



Queen's University
Belfast

REFLECTIONS

JUNE 2006

About *Reflections*

Welcome to the second issue of *Reflections*, the newsletter which focuses on teaching, learning and assessment in Queen's and more generally in higher education. *Reflections* is published once a semester by the Centre for Educational Development.

Reflections provides a forum for discussing learning and teaching initiatives in Queen's. In this issue, we feature a lead article by Professor Phil Race, who recently gave a highly successful workshop at Queen's on Motivating Students. Phil is a well-known educational consultant, based at the University of Leeds and Leeds Metropolitan University. There is also an article written by student participants from the performing arts Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, updates on Personal Development Planning for students and the new Education Strategy, and an article by David Grant in Drama Studies on the wider application of drama-based pedagogical techniques.

Reflections also provides news and updates on learning and teaching events and initiatives within Queen's and this time we announce our two-day learning and teaching event on 18th and 19th September 2006.

Contributing to the next *Reflections*

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

- Articles on an aspect of teaching and learning or student support (generally 500 - 750 words);
- Shorter "newsflash" items, e.g. reporting on a recent event or advertising a new venture or up-coming event (100 - 200 words);
- Brief synopses of recent interesting articles on teaching and learning from the educational literature (100 - 200 words);
- Letters or 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 Liz McDowell (e.mcdowell@qub.ac.uk) Centre for Educational Development.



Linda Carey
Editor of *Reflections*



Professor Ken Bell (left) chats to Professor Phil Race

Making Learning Happen

by Professor Phil Race

Teaching is about making learning happen in students' minds. Getting better at teaching involves making learning happen in our own minds too. And research is also about making learning happen, then communicating the learning so that it can be taken into other people's minds. So everything we do, one way or another, in a university is about learning.

However, learning involves effort – even hard work. Motivating students to learn involves us in a combination of trying to cause them to want to learn, and helping them to take ownership of the need for them to learn – otherwise they won't invest the effort and energy it takes to get their heads working systematically and efficiently around the subject material of their courses.

But students have changed. The faces in our lecture rooms are no longer those of around 5% of the population – heading towards 50%. A smaller proportion of our students now come from homes where they were surrounded by books, and where the local library was a place for regular visits. That said, most students nowadays are really expert at finding things on the Internet, and at anything to do with technology. When stuck with technology, ask a student! But we need to work harder to motivate our students to work with books, journals and articles, as part of getting their heads around the subject matter of our courses. Perhaps, however, we need to change our expectations of how much reading our students are likely to do, and concentrate more on helping them to make sense of what they are studying there and then in our teaching sessions with them?

Learning is an active process. We can't 'do' learning to our students. Only they can do it. They can indeed learn by reading things, but they often learn much faster by doing things – explaining things to us and to each other, solving problems with what's in the books and articles, and applying the information in our libraries to their studies rather than just memorising the information and

giving it back to us in exams and coursework. We need to move assessment forward to measure what students have actually learned – and not just what we tried to teach them.

Students need help regarding how best to learn. This help should not just come from expert study-skills developers, vital as their role is. Everyone who tries to teach students needs to be helping them develop how they learn, so that each individual student picks up a wide variety of tactics from which to build up their own learning strategies. Each lecturer can be an illustration to students, not just of someone who has successfully learned a lot, but of someone who now knows a lot about how learning happens, and can share both sides of this knowledge.

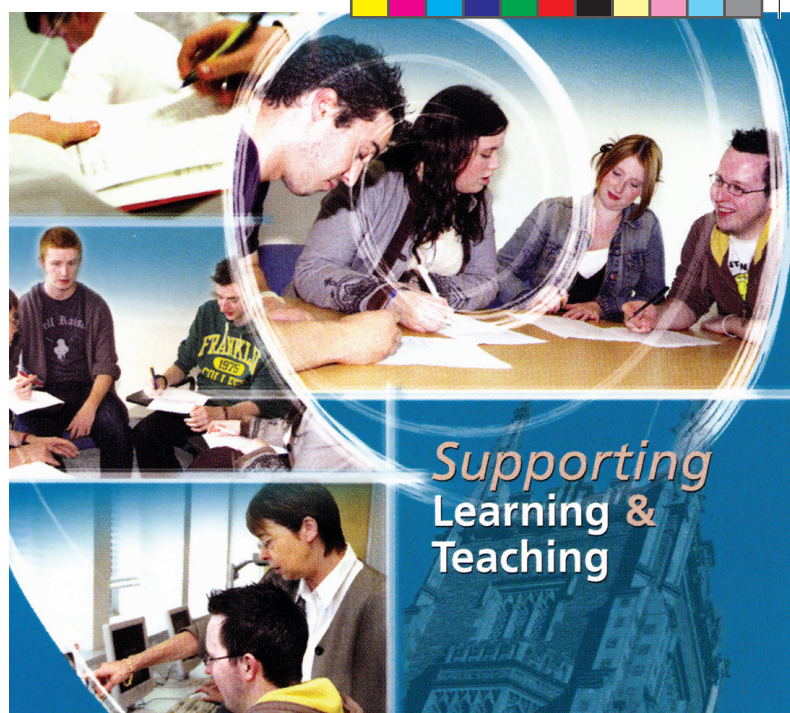
Feedback is vital to students, to allow them to fine-tune their approaches to learning, to help them towards making each element of coursework better than the last one, and to enable them to demonstrate their optimum potential each time they sit an exam. But with far more students in our classrooms, we can't give them all the feedback they need, so we need to get them giving feedback to each other to maintain the momentum of their motivation. Every time a student explains something to a fellow-student, the explainer deepens his or her own learning. The student hearing the explanation also benefits – it's often clearer than when a lecturer tried to explain it, as the student-explainer can remember how the light dawned when the idea or concept first became clear to them (lecturers often can't remember how the light originally dawned – perhaps too long ago!).

