education, including the importance of exposing students to current research and developing their confidence in their own judgements. His approach has led to significant improvements in student performance and impressive student evaluations.

## **Team Category**



### **Mr Joe Duffy (team leader), Dr Berni Kelly, Dr Chaitali Das, Dr Gavin Davidson, Dr David Hayes, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work**

This Teaching Award is presented to a team from Social Work for their innovative approach to involving service users and carers in teaching and assessing Social Work students. By enabling students to visit service users and carers in their own community settings and involving the service users and carers in role play assessments, the team provides students with realistic insights into their chosen profession and prepares them more effectively for placement. This substantial innovation is making an impact on the teaching of Social Work both nationally and internationally.



### **Dr Nicola Carr, Dr Melissa McCullough, Mrs Aine Maxwell and Dr Karen Winter, Schools of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences and the Institute of Professional Legal Studies**

This Teaching Award is presented to an inter-professional team from Social Work, Medical Education and the Institute of Professional Legal Studies for their development of a highly effective training initiative which develops students' skills in court work practice in child welfare and criminal justice proceedings. Their approach equips their students with the knowledge, skills and values to understand their own and each others' roles in an important and potentially stressful environment. The team uses in-depth case material and simulated court cases to provide their students with a valuable, active and interactive learning experience.

# Service Quality Award for Careers, Employability and Skills at Queen's University Belfast

**Careers, Employability and Skills (CES) has been successful in its bid for re-accreditation of the Matrix Quality Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance Services. This is described as *"the unique quality standard for organisations to assess and measure their advice and support services, which ultimately supports individuals in their choice of career."***

CES was visited by a Matrix Assessor during September 2012 who was able to confirm, after two days of investigation and study, the excellence of the service provided to Queen's students as well as Schools and employer partners. She noted that; *"A welcoming and professional environment was evidenced throughout the Assessment, with members of staff clearly passionate about the work they do."*

During the visit, the Assessor conducted a series of meetings and face to face/telephone interviews with 16 students, 18 members of staff plus two external and two internal partners of the Service and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and

Students. She also undertook an informal observation of the Reception and Career Information points in the Student Guidance Centre and attended a photographic exhibition by students from Modern Languages who had recently returned from their Year Abroad.

Among the many good practices and areas of strength that were highlighted by the Assessor in her report were:

- The strategic commitment and focus on employability that helps to ensure communication between Heads of Education, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the Head of CES;
- *"The increasing amount of work now carried out by Careers Advisers working directly in Schools to improve access for students";*
- The strong Senior Management Team within CES and investment in posts with an employer focus which has emerged following a challenging period of restructuring.
- *"Best use"* being made of resources *"within tight financial budgets"* and it was noted that there had been a 19% rise in the number of

enquiries coming through the Careers Information Room over the last academic year as well as a rise in e-queries and guidance over the same period.

- A series of successful partnerships for the benefit of students, *"including internally with Academic Schools, the Students' Union and the Alumni and Events Office, and externally with a range of organisations including employers – for example Santander, PWC and with Invest NI".*
- The encouragement of ideas and innovations by staff within CES that has led to the development of best practice such as, career-based study tours, Degree Plus, the use of web, social media and e-guidance, as well as face-to-face interactions with students, to support their career development.

One student commented that,

*"The initiative with the Study Tours is really good. Last year, for the first time, one was organised to Brussels. It was entirely a CES initiative and worked well."*

**Queen's Students on the Brussels EU study tour.**





Both the Matrix Assessor, students and partners all commented on the commitment of Careers staff and the positive impact that their work had on students. The final report stated that ***"Members of staff are all well qualified and experienced in their roles"*** and that there was also a strong commitment to Continuing Professional Development. Students who were interviewed by the Assessor made the following comments about the staff in CES:

- ***"They're impartial – helpful on where you want to go, but don't push you. Advisers were more in tune with reality than I expected"***
- ***"They're always there and do promote themselves well"***
- ***"They helped me get my job, also put me in touch with Queen's Alumni – really nice and I had a chance to speak to them about working in London"***
- ***"Students' opinions are always valued"***

One external partner talked about the effectiveness of planning and review meetings with Careers Advisers and commented that: ***"Careers are very receptive to letting us come in and do sessions (with students)"***. ***"Communication channels are such, that we could raise any issues"***. The other external partner described their experience of working with CES as being ***"nothing but positive"***.

