



QUEEN'S
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BELFAST

Centre for
Educational Development

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REFLECTIONS

Communities of Practice (CoP)

When we agreed that the focus for this edition of *Reflections* would be Communities of Practice (CoP) we were unsure what sort of response we might receive. Needless to say the articles submitted have been wide and varied. A reminder for us that communities of practice are about our places and spaces of learning, of support and of networks as well as the connections that we make at all levels of our Institution and beyond.

The articles within reflect on a wide range of CoPs and how they thrive and grow. Professor English considers the way in which the culture of a university is enriched by having an international composition to its staff and student population and the input that this can have to empathetic dialogue. Coming down to a European level Dr Emma McKenna and Eileen Martin consider the way in which their Science Shop CoP has led to an improved sharing of knowledge amongst those who support community-based research.

The powerful narrative behind the Prisons Memory Archive is explored by Professor Cahal McLaughlin. A narrative that is built upon co-ownership that allows all of those involved in the project to retain a strong sense of agency in their stories, so important given the context. Alex Lucas and Dr Franziska Schroeder also explore an inclusive CoP around the way in which innovations and creativity in technology can provide a wider access to music-making for those with disabilities.

CoPs can vary in size. Gary Mitchell and Susan Carlisle discuss a dementia-friendly CoP in Nursing and Midwifery in which over 2000 students have taken part. At the other end of the scale three staff from the School of Maths and Physics have been meeting weekly over two years to discuss teaching and learning, an approach that has allowed them to share good practice and develop their own confidence. One of our largest CoPs this year has been the one developing around the adoption of Canvas. Without a doubt, the embedding of this new learning space has been supported by the willingness of early adopters to share their practices with one another.

Roisin Copeland and Christine Boyd explore how they developed and supported a University-wide CoP to bring together a wide range of staff who support Work-Related Learning in one form or another. Furthermore Amanda Kirkpatrick reflects on a different staff group, the Staff Choir, and the positive impact that this has had on those involved. Emma McAllister's article explores how a CoP can have positive impacts in a number of ways, including accreditation and understanding of one's own professional identities. Tracy Galvin, who is new to the CED team, outlines three projects that she is developing around Internationalisation of the curriculum, Universal Design for Learning and Inclusive Assessment. She explores the role of CoP as we start to move forward with our work in these areas.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of *Reflections* and that it inspires you to join or develop a Community of Practice.

Claire Dewhirst
Editor of *Reflections*



Internationalisation and the University

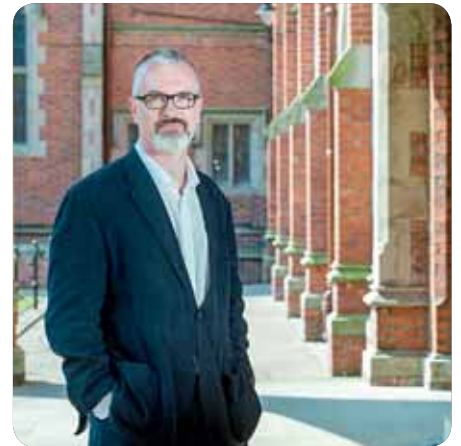
By Professor Richard English, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Internationalisation and Engagement

Many universities have become zealots now for internationalisation. It's there on the web sites, in the mission statements; and it's generally presented as a necessary, an essential development. But what does internationalisation mean in practice for universities, and what are its implications for a place like Queen's?

The first point is that, paradoxically, internationalisation mostly happens at home. Put another way: the universities which successfully and enduringly attract the largest numbers of international students, or the greatest number of international academics and academic partners and global reputations, do so mostly because of the very high quality of what they do on their campuses at home. The main reason for Harvard, MIT or Stanford being such internationally powerful institutions is what happens in Cambridge, Massachusetts or Palo Alto.

So, although there is an essential role for taking good news abroad, for a global presence in terms of people travelling elsewhere, the successful internationalisation of a university like Queen's centrally depends on our being the best university that we can be in terms of our education, our research, and everything else that we do.