Reflection and learning go hand in hand. An essential part of learning is to step back and put things in perspective, make links, think about what worked and what didn't work, and so on. Reflection is also vital for good teaching, in the same ways. We need to keep looking back on our teaching and thinking about what to do differently next time, what to do less of next time, and so on. On www.phil-race.com you can download a pro-forma to start you reflecting on a teaching element you have just done – or indeed to help you reflect as you plan another element. (See the link at the end of 'Planning and Reflecting' on the front page of the site).

In 'Making Learning Happen' there are several checklists which you can adapt for your students to use, to help them think through how their learning is going, and how they can improve and develop their approaches to learning.

All of us – staff and students alike – have the same sorts of human brains, and we need to continue to think about the processes of learning alongside thinking about the subject matter we are teaching or learning. Nothing matters more than learning.

(Race, P (2005) Making Learning Happen London, Sage).



The Centre for Educational Development has now moved to new offices at 6 Malone Road.

Our new contact details are:

Phone: 028 9097 6570. Fax: 028 9097 6612

Email: ced@qub.ac.uk

Web: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/ced>

Since the last issue of Reflections, four new staff members have joined the CED team: Eimear Gallagher and Anne Jones to develop Personal Development Planning for undergraduate and postgraduate students (see page 3); Sarah Hannaford who is part of the quality review team looking at student surveys; and ICT development officer, Clare Thomson, who is developing e-learning case studies.

Staff in the Centre for Educational Development

Maria Lee	Head
Linda Carey	Senior Educational Developer (CPD programme)
Linda Ryles	Senior Educational Developer (Curriculum Development)
Sarah Marshall	Senior Educational Developer (CETL, NI)
Michelle Evans	Project Manager (CETL, NI)
Susan Harte	Senior Administrative Officer (Quality Review)
Eimear Gallagher	Educational Developer (PDP)
Anne Jones	Educational Developer (PDP)
Gill Kelly	Educational Developer (Educational Technology)
Alison Skillen	Administrative Officer
Liz McDowell	Administrative Officer
Sarah Hannaford	Educational Developer (Quality Review)
Clare Thomson	Development Officer (ICT)
Chun Fan Lai	Placement student
Joan Sloan	Support staff
Karen Butler	Support staff

PDP - an integral part of the Queen's experience for students



by Mrs Eimear Gallagher and Dr Anne Jones, CED

Progress Files and PDP Nationally

The idea of introducing Progress Files (a Transcript plus a Personal Development Plan) for all students in Higher Education originated from the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Recommendation 20, Dearing Report). Dearing's recommendation was influenced, in part, by views from employer groups and other commentators who identified a need for the honours classification system to be supplemented by "a profiling and transcript system, which would offer employers and others more detailed information about the capabilities acquired by students".

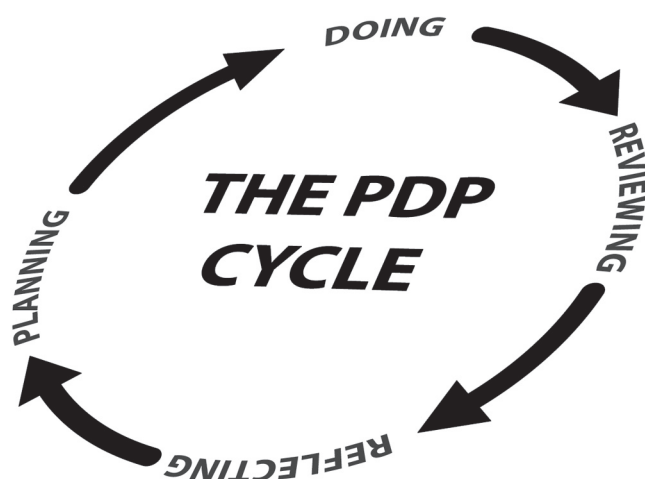
The report clarified this point further by saying, "We are convinced that it would be advantageous if institutions of higher education were to contribute to the use of a Progress File as part of a student's academic and personal development. The contents of the File would help students to review and record their past achievement, and encourage them to set targets and plan future development. It would provide a record from which they could construct their curricula vitae to communicate their achievements to prospective employers or education and training institutions. It would provide a basis from which students could seek guidance and advice."

As a consequence, QAA require that all Institutions introduce Progress Files for all HE students by 2005/2006.