School-based partners were also complimentary about their experiences of working with CES. They described how ***"careers staff engage with Schools, they carry out a range of activities to get students into***



Queen's Students on Study USA programme



Students talking to an employer.

***CES and using resources"***. They also valued having "a named person at the end of an email or phone to discuss and set things up. (It) makes life so much easier and benefits the student too."

The Accreditation review also commended the structured approach to careers education by year group and the tailoring of career information, advice and guidance to specific cohorts and individuals. The cycle of options and opportunities for students, including Year Out experience through Erasmus or USA placements, were considered relevant and appropriate. ***"In the first year CES tries to get them (students) familiar and involved, for example with insight days from employers, in the second year more focus on career planning and workplace experience, readiness to work in the global economy, and in the third year a focus on graduate recruitment to enable people to access support, if needed, while still at Queen's"***.

The Assessor also noted the level of professionalism and equality of opportunity for students and this was considered to be particularly well evidenced through the work of the Jobshop. She was also impressed by the following student comments:

***"They really do care about you; there's an unbelievable level of knowledge."***

***"They're now helping me in my progression, the direction has become a lot clearer"***

***"I really needed the Careers Service to understand what was available and interview advice really benefitted me"***.

While CES is pleased to have successfully retained its Matrix Standard accreditation, it is still committed to continuously improving the service it offers and to increasing the level and quality of engagement with students, Schools, employers and other partners. Academics and others who would like to explore options for further links between their curriculum area and Careers, Employability and Skills are welcome to contact the Service directly at the Student Guidance Centre or via the nominated Careers Adviser for the School (a who's who in CES is available under the ***"About Us"*** section in the CES website: [www.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qub.ac.uk) or by emailing [careers@qub.ac.uk](mailto:careers@qub.ac.uk) ).

Further details about Matrix accreditation can be found at: <http://www.matrixstandard.com/>



Students at a Careers Fair.

# Service Quality Award for Careers, Employability and Skills at Queen's University Belfast

## CES Key Supports and Activities

Events Calendar and student or graduate Job vacancies	
<b>Listings of the details of all events and job vacancies.</b>	<p>Queen's students can register with the CES Online Career Management System to view:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>"what's on" list of events</b> that are happening in the University and elsewhere. Once registered they can also book a place, get details of when and where an event is happening.</li> <li>• The <b>job vacancies database</b> that is used to advertise both student and graduate job vacancies.</li> </ul> <p>(The Online Career Management System can also be accessed through the CES website <a href="http://www.qub.ac.uk/careers">www.qub.ac.uk/careers</a>)</p>
One to one Guidance	
<b>Staff in SGC</b>	Can help or refer to a Careers Adviser (Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)
<b>Duty Adviser/Guidance Interview</b>	For quick, <b>drop-in</b> queries or help with a CV or application form Monday to Friday 10 am - 12.30pm & 2pm - 4.30pm (10.30am - 12.30pm & 2.30pm - 4.30pm during non-teaching weeks). For a <b>full guidance interview</b> , students need to book an appointment through the Guidance Centre (028-90972727)
<b>E-Guidance</b>	Further information on this and all of the above is available on the CES website
Degree Plus	
<b>Accreditation</b>	The Degree Plus Programme is a vehicle for accrediting learning and skills developed through extra-curricular activity. Students will find further information at <a href="http://www.qub.ac.uk/degreeplus">www.qub.ac.uk/degreeplus</a> .
Careers Fairs	
<b>Annual Fairs and mini-fairs</b>	<p>Several large Careers fairs are run across the academic year. These attract high levels of interest from employers and provide an excellent opportunity for students to access information and interact with a potential employer.</p> <p><b>Annual Fairs (mini-fairs are also offered)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>October:</b> Administration, Finance &amp; Management Fair plus Engineering, Science &amp; IT Fair</li> <li>• <b>November:</b> Law Fair</li> <li>• <b>February:</b> Work Experience Fair</li> <li>• <b>June:</b> NI Graduate Recruitment Fair</li> </ul>
Development Programmes	
<b>Development Programmes</b>	In addition to tailored workshops for particular disciplines, staff from CES facilitate a range of career development programmes such as <b>Insight into Management</b> (April each year) <b>Queen's Employability and Skills Award</b> and <b>City Study Tours</b> .
Further Information	
<b>CES Website, Facebook or Twitter</b>	<a href="http://www.qub.ac.uk/careers">www.qub.ac.uk/careers</a> . The careers website is a key information point and all students should get to know it. Facebook <a href="https://www.facebook.com/queenscareersemployabilityandskills">www.facebook.com/queenscareersemployabilityandskills</a> and <a href="https://twitter.com/CareersatQueens">Twitter twitter.com/CareersatQueens</a> interfaces are also offered to students.
<b>Weekly Newsletter/ Careers Guide</b>	The Careers Weekly Newsletter is available on the careers website and provides a summary of key opportunities that are currently available. The <b>Careers Guide</b> is available in hard copy and e-book format (via CES website)
<b>Career Information Room</b>	Located just off the main reception area on the First Floor of the Student Guidance Centre. This is a quiet area where students can browse a broad range of career-related information. Personal Tutors can request a tour of this and other career resources, for their group.