That is the second vital point: internationalisation is not an optional extra to be dealt with after other work is done; it is something which needs to be inherent in everything that the University does. Every School needs to work to produce education of such a quality that, in addition to the unique and precious local and national students who come to Queen's, so too people around the world will consider Queen's to be one of the potentially best places for them to study. Ideally, all research



by Queen's academics should be at such a level that anyone studying their specific subject around the world should have to engage with that research, to take note of it, to be in dialogue with its findings.

Our facilities need to be globally competitive, our culture of work and study must be globally alluring, our alumni work has to be global in reach, our communications messaging needs to be pervasively international – everything that we do should have an international element to it.

This is not just because of the financial implications of internationalisation. Those are vitally important, of course, and increasingly so. International students do provide invaluable financial benefits for universities, and a global alumni network and fund-raising

capacity are crucial also for the business parts of the University's work.

But there is far more to it than that. The culture of a university is extraordinarily enriched by having an international composition to its staff and student population. The famously polarized current political context – whether regarding Brexit, or the Irish border, or Donald Trump's America, or US-China-Russia tensions, or the politics of a still-fractious Middle-East, or beyond - reinforces the need for us all to engage in empathetic dialogue. We need to understand and engage with cultures and ideas and insights that are different from our own. We need to listen across divisions, and universities offer educational and evidence-based settings that are of unique value here.

This affects our public events, and it reinforces the need for diverse opinions – locally, nationally, internationally – to be reflected and made repeatedly accessible.

It affects our curriculum: how narrow or how expansive and inclusive is what we discuss, what we recommend for study, what we teach?

It will affect how we think about sacred space and sacred days, about patterns of social interaction, about how welcoming we are in terms of languages and cultures, about how tolerant we are of people expressing views with which we differ.

These are not easy challenges to overcome, and universities around the world have struggled with them. But Queen's University Belfast, if it is genuinely and lastingly to be a global university, needs to be committed to open engagement with such issues. If, for example, students from Muslim-majority countries are to attend Queen's more and more in the future – as I very much hope that they will do – then what implications does that have for us? Do we need to think more deeply about how Queen's welcomes and how it socialises with such students, for example?

Again, if we are presenting ourselves as an international university, then do we reflect that in the events that people see? Are they sufficiently diverse in terms of international background and diversity? There is great work being done around these questions, but they remain key issues for us to address.

So university internationalisation involves ambition – to be the best that we all can be in our work – but it also necessitates humility. One of the crucial aspects of engaging with diverse cultures and regions is a preparedness not to assume the rightness of our

own initial opinions, practices, and cultures. Every academic discipline has something to teach us here, as we reflect on the subversive process of questioning what we think we know, and listening to the arguments and evidence produced around the world in relation to major phenomena. So students from around the world will be teachers as well as learners, and the dialogue that is at the heart of all great universities will involve people from every country learning from Queen's, and simultaneously making it truly international.



Promoting Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to Enhance the Learner Experience: how the role of Educational Developers can support staff to achieve this through Communities of Practice (CoP)

By Tracy Galvin, Educational Developer, Centre for Educational Development



Tracy is an Educational Developer at the Centre for Educational Development at Queen's University Belfast since January 2019. She has 13 years' experience working in higher education with a focus on teacher education and inclusion. Her focus in Queen's is to support staff to incorporate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into the curriculum. If you want to contact Tracy in relation to any of the projects, please contact her on: t.galvin@qub.ac.uk or ext 3077.

It seems to be a time of change in Queen's and more so than ever with the changing nature of our diverse student cohort and increase of international staff, along with a number of new senior management posts. The number of Teaching Awards and HEA Fellowships is significantly on the rise, we have more digital learning advisers/eLearning developers than ever before doing great work across Schools and, of course, what nobody can hide from, the roll out of our new VLE – Canvas. Outside of the curriculum and institution-wide, there is also a positive culture shift occurring that is celebrating staff and recognising their hard work and achievements. HR, rebranded as People and Culture, who are winning awards for their work on EDI (along with an updated version 2019 EDI policy under consultation), the great work PRISM, SWAN and Queen's Gender Initiative are accomplishing, the launch of iRISE in

June for BAME&I staff and many more initiatives of no less importance.