PDP within Queen's

Comment from Ken Bell

"PDP is a must for every student and every university. It enables a student to be supported in a structured way, to carry out reflection and answer questions such as, "Where is it all leading? Do I want to go there? Have I got my priorities right? What should I do differently or better to enable development at a personal, educational or career level?" It can only benefit the student and indeed, by inculcating such an approach to life within the student, benefit society and the economy when the student enters employment. It is for these reasons that I am strongly supportive of the customised introduction of PDP across the University and am delighted by the response from Schools."



Effective PDP is a student driven process. Within our own institution, it is hoped that the PDP element of the Progress File will provide a means by which we (academics, Careers Service, and other student support units in partnership) can collectively encourage each individual student to adopt a more holistic view of the opportunities made available to them through the Queen's experience. It is also intended that the consequent support systems will promote a staged development of the individual's capacity to

"...understand what and how they are learning, and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning"

(Higher Education Academy)

Enabling students in this manner should allow them to plan more strategically for the significant transitions which they are making at this stage of their lives, from school to university, from one semester to another, from undergraduate to postgraduate and from university to employment.

At undergraduate level, the Centre for Educational Development (CED) is working, through a focused implementation initiative, with academic staff from a range of disciplines (e.g. Medicine, Dentistry, Maths and Physics, Nursing, Biological Sciences and Biomedical Science). CED is also supporting the development of PDP systems to complement existing practice across the University for postgraduate research students. In keeping with advice from QAA and HEA on best practice, Schools are being encouraged to avoid duplication of existing effective practices to provide PDP opportunities as a customised and integral part of the course.

"PDP is likely to be most effective when it is

- a mainstream academic activity
- linked to the learning objectives/
outcomes of programmes
- undertaken regularly
- supported and valued by staff
- supported by institutional structures,
resources and expertise
- owned by the learner
- seen to be valued by society
(e.g. employers and professional bodies)"

Among the significant supports which CED is providing for academics is an e-portfolio called PDP Online. This new system is about to be piloted with staff and students in the School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology. PDP Online includes a range of potentially useful tools and links for both staff and students e.g. guided exercises to help the student to work their way through the PDP Cycle, a CV builder and a means of communicating their plans to a member of staff for feedback.



Anne Jones



Eimear Gallagher

For further information on PDP please contact Ms E. Gallagher (e.gallagher@qub.ac.uk) or Dr A. Jones (a.m.jones@qub.ac.uk) at the Centre for Educational Development.

References

1. National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education (1998) *Higher Education in the learning Society* (Norwich, HMSO).
2. Higher Education Academy (2005) *Guide for Busy Academics* No. 1.
3. Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2001) *Guidelines for HE Progress Files*, page 13.

PDP - from an academic's perspective

A little over a year ago, we were asked by the Mathematics USR Panel if our students engaged in PDP. We said 'No', our students said 'No', but it seems that, unbeknownst to any of us, they did. Happily the USR report gave us more commendations than recommendations, but it was no surprise to us that one of the recommendations was that we should encourage our students to participate in PDP.

So when an HEA Workshop on PDP was advertised for a day in October, I thought I should volunteer (yes, it still happens sometimes) to attend. I thought I might even develop the enthusiasm needed to be convincing in recommending PDP to our students. For if we are half-hearted in our approach to PDP, our students will quickly get the message that it can be ignored.

The workshop was stimulating, and during a rather long wait at Heathrow on my way home, I had time to make the following observations.

- The talks/presentations at the workshop were given by committed enthusiasts for PDP. They had clearly devoted much of their own time to implementing PDP, and it was clear that many of their colleagues did not share their enthusiasm.
- PDP is a process whereby students create a transcript of their achievements (not only academic) and - on an on-going basis - monitor, build and reflect upon this development. It is a culture which is prevalent in industry and commerce, into which many of our students go after graduation. Students are, in effect, being asked to develop motivation for their learning. If it is successful, it could lead to a reduction in the numbers of students who move along aimlessly through university, and in due course drop out.
- In Mathematics and Physics, we come to this issue in the context of a significant number of students who do not engage with the University as fully as they should. Its value to us could be to create amongst students a culture of more purposeful learning than they have previously demonstrated.

- Against that hope, one can cite two counter arguments:

Secondary schools have been encouraging their students to develop their Records of Achievement for some years, and these do not seem to have engendered a culture of purposeful learning - at least not in a significant minority of students. The evidence coming from the rather limited analysis of PDP done so far (nationally) is that the more able students are the ones who see themselves as gaining from the experience of PDP.

by Professor Alan Hibbert,
School of Mathematics and Physics

Two forms of approach to PDP seem to be in place in those universities who have advanced further along the road than we have:

- a system linked to personal tutors;
- a system of embedding the ideas of PDP into the curriculum, typically through a skills-based module.

Since it is desirable to develop PDP from Level 1, our modular system makes the second of these rather difficult

Since the time of that workshop, Queen's has devoted more resources to PDP and has appointed Eimear Gallagher and Anne Jones to help Schools put in place systems and processes which will make PDP more accessible to students, in ways appropriate to each School individually – no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Schools can obtain more details by consulting Eimear or Anne. Here, I wish to reflect on a couple of more general issues.