# e-AFFECT in Civil Engineering

By Dr John McKinley and Dr James Lim, School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering



In Phase 1 of the e-AFFECT Project, a number of academic staff in Civil Engineering have introduced new assessments and assessment support material in their undergraduate modules. In this article **Dr James Lim** and **Dr John McKinley** outline their particular initiatives which are currently being trialled with students during semester 1.

## Learning materials and redesign of assessment in CIV3002 Structures 3

Structures 3 is a challenging module for the (approximately 120) students enrolled in it each year. The mathematical and structural engineering concepts are essential in professional practice. Successful mastery of these concepts has employability implications as well as degree outcomes because these are skills which can, and traditionally have, been tested at job interview.

The rationale for the new assessment and feedback opportunities was that:

- the students' persistently poor grasp of the underpinning concepts of the calculation of bending moment and shear force in simple beams and columns is handicapping their studies at the higher levels;
- new assessment should be introduced which is designed not to test students (assessment of learning), but to engage students in reflecting on their skills and understanding of these concepts (assessment for learning); and
- online support materials should be developed to both aid that reflection, and to help the students develop new skills that enhance their understanding through the assessment (assessment as learning).

Assessment in this module is primarily by examination. To address the poor grasp, and by doing so better prepare students for the examination, a small piece of coursework was introduced to the module. More importantly, there was also an initial class test in Week 1 of this third year module to establish a baseline, with a follow-up class test, which must be passed, on the same topics towards the end of semester. This revision-style test also emphasised continuity with previous modules in the subject area. Whilst neither class test contributed marks to the overall module assessment, the piece of coursework is worth 10% of the module mark. In the coursework, each student worked through a series of problems similar to those s/he would have tackled in the first class test both by hand and using a structural analysis software tool called LUSAS. The requirement in the coursework was for the student to get the same answer by both means. In addition, the first class test was peer-marked.

Both these approaches were reflective for the students, as they involved analysis of where the offered solutions differ.

Since LUSAS was new to the students, we developed several web-based guides illustrating its use for setting up and solving the kinds of problems being addressed in the coursework and class tests. As LUSAS is a commercial professional tool, it is intended that this will be used in subsequent, particularly design related, modules. One major reason for adopting LUSAS was the free student version. This allowed students to become familiar with it through flexible private study, supported by the web-based guides, as they tackled the coursework.

Student involvement is an important ethos of the e-AFFECT project. Under the supervision of Dr James Lim, much of the work on developing the web-based learning resources has been undertaken by Jonathan Neville, a current undergraduate in Civil Engineering. The assessment materials were developed by Christopher McCracken, a PhD student who recently graduated from our MEng in Structural Engineering with Architecture. The involvement of high-performing students was important, because getting people who had recently completed the parts of the course for which they were preparing these resources ensured the material was pitched at an appropriate level. This work is still being progressed, as the materials and approaches are now cascading down to the same subject area in earlier years of the degree with further developments by Dr. Danny McPolin and Dr. Sreejith Nanukuttan.