Higher Education (HE) globally is facing multiple challenges, including increased diverse student numbers and greater accountability concerning the student experience (Hénard and Roseveare 2012). In terms of diversity, our student population is non-static and continuously shifts. In Queen's, we are now moving toward increasing numbers of under-represented groups, mature students, parents, and, in particular, international students. Moreover, the increase in students disclosing with the Disability Office (including mental health) has also seen significant rises in recent years. While there are several advantages to having a diverse student cohort, unless there is institution-wide joined-up thinking there can be numerous challenges and pressures put on student service support, professional staff, teaching staff and the wider university community. With the increased pressure on academic staff in terms of demands on time regards administrative duties, teaching and marking, and performance related scrutiny, there has never been a more important time to work in collaboration with others. One way to counteract this pressurised workload is by refocusing how we approach teaching, learning and assessment and doing this through Communities of Practice (CoP).

Communities of Practice (CoP) is well documented in HE, in terms of academic development, shared responsibility, promoting collegiality and creating situated learning opportunities through a sense of belonging, sharing solutions and common challenges. CoP foster knowledgeability among academic staff in areas of importance to institutions' strategic goals (Brown and Peck 2018). The term CoP derives from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) who explored situated learning, emphasising the importance of social networks. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder further developed CoP with a focus on '*groups of people who share a concern, set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and*

who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis' (2002, p.4).

These working relationships inform practice through collaboration and networks are often a response to the ever-demanding nature of HE. Consequently, the role of academic or educational developers is to provide support for staff through various initiatives and projects that encourage and foster a collaborative working environment. Educational developers work with broader groups on various projects that align with the establishment's priorities and institutional education strategies (Brown and Peck 2018). In line with Queen's Corporate Plan, Education Strategy and CED objectives through engagement with staff throughout Queen's, three working groups have been established to embed CoP at the centre of each project under the umbrella of EDI. The three projects are Internationalisation of the Curriculum, Inclusive Assessment and Universal Design for Learning.

Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC)

Internationalisation "frequently refers narrowly to the strategic recruitment of international students, with financial benefits to universities through increasing student numbers" (Warwick and Moogan 2013, p. 105). Of course, for internationalisation to occur and be successful, a number of factors must be aligned, for example: joined up thinking across the institution, support from senior leadership, review of current practices, overseas opportunities, collaboration across internal and external parties and the wider community, recognition of best practice by staff, support for international students and to enhance IoC. Internationalisation is about adopting a position of inclusivity where diversity is acknowledged institutionally, both in academic and non-academic contexts from estates to the library and the wider local and business communities.

IoC has become a central factor in Higher Education (HE) where best practices aim to increase awareness around the formal and informal curriculum, content, curriculum design, pedagogy, learning activities and assessment. Furthermore, it is to enhance the student experience to learn in a global context, promote inclusivity and an enriched learning experience for all (both international and home students). The HEA (2015) provides a framework on IoC that at the core are 21st century graduates who contribute to a global society that is structured around three key areas: its people, organisation and curriculum. Additionally, Barker (2011, p.7) denotes:

“graduate attributes and their importance for global citizenship, where students are interculturally competent to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to thrive in a world characterised by global mobility and social, cultural, economic, political and environmental interconnectivity”

One of the most utilised definitions of IoC is the ‘incorporation of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a programme of study (Leask 2015, p.9). IoC is one of the five strands in the Education Strategy identified as a key factor to promote inclusivity at Queen’s and included in our Corporate Plan, so its importance to moving EDI forward is key.