What is PDP?

The intention is that students should develop their own Progress File, comprising two elements: a Transcript, recording their achievements – academic or otherwise; and a means whereby students can record their reflections on personal development.

The former is straightforward, with students able to augment their formal academic record/transcript with achievements in other areas, academic or social. This is the material they may wish to show to other people.

The latter is inevitably more personal to students, and perhaps for their eyes only. Some aspects will relate specifically to academic study; others will have nothing to do with study and may not relate to university activity at all.

How can PDP benefit students?

Students who have noted down their achievements in a variety of aspects of life will find it easier to complete a CV or an application form for employment. They are less likely to leave out something important which might secure for them the career of their choice, and they will more easily be able to write about themselves in a positive manner.

If they set themselves some goals they need to achieve for the future, perhaps in relation to the career they want to follow, they can periodically take stock of how they are moving towards those goals. A purposeful attitude to aims in general could result in a purposeful approach to their studies too.

Reflection at the end of a semester or at the end of a year on what has been learnt in that timescale can itself provide a sense of achievement. If that is then combined with some

planning for the following time period, particularly in respect of how much of the previous period's work will be needed for subsequent study, a greater understanding of the coherence of the student's programme of study can be achieved. Moreover, it is more likely that prerequisite knowledge and skills will be retained between modules.

What is required of academic staff?

In our USR Report, we were enjoined to encourage students to engage in PDP, not to do it for them, nor just to mention PDP to them and leave them to get on with it. I have interpreted this as a requirement (sometimes recommendation is a sanitised word) to provide the environment in which students will be pleased to undertake PDP. This can only be achieved in the context of interactions with students outside the formal classroom environment. It presupposes that we will engage with them as people, as individuals or maybe as small groups, not merely as a sea of faces in a big class.

One way of achieving this is through a structure of personal tutors, a system which, in other universities, and in some areas of Queen's, appears very effective in engendering amongst the students the sense that they too are part of the academic community which is QUB. Its success depends on establishing such a rapport between staff and students, or maybe between students and other students, that supportive discussion of a student's aims and ambitions can be welcomed by the students concerned.

The PDP process has the potential for being a catalyst in such discussions as well as a vehicle for the student's monitoring of progress. It can be part of a package of measures to help students engage with the university. Students who only ever 'drop in' to university life are prime candidates for dropping out.

One of my colleagues asked me the very pertinent question: what are we going to stop doing in order to find time to help students engage in PDP? It is the type of question which needs to be asked more frequently of those who would have us follow up yet more initiatives – initiatives whose effectiveness is not always subsequently assessed (maybe some PDP practice might be useful here!).

My response is in two parts. Firstly, if PDP helps in our attempts to create a culture in which students take responsibility for their own learning and levels of motivation, maybe our drop-out rates would be lowered and I would spend a lot less time, either informally or formally through progress committees, chasing up students whose engagement with our courses is less than adequate. Secondly, I believe we have much to gain by encouraging the development of an academic community embracing both staff and students. I see it as part of the job, to be shared by all academic staff, not just the few who have a penchant for this sort of thing.



Research-informed Teaching

by Dr Anne Jones and Dr Sarah Marshall, CED

“Involving students in inquiry - in research – is a way of improving their learning, motivating them more. After all, what motivates large numbers of academics is engaging in the excitement of research. Bringing research and teaching together is a way of enhancing the motivation of both academics and students”

(Brew, in Jenkins et al, 2003).

Teaching and research relationships are currently at the centre of many higher education policy debates, and linking research and teaching has become a contentious topic of international interest. As a research University, Queen's believes that students learn best in a research-oriented environment where they are taught to the highest standards by academics who are both world-class teachers and researchers.

It is clear that links between research and teaching are constructed in a variety of ways across the University, from the inclusion of subject-based research in the curriculum to the provision of opportunities for students to learn as researchers.

Professor Mick Healey, Director of the Centre for Active Learning in Geography, Environment and Related Disciplines, University of Gloucestershire, visited Queen's recently to facilitate a Centre for Educational Development workshop entitled Linking discipline-based research with teaching to benefit student learning. During his workshop, Professor Healey suggested that, while there are many pressures that are pulling research and teaching apart, putting greater emphasis on actively engaging students with research, suitably adapted to recognise the variation and complexity of constructing knowledge in different disciplines, is one way of re-linking them. He provided participants with a wealth of examples and case studies, and the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their applicability at Queen's.

To promote discussion about what we as a University collectively understand by the term 'Research-informed Teaching', CED has developed a set of working definitions of the ways in which our learning and teaching at Queen's is informed by research. (Table 1).

TABLE 1: What do we mean by Research-informed Teaching at Queen's?

Students learning about others' research	Staff use their own research and that of others in the discipline to illustrate ideas, concepts and theories or to provide examples.
Students learning to do research	Opportunities are provided for students to learn about how to undertake research within their discipline. This learning may or may not take place within 'research methods' modules.
Students learning in research mode	Students develop knowledge and researcher skills by learning in 'enquiry' mode, rather than being the recipients of teacher-processed knowledge.
Staff involved in pedagogic research	Staff inform their teaching practice through practitioner research and reflective practice or make use of the learning and teaching research of others.