The assessment in CIV3002 has been redesigned in accordance with the e-AFFECT project's educational principles (Fig. 1):

Educational principles for assessment and feedback

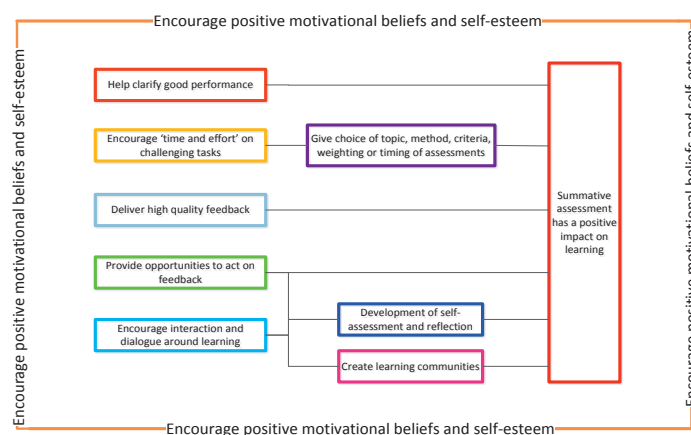


Figure 1

e-AFFECT, Queen's University Belfast – November 2012



# e-AFFECT in Civil Engineering

By Dr John McKinley and Dr James Lim, School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering

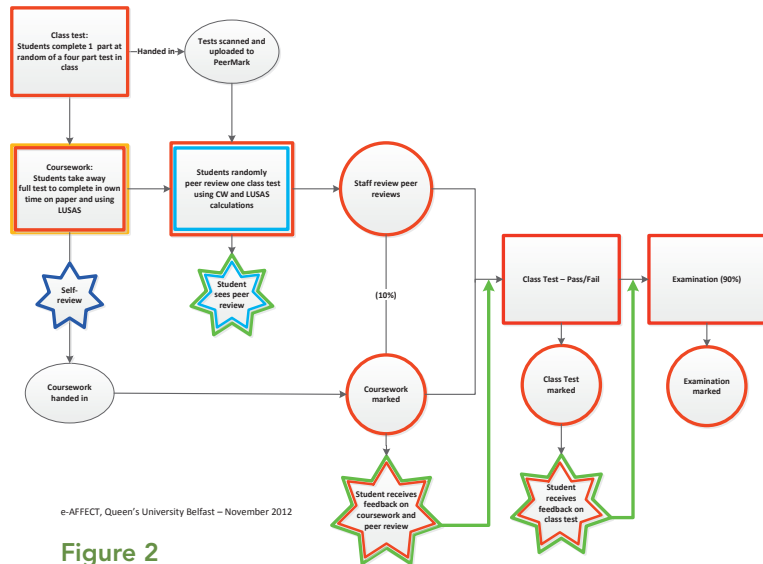


Figure 2

Figure 2 is colour coded to show how the new assessment process adheres to the principles in Figure 1. Assessment in the module has been redesigned to encourage the students to engage with the content from the outset, with ongoing formative assessment over the first few weeks. Within the design there are several opportunities for feedback on lower stakes tasks before the high stakes exam. These do, however, come with an increased marking load and, as the module progresses this year, we are exploring if the PeerMark electronic tool (part of the Turnitin package) can provide some efficiencies.

## Learning materials and redesign of assessment in CIV2017 Geotechnics 2

In Geotechnics 2, the focus of work under e-AFFECT was on report writing for Civil Engineering students. As with the Structures 3 material, we identified a specific area in which students with moderate to poor performance persistently underachieve and which impacts on their ability to tackle subsequent work. In Geotechnics 2, a year-long module, this was focused around a large piece of coursework that is submitted in the second semester. The assessment redesign includes an activity to engage students in a reflective practice concerning the assessment criteria for technical reports, in order to increase awareness of the expected standards for their assignment and thereby better prepare them for the large design and project reports that they will be doing in Stages 3 and 4. At the weaker end, past reports have a number of common formatting and layout failings: the use of a simple bibliography in place of referencing; absence of captions in figures and tables; limited use of supporting data; and lack of evidence of reading beyond the lecture content.

To engage students with the assessment criteria, we have created the following:

- two exemplar reports in the style of a second year design-orientated coursework, one intended to represent work at 2(i) level and one intended to represent work at the 3rd class level;
- a report writing guide covering general issues but tailored for Civil Engineering students and the specific requirements of the discipline; and
- a descriptive marking matrix that covers report format, structure and referencing.