A working group was set up in May that includes staff from all Faculties, senior management, CED, the Graduate School, Students’ Union, International Student Support and Learning Development Service staff. The first meeting focused on identifying what IoC is and the enablers and barriers that staff and students face. A wide range of issues were discussed including: knowledge and understanding of other cultures, communication issues, language support for academic writing, plagiarism and social integration. Moving forward, the intention is to capture best practice across Queen’s in the form of case studies that include IoC and/or inter-cultural or global engagement projects as core themes to disseminate and recognise the good work that is occurring across the institution. If you are an IoC champion and are already involved in a project that

incorporates international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions or citizenship into the content of the curriculum as well as learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, please contact CED (ced@qub.ac.uk) for a case study template. Moving forward, a number of resources will be developed and IoC workshops will be rolled out to enhance professional development and support staff to implement IoC into their teaching and assessment practices and build upon our Community of Practice.



Image by HEA (2015) on Internationalisation

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

As the QUB student population, and indeed the wider Queen’s community, has become increasingly diverse, it is no longer feasible to adopt a ‘one size fits all’ approach when it comes to the practice of teaching, learning and assessment, but to move towards ‘flexible approaches that can be customised and adjusted for individual needs’ (Bray and McClaskey 2013, p.18). One solution to address this issue is to adopt the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) philosophy across campus. The positive impact of implementing UDL is vast in terms of enhancing Queen’s profile in the promotion of pedagogic excellence, staff/student partnerships, and student outcomes in terms of retention, employability, progression and engagement. UDL is promoted as a philosophy, education framework, and set of principles for designing and delivering flexible approaches to teaching and learning that address student diversity within the classroom context (Capp 2017).

UDL has the potential to create a QUB culture where ‘instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments work for everyone, staff and students’. A critical attribute of UDL is that it “provides scope to unify planning among differing strands of the student

experience including student services, library services, information services, estates, information technologies and the wider academy” (Bracken 2019). The Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) as a leader in the UDL field, has articulated three core principles, nine guidelines and 33 checkpoints to inform the adaptation and application of UDL across learning environments. In short, these are referred to as the what, how and why of learning (Meyer et al., 2014). The three main principles are:

Principle 1 – Multiple means of Engagement (The ‘WHY’ of learning)

The overall aim of **Principle 1** is to develop expert learners who are purposeful and motivated. Learners differ significantly in the ways that they engage or are motivated to learn. Therefore, the emotional (affective) attachment is crucial in terms of student engagement to connect to a topic or subject. There are varieties of factors that can influence individual variation in affect including culture, subjectivity, background, personal relevance and prior-knowledge. In reality, there is not one means of engagement that will be optimal for all learners in all contexts; providing multiple options for engagement is essential, that includes flexible ways of learning, for example:

- getting students to participate in taught sessions in inventive and innovative ways
- using teaching aids imaginatively in order to aid learning
- varied and innovative teaching methods to motivate and engage students (e.g. flipped classroom and voting technology)
- students participate actively in classes and have frequent knowledge checks
- students are encouraged to work in an inclusive and engaged manner with their peers with opportunities for group work, collaboration, co-creation and peer support
- differentiation provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge, with direction to culturally inclusive independent study resources
- students are supported to become autonomous, resilient and reflective learners who can self-check and identify their most effective learning strategies
- learning is authentic and contextualised; it is socially, culturally and globally relevant and considers

learners' identities, experience and history.