Professor Mick Healey

We would very much like to hear your views on these broad definitions, so please contact us on ced@qub.ac.uk and let us know what you think.

You can find more information and resources from Mick Healey's workshop on the Centre for Educational Development (CED) website at www.qub.ac.uk/ced, where you will also find CED's own embryonic Research-informed Teaching support pages. CED is currently building up a resource base, including case studies which will illustrate the diverse ways in which research informs teaching at Queen's. If you have a case study example that you would be willing to share, please contact Anne Jones on a.m.jones@qub.ac.uk or complete the Case Study Pro-forma on our website.

References

- Griffiths, R. (2004) *Knowledge production and the research-teaching nexus: the case of the built environment disciplines*, *Studies in Higher Education*. 29(6), 709-726.
- Healey, M. (2005) *Linking research and teaching: disciplinary spaces*, in: R. Barnett (Ed.) *Reshaping the university: new relationships between research, scholarship and teaching*, 30-42. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.
- Jenkins, A, Breen, R, and Lindsay, R with Brew, A (2003) *Re-shaping higher education: Linking teaching and research*. London. RoutledgeFalmer.



Thinking on Our Feet

by Mr David Grant, Drama Studies

Over the course of the last two years, I have become increasingly fascinated by the application of a drama-based approach to teaching and learning in contexts other than drama. For these purposes, I define the 'drama method' as "the interaction of people and ideas in space". I do not include the written word in this definition, because the essence of drama is performance rather than the literary medium, the printed play text, which is often thought of as the subject's main concern.

The wide relevance of drama in a teaching context flows easily from this principle, because nearly every teaching situation is performative in nature. E-learning aside, students and teachers are usually present together in the same space, and interaction between them is primarily oral and aural, notwithstanding the increasing use of PowerPoint and other evermore sophisticated visual aids, which all too often undermine the effectiveness of the performance itself. So the first challenge for every participant in these 'performances' is the same as for the actor on a stage. And that is to try to make themselves at ease with the innately unnatural sensation of being looked at!

Acknowledging this challenge is the first task of every performer if they are to take control of the way they appear to their audience. They need to achieve a kind of managed self-consciousness if they are to appear to be at ease, because true insouciance under scrutiny is, in my experience, an unattainable nirvana! The most common approach is to be meticulously well-prepared. The aim of rehearsal is not just to get it right but to make sure you can't get it wrong. But the result of such exhaustive preparation can all too often be lifeless and unengaging. An effective performance needs a little danger in it.

To illustrate the point, let's take two contrasting examples. The accomplished actor, after weeks of rehearsal and (even more crucially) many performances, internalises a role so fully as to enjoy a high degree of freedom with it. Compare an improvised performance of the kind made popular by the 'Whose Line Is It Anyway?' TV show. In this case, the actor depends entirely on the capacity to 'busk' – to suspend the unholy terror that normally inhibits the free flow of expression before an audience.

If we apply these models to a teaching situation, the former is perhaps the experienced teacher, who having taught the substance of the class so often that it has become automatic, can lavish full attention on the form of its delivery.

By contrast, the student (and indeed the teacher less familiar with their material) needs the improviser's almost reckless nerve. No wonder then, that in so many seminars we are faced with array of dumbstruck faces. But this is where I believe that drama-based techniques have a role to play.

We often talk of "thinking on our feet" – but usually in a figurative way. The phrase implies spontaneity, quick-thinking and sometimes also a lack of preparedness. The drama method seeks to cultivate an attitude of ease by acknowledging the inherent discomfort of such situations. To do this, it makes extensive use of game-based exercises – a literal application of the idea of "thinking on our feet". Given what I have said about the inhibitions associated with normal social exchange, it might be thought that there would be an even greater resistance to the apparent absurdity of students (and their teachers!) engaging in seemingly childish activities, but my experience with students from disciplines as various as medicine, engineering, education and law, suggests that it is the very outlandishness of such an approach that allows it to work. Furthermore, once students start to experience the freedom of moving about a room, they quickly adapt to its expressive possibilities. So, for instance, the variety of views on a given subject within a class can be illustrated by the way in which students position themselves (literally) within the space relative to agreed parameters. This can provide a fruitful basis for subsequent and more conventional discussion.

A drama-based approach has obvious implications for the development of self-confidence in interactive situations and I am about to embark on a new training programme for drama students involved in assessed role-plays in Social Work, Medicine, Nursing and Law. But I firmly believe that a game-based approach would prove valuable for students of these disciplines themselves and indeed all students needing to express themselves in a public context and wanting to understand the performative dynamics of such activities. Anyone interested in exploring the relevance of game-based approaches in their own teaching is welcome to contact me to discuss a possible demonstration. (d.grant@qub.ac.uk)



Mr David Grant in the Queen's Studio Theatre



Plagiarism

by Dr Lillian Greenwood

School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering
and Computer Science

Plagiarism is defined as the theft (inadvertent or intentional) of another's ideas. It has long been recognised as a serious academic offence and this is made clear in student guidelines at all levels.