The exemplars were developed by Shannon McNamee, a PhD student who recently graduated from our MEng in Structural Engineering with Architecture, under the supervision of Dr John McKinley. They were based on coursework reports from previous years although significantly reduced in terms of scope. Shannon also developed the report writing guide using material available at the Student Guidance Centre, online and the McClay Library, and her own experience as a high-achieving undergraduate. Finally, the marking matrix was developed from a broader marking scheme used for Level 3 project reports, and drawing on the University's Conceptual Equivalents scale descriptors. In essence, the marking scheme captures the phrases that academic staff typically use when describing work that is excellent, or middling, or poor. Table 1 shows part of the marking matrix developed.

The intention is to run a marking workshop for the second year students towards the end of Semester 1. The design and timing of this workshop have taken into account each of the following e-AFFECT principles:

- help clarify good performance
- provide opportunities to act on feedback
- encourage interaction and dialogue around learning
- development of self assessment and reflection

In the workshop activity (described here with colour coding relating to the principles), students will be given the two exemplars and asked to **mark the report format, structure and referencing against the marking matrix**. In part whilst this will get students to address the criteria, it will also introduce them to the subjective nature of some of the assessment decisions. We will then collect their marking using the Personal Response System (electronic voting handsets). This will be the springboard for **classroom discussion in the workshop, particularly where there is great variation in the assessments made by the students**. This

workshop will coincide with the issue of the coursework, which will emphasise the relevance of the workshop with regard to format, structure and referencing of the required reports. Of course, the assessment of the coursework will cover a great number of other areas, such as technical content, and it is not intended that the coursework be marked using the matrix explicitly. Rather, it will explain how markers typically come to decide an overall mark for that part of the coursework assessment that deals with its presentation, which contributes about 20% of the overall mark.

This marking guide (Table 1) is specific to Civil Engineering at Stage 2 and Stage 3. For example, for referencing the Harvard system is stipulated, and furthermore the use of superscripted numerals for footnote or endnote style references is deprecated, to avoid confusion with units of measurement such as m<sup>2</sup>. This work is still being progressed, with further developments by Dr. Siobhan Cox at MSc level, and relates to other work within the School's e-Affect tasks by Dr. V. Sivakumar for Level 1 Drawing and Dr. Trevor Elliot for Level 1 group work and role allocation.

Category			
Marks band	Report Structure	In-text citation	Evidence of research
A* (100% to 85%)	Professional standard, has gone beyond scope of given material and expanded on suggested structure of assignment.	Extensive use of sources to support main discussion points. Perfect use of Harvard system with correctly formatted references page and additional bibliography.	All discussion points use supporting evidence sourced from relevant books, journals and online publications. References and bibliography show extensive background research.
A (84% to 70%)	Very comprehensive, all relevant sections included and clearly presented. Abstract and concluding statements well supported and completed to a high standard.	Report thoroughly cited. Correct use of Harvard or other referencing system with correctly formatted reference page.	Major discussion points have been researched and are well-supported. Well-known publications used with evidence of researching several major background topics.
B (69% to 60%)	All relevant tasks completed to required standard, abstract and concluding statements are considered and appropriate.	Acceptable use of relevant citations. Referencing system includes in-text citations but is not an official system, i.e. numerical superscripts.	Some background research is evident, the primary topic has been investigated and discussion is well supported in key areas.
C (59% to 50%)	Outline of assignment followed, primary tasks complete. No evidence of additional work, abstract and conclusions are satisfactory.	Limited use of in-text citation. Reference page is not alphabetical, references are vague or difficult to follow.	Limited background reading completed. Only uses suggested reading material for the course or uses supporting evidence from a small number of sources for key areas of assignment.
D (49% to 40%)	Majority of tasks complete, some sections missing or incomplete. Abstract/ conclusions present but not fully relevant.	No use of correct in-text citation but sources mentioned in main text are included in a reference page.	No evidence of any real reading outside lecture material or sources specifically suggested in class. Only a few key points of assignment are supported.
E (39% to 35%)	Significant proportion of tasks incomplete. Abstract/ conclusions basic or inappropriately completed.	No correct referencing system used. Includes a bibliography only with no indication of where reference material is used.	Only lecture material is used to support discussion points, no evidence of background research.
F (34% to 0%)	Large sections missing or incorrect. Abstract or conclusions not attempted or not completed correctly.	No attempt at referencing or a bibliography.	Discussion points are unsupported even by lecture material.