- students can identify themselves and their experiences in their learning

Principle 2 – Multiple means of Action and Expression (The 'HOW' of learning)

The overall aim of **Principle 2** is to develop expert learners who are strategic and goal directed, such as planning and performing tasks, organising and expressing ideas. Writing an essay or solving a maths problem are strategic tasks. Providing multiple options for engagement, that includes flexible ways of testing learning on student knowledge is essential, for example:

- offering a wide range of ways for students to 'demonstrate' their learning e.g. presentations, video, podcasts, blogs, mini viva etc.
- offering a variety of assessments besides timed, unseen traditional exams to provide flexible ways to meet the learning outcomes (e.g. videos, practicals, presentations, blogs, internet tasks, lay explanations, reflections)
- offering assessments that only test the learning outcomes (e.g. if speed of response is not relevant then do not time the test)
- making clear and contextualised marking descriptors available to students and staff before assessments
- offering formative assessments that are timely, provide specific feedback and feed-forward to help students to improve and excel
- guiding students to set aspirational goals and track their own progress
- encouraging students to embrace mistakes and risk-taking as valuable learning opportunities
- offering assessments that test "real world" problems; assessments are socially, culturally and globally relevant considering learners' identities, experience and history

Principle 3 – Multiple means of Representation (The 'WHAT' of learning)

- The overall aim of **Principle 3** is to develop expert learners who are resourceful and knowledgeable. It identifies how we gather facts and categorise what we see, hear and read. Historically, "reading and lecturing were popular teaching methods, yet such approaches

potentially entail countless embedded barriers for many students" (Bracken 2019, p.5). There are multiple ways of representing knowledge where material and content (visual and auditory) are presented in a variety of ways, so it is accessible to all, for example:

- using modifiable handouts so that students can edit the font or background to their preference
- recording lectures (or a summary of) in video or audio format for students to access before or after their lecture
- uploading learning materials to Canvas 24 hours in advance in modifiable and PDF format
- clearly defining technical language, symbols and key terms (included in handbooks) and making background information clear
- encouraging students to use scaffolds and modelling e.g. concept maps, tables and summaries to link ideas, structure information and highlight key concepts
- using a wide range of culturally inclusive learning resources within which students can recognise their own identities e.g. images, videos and demonstrations
- signposting to learning resources from a diverse range of socially, culturally and globally relevant sources which account for a diverse global community

Taking a UDL approach to inclusion across the whole institution, its systems and processes, will provide an effective model for managing a diversity of students across the sector. The necessity for HEIs to learn from shared collegiate practices reflecting experiences from a diversity of settings in a variety of linguistic, geographical and socio-cultural contexts has never been greater (Novak and Bracken 2019, p.7). It is important to note that academic and teaching staff are doing a significant amount under the remit of UDL but just not framing it as so. Having spent the last three months speaking to staff regards UDL, it is very evident that there are exemplary teaching and learning practices occurring in terms of student engagement, co-curricular design, innovative and inclusive assessment approaches (through the use of rubrics, exemplars and technology), scaffolding and modelling practices to ensure equitable academic outcomes across campus.

The UDL Working Group will consist of academic staff and colleagues from CED, Library Services, Information Services, Student Services, The Graduate School and the Students' Union. In terms of academic staff, the aim is to identify key teaching staff who are already innovative in their pedagogical approaches and who are willing to be UDL champions. Staff need to be recognised and celebrated by showcasing best practices across Queen's through dissemination of exemplars in the QUB Round-up, CED website and e-zine. Moving forward with the UDL Working Group will systematically map UDL practices across Schools. Guidelines will be designed and developed to support staff to implement UDL principles; including a number of workshops where staff can re-focus module content using the UDL principles.

Inclusive Assessment

Assessment approaches have a "powerful impact on both students' and staff in HE" (O'Neill and Maguire 2019, p.277). It has been well researched "how assessment drives students' behaviour" (Careless 2015: Boud and Molloy 2013) and can have an impact on engagement and attendance (Harland et al., 2015). The UK league tables focus on student satisfaction results from the National Student Surveys (NSS) with assessment and feedback mostly under scrutiny, often leaving HEIs running around in a panic to change teaching and assessment practices. One way Queen's has tried to tackle this issue is through the Student Partnership Project on Assessment and Feedback that is currently under review after its first year of completion. Another development is the new Handbook of Assessment Guidance and Support recently approved by the Education Committee.

There is often an overemphasis in HE on certain assessment methods, such as the written examination (QAA, 2018) that has disadvantaged many groups