Some students choose to adopt plagiarism as an "easy" route through university while others seem to be genuinely confused or unable to understand the basic concept and why it is such a serious matter (Carroll and Appleton, 2001). This latter group is likely to demonstrate cyber-plagiarism by incorporating unattributed material from the World Wide Web into assignments. Ercegovic (2005) in a small scale study of high-school students in the USA found that they did not regard using unattributed maps, choreography and computer code found on the Web as plagiarism. However, actively digitising images or taking music from a CD was thought of as academically dishonest.

In some measure it is possible to understand how confusion can occur. Students in primary and secondary schools are encouraged to utilise the Web as a primary source of downloadable information for projects. It must, therefore, come as a shock to find that this is not how things are done at University level. Recognising the problem is the first stage to implementing a strategy to counteract it. Using Carroll and Appleton's guidelines may be one way to counteract the rising incidence of plagiarism as may the use of electronic detection measures requiring students to submit written materials to websites like JISC.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of academics to make the detection and punishment of plagiarism a high priority and by doing so restore honesty and fairness to university study.

Obviously, prevention of plagiarism rather than detection is preferable and there are a number of popular strategies for plagiarism prevention. Some of these include:

- Change assignments from year to year
- Choose a unique or unusual topic – perhaps asking for the student to relate material to a recent incident or own experience
- Require specific components in an assignment
- Ask to see the assignment at a particular stage in its development as well as at completion
- Have a viva
- Ask for photocopies of title pages of articles
- Request an annotated bibliography
- Require up-to-date references
- Require short written reflection on the student's approach to the assignment
- Set up systems for secure submission and return of assignments

However, it is important to establish methods of detecting plagiarism also and Queen's has become a licensed user of the TurnitinUK plagiarism detection tool. This is an easy-to-use software which compares student assignments to materials on the web. Some points to think about when adopting plagiarism detection software are:

- i. Begin with first year students, as there are no degree classification implications if unwitting plagiarism is detected.
- ii. Schedule a software introduction session for sometime after week two as students do not tend to retain information about plagiarism given at induction.
- iii. Organise a short session in a computer lab for students to register and practice uploading a document. As part of registration, students give formal permission for their work to be stored on the TurnitinUK assignment database.
- iv. Organise a follow-up awareness session before the first assignment.
- v. Allow students one opportunity to submit work, see the originality report and then a week later resubmit the assignment. Weight the first assignment at less than a third of the total module marks so that any inadvertent plagiarism is not treated as a 'major academic offence'.
- vi. Students should continue to submit paper copies of assignments together with signed declarations of originality.

Remember, the originality reports only flag up what might be plagiarism. Whether plagiarism has taken place is still a matter for academic judgement. To register for the TurnitinUK software and for advice and support on using it, please contact Gill Kelly in CED on g.m.kelly@qub.ac.uk.

Dr Lillian Greenwood with students



Behind the Scenes of *How to Disappear*

Warning: May Induce Spontaneous Collaboration!

by Emily DeDakis, writer and stage manager (MA student in Creative Writing)
and Richard Lavery, performer (First Year Drama)

At our first meeting on 16 January, *How to Disappear* was a disparate collection comprising sixteen performers, four writers, three composers, a choreographer, a set designer, a dramaturg, and a director – twenty-seven strangers in sweatpants, warming up with just three weeks before opening night. When the curtain fell at the start of the show on 7 February, (yes, that's 'fell', not 'rose' – everything about this show was different!), it revealed a polished, unique performance, created by an ensemble of artists both on and off the stage.

How to Disappear was the pilot theatre project of the Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts. Artistic Director, Anna Newell, garnered a wide mix of talented Queen's students and professionals to create the ... well, it wasn't a musical, or a play, or a dance piece. True to its interdisciplinary nature, it was all of the above – and something completely different.

Aside from putting in a string of nine-to-five days, we didn't know what to expect for those three weeks. We had the poem by Amanda Dalton which gave us the title and some initial inspiration. With so little time to prepare and many divergent ideas about story, characters and imagery, all of our work had to be intensely compressed. Preconceptions about our individual roles were shoved aside; the first tickets had been sold before we knew each other's first names.

Under "normal" circumstances, the script would have been all but finished by the time the cast got together. For *How to Disappear*, writers began the same day as the rest of the company, devising characters – and creative ways of telling their stories on stage – in days, not months. Each writer took charge of one main character and all had a hand in intertwining the storylines. The dramaturg helped maintain the continuity of the performance, and essential input came from the improvisations of performers. Some segments were written by a single person in one draft; others took the whole team hours of rewriting to perfect. Meanwhile ...

From voice coaching to elaborate percussion sequences, the performers did it all – even contemporary dance. Our days started with rehearsals to get to grips with the complicated dance sequences. Few of us had any dance experience, and very soon people were going to pay to watch us. The main dance sequence, known to the company as 'The Dancy Dance', was introduced to performers at the very beginning to give us

time to achieve all the choreographed jumps and twists. More traditional dramatic sections were rehearsed separately, as they were finished, and slowly integrated into full rehearsals. Whilst this was going on ...