**Table 1 Partial marking matrix for Geotechnics 2 exemplar report marking**

Evaluation of the effect of these developments (which includes impact on student performance) will inform any refinements for years 2013-14. For further information on the e-AFFECT Project contact Dr Anne Jones [a.m.jones@qub.ac.uk](mailto:a.m.jones@qub.ac.uk), Gill Kelly [g.m.kelly@qub.ac.uk](mailto:g.m.kelly@qub.ac.uk) or Linda Ryles [l.ryles@qub.ac.uk](mailto:l.ryles@qub.ac.uk), Centre for Educational Development.

## CED Guest Speaker Series and Conference - Semester 2, 2012-2013

**Event:** **Assessment and Feedback: From Principles to Practice**  
**Presenters:** Professor Mark Russell, King's College London  
 Dr Gwyneth Hughes, Institute of Education, London  
**Date, time and venue:** Friday 1 March 2013, 9.30 am – 4.30 pm, Canada Room/Council Chamber

**Event:** **Engaging 1st year students with Employability**  
**Presenter:** Anne Tierney, University of Glasgow  
**Date, time and venue:** 26 April 2013, 10.00 am – 1.00 pm, Canada Room/Council Chamber

**Event:** **CED Conference on Active and Interactive Teaching and Learning**  
**Presenters:** Dr Kate Exley, University of Leeds  
 Professor Colin Beard, Sheffield Hallam University  
 Dr Karen King, School of Biological Sciences, Queen's University  
 Dr Geraint Ellis, School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering, Queen's University  
**Date, time and venue:** Friday 28 June 2013, 9.30 am – 3.30 pm, Canada Room/Council Chamber

For details of the above events, please visit the CED website at [www.qub.ac.uk/ced](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ced)

## Summary of CED Workshops - January – June 2013

JANUARY				
9	Jan	2013	Using Audio to Enhance Teaching and Learning (Podcast)	8 x 30 min periods over 8 weeks
16	Jan	2013	Exploring Online Learning (part 1)	2 pm – 5 pm
23	Jan	2013	An Introduction to Queen's Online for Learning and Teaching	2 pm – 5 pm
23	Jan	2013	Laboratory Demonstrating	2 pm – 5 pm
23	Jan	2013	The Dyslexic Student at University	2 pm – 4 pm
24	Jan	2013	Supporting Students with Asperger's Syndrome	2.30 – 4.30 pm
25	Jan	2013	Small Group Teaching	10 am – 1 pm
30	Jan	2013	Exploring Online Learning (part 2)	2 pm – 5 pm
30	Jan	2013	Preparing and Giving Lectures – Part 1: Tips and Theory	2 pm – 5 pm
FEBRUARY				
6	Feb	2013	Preparing and Giving Lectures – Part 2: Practical session in small groups	2 pm – 5 pm
13	Feb	2013	Teaching with Emotional Intelligence	2 pm – 5 pm
13	Feb	2013	Interactive PowerPoint Presentations	2 pm – 5 pm
20	Feb	2013	Small Group Teaching	2 pm – 5 pm
27	Feb	2013	Using the TurnitinUK Originality Checking Software	2 pm – 4.30 pm
MARCH				
6	Mar	2013	Using Computer Assisted Assessment	9.30 am – 4.30 pm
6	Mar	2013	Engaging Students in Assessment and Feedback	2 pm – 5 pm
20	Mar	2013	Creating Interactive Learning Resources Using Excel 2010	2 pm – 5 pm
20	Mar	2013	Teaching Larger Classes	2 pm – 5 pm
27	Mar	2013	Using the Personal Response System in your Classes	2 pm – 5 pm
MAY				
1	May	2013	Small Group Teaching	2 pm – 5 pm
8	May	2013	Evaluation of Teaching	2 pm – 5 pm
17	May	2013	Linking Teaching and Research	10 am – 1 pm
JUNE				
19	June	2013	Using Computer Assisted Assessment	9.30 am – 4.30 pm
20	June	2013	Being an Adviser of Studies	10 am – 12.30 pm

Please visit the CED website for further information on the courses and registration details at [www.qub.ac.uk/ced](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ced)