The sound designer and the composer, lovingly dubbed 'The Noise Boys', were locked away in a room messy with computers and musical instruments, working on the show's soundtrack and giving our poetic inspiration an acoustic overhaul. In collaboration with the director and their mentor composer, and with periodic visits from the rest of the cast to incorporate language and movement, they created the entire soundscape of *How To Disappear*.

From rehearsal to performance, we tackled all aspects of production as a company. Writers became stage managers. Music technologists became performers. Performers became set dressers. Twenty-seven strangers became a company.



How To Disappear was an interdisciplinary performance project undertaken by the Centre for Excellence in the Creative and Performing Arts (NI), one of three Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs, NI) at Queen's. For more information, contact Anna Newell, Artistic Director, a.newell@qub.ac.uk, or visit the Centre's website at www.qub.ac.uk/cecpa

Enhancing Visualisation for Effective Learning Outcomes

by Dr Karen McMenemy and
Dr Stuart Ferguson

In 2004-05, we applied to the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund for money to undertake a project to enhance the visualisation aspects of our courses on virtual reality and computer graphics. The students were asked to create a 3D environment and a tour of that environment. We were able to demonstrate that the use of visual material created in a virtual world enhanced the learning outcomes for our students by engaging their interest and motivating them to use concepts outside the bounds set by the module. Ultimately it led to the students' deeper understanding of the material.

We know that if students enjoy what they are doing they are likely to have an enhanced learning experience. We, therefore, incorporated an element of fun into the course by allowing the students to work with a user-friendly, freely available 3D animation software in the Virtual Reality and Computer Graphics modules.

The high quality of the practical work undertaken by students, and the clarity of their formal reports documenting their work, was a very pleasant by-product of the process. We had become aware from informal comments that the class as a whole was taking the assignment very seriously. In fact, we were concerned that they may be spending too much time producing their virtual environments.

Having marked their assignments it was evident that much class discussion had taken place with regards the utilisation of the software. Many students used robots to simulate movement and many used image processed effects. The surprising element about this was that these effects had not been explained in either lectures or tutorials, so the students must have sought out information on them from the software help files. Many students added soundtracks to their animations – again an effect that had not been identified as a requirement, or even suggested. We took this as an indication that the students were proud of their finished pieces and were keen to go beyond requirements to display them to best effect.

One element of our assessment was the peer evaluation of student presentations of their virtual environments. Since the students took part in group assessment exercises, they experienced the best and worst of others' work and gained a sense of scale for their own work. Having received feedback on the peer assessment from the students, we will have no hesitation in continuing this form of assessment. One student commented,



"I do feel that getting peers to assess the work was very worthwhile and that having to present the animations was educational. To see what other pupils had done was an insight to some of the high standard of work and the effort that some had put into their animations."

It is also worth remarking that the combination of the design nature of the assignments, the presentations and the peer review process produced a total lack of similarity in the work of each individual student. While the students had collaborated on learning key techniques and teaching each other certain skills, the individual nature of the work they presented indicated that everyone had used their own initiative and done significant work.

The School of Electrical Engineering, Electronics and Computer Science plans to deploy this computer animation software and assessment procedures as part of a course for first year students, simply as a vehicle to encourage them to learn, by experience, the art of presentation-giving and report-writing. Our hope is that, motivated by the component of entertainment that it offers, they will build working relationships with their colleagues and come to discover some of the unexpected ways in which the students can progress their professional development.

Virtual Reality is, by its very nature, multi-disciplinary in that it can be used in a variety of different ways to serve the needs of a variety of subject areas. Obvious areas might include architecture, medicine and dentistry where generating 3D views of areas of interest would give the student a more realistic impression of their chosen course material.

Education Strategy

by Maria Lee, CED

Delivering the highest quality education for students will be central to everything the University does. Encouraging academic excellence, fostering innovative teaching and enhancing the thinking skills of graduates is a key objective for Queen's.

Queen's: Vision and Strategic Directions 2005 - 2015



The University will soon launch its Education Strategy for 2005-2008. The Strategy has been developed as a response to the Vision which sees the delivery of high quality education for students as being central to everything the University does. Since implementing the Strategy will depend on Schools developing their own Education Strategies that align with it, ensuring that staff can identify with its goals has been paramount. Accordingly, over the past months, the Strategy has been re-iterated and refined as staff have debated and discussed it in various forums.

The crux of the Strategy is that the University will provide an environment where students will flourish academically and personally; when students as individuals prosper then society too benefits. Part and parcel of this is making sure that excellence in education is supported, recognized and rewarded and that the entirety of the University's educational resource is deployed intelligently and coherently so that the system delivers to maximum effect.

The Strategy has evolved under five themes: students; staff; curriculum development; quality assurance; and, educational infrastructure. In each case, the University is raising its game – challenging and stretching itself, being bold rather than tentative.

Students

First and foremost, the University seeks to attract high quality students from a diversity of backgrounds but all with one thing in common, the potential to excel in and contribute to the particular education environment Queen's offers. With an intake of this quality, the University has a responsibility to produce the sought-after and well-qualified graduates who will become the leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs driving the new knowledge economy. But the Strategy also recognises that the distinctiveness of individual students requires comprehensive

learning, personal and social engagement if they are to take full advantage of the learning opportunities on offer.

Staff

The University's plans here are equally ambitious and equally focused: to recruit and retain staff who can contribute to the distinctive education provided by a research-intensive university; to maintain excellence and foster innovation in education, informed by disciplinary and educational research; to recognise and reward good practice in the education of students.

Curriculum Development

Above all, the University's curriculum must be relevant, relevant in the context of a global society in the 21st century and the new knowledge economy. It must provide high quality programmes that meet the needs and expectations of students, Government, business and the wider community. It must provide educational opportunities for a more socially-inclusive and age-diverse student body. It must ensure that undergraduate and postgraduate curricula are informed by the latest research and also promote and value diverse international perspectives. It must ensure that students are assessed effectively and efficiently.

Quality Assurance

The University strives for continuous improvement and will continue to develop internal quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms that are rigorous but not burdensome. Implementation of the recommendations of the December 2004 QAA Institutional Audit, where the University achieved the highest commendation, is further securing quality. As the use of e-learning grows, quality assuring it becomes increasingly important: a programme delivered wholly, or in part, by e-learning, must be of the same standard as its traditionally delivered counterpart. This equivalence will best be achieved if quality assurance procedures for e-learning developments are fully integrated within existing ones, and the University is working to ensure this integration.

Educational Infrastructure

Physical and virtual infrastructure plays a significant part in supporting learning and here the University's ambition is to develop a world class and accessible learning environment where students will be able to call upon ever-more sophisticated information and communication technologies, resources, services and software. The University will also continue to pilot new technologies, including wireless networks, to enhance the learning environment.

The Education Strategy is an articulation of what we, as an institution, plan to achieve. It is ambitious and challenging and its achievement will rely on the individual contribution of all who work here. The consultation is still ongoing and staff can view the Strategy at www.qub.ac.uk/ced/ConsultationonEducationStrategyfortheUniversity. The Strategy will be presented to Academic Council for final approval in June 2006.

Reminder:

All Ireland Society for Higher Education
(AISHE)

2nd International Conference**Creating and Sustaining an Effective Learning Environment**

31 August & 1 September 2006

To be held at the National University of Ireland,
Maynooth, County Kildare

For further information and to register:
<http://www.aishe.org/events/2005-2006/conf2006/>

AISHE is a professional society whose goal is to bring together and support those people who are concerned to advance higher education in the island of Ireland. It promotes the professional recognition and enhancement of teaching and learning in Higher Education through a range of activities including seminars, conferences, publications, and provision of online community forums and services.

CED Conference

18th and 19th September 2006

Canada Room and Council Chamber, QUB

Theme: **Enhancing the Education Environment at Queen's**

Keynote speakers:

- **Professor Brenda Smith**
Higher Education Academy
aspects of assessment in higher education
- **Professor Dai Hounsell**
University of Edinburgh
effective learning environments
- **Professor Grainne Conole**
University of Southampton
developments in e-learning for Higher Education
- **Professor Carol McGuinness**
Queen's University, School of Psychology
education for thinking

In addition, parallel workshop sessions will be facilitated by the keynote speakers and invited Queen's staff members. Publicity material and registration details will be circulated in late June. There will be no charge for Queen's staff members. Please contact CED for further details: ext 6570 or ced@qub.ac.uk

Personal Response Systems in Queen's

by Gill Kelly, CED and David Robinson, Media Services



Geraint Ellis's students use the PRS

Personal Response Systems (PRS) are hand held wireless transmitters which, through the use of Microsoft PowerPoint, allow students to submit responses to multiple choice questions in lectures, tutorials and practicals. Student responses are immediately summarised in graphical form and displayed on the computer screen. The system is very easy to use as it is only an extension of Microsoft PowerPoint.

PRS can be deployed in range of ways to promote interaction and give students and lecturers immediate feedback on learning that is taking place during class. Queen's is currently piloting the use of this technology in a small number of modules across the University. Use to date has included: checking students' understanding of course reading material, checking understanding of material delivered in class allowing subsequent contingent teaching, revision sessions, problem setting and gathering module feedback.

During the 2005-06 academic year, some members of academic staff have been piloting the use of PRS as a way of improving student learning, in a variety of contexts and for a range of different reasons. One of these is Geraint Ellis in the School of Planning, Architecture and Civil Engineering (SPACE) who has integrated PRS into the lecture programme of a new level 1 module. His initial reflection on the use of the software is encouraging;

"PRS has really livened up the lecture sessions, which even in the best circumstances can be a passive and uninspiring experience for many students. The use of PRS has had a marked effect on encouraging students to contribute to discussion, even in big classes. PRS appears to promote student confidence as they can see that others share their opinion and gives signal that academic staff value their views. I have found that breaking the lecture up into smaller sessions punctuated by such discussions has helped prolong student attention, while carefully targeted questions using PRS can help to underline the most critical points I want to get across".

The technology will be available for wider use in 2006-07 when it can be booked for use in all teaching rooms. Those interested should contact David Robinson, Media Services on david.robinson@qub.ac.uk, extn 5515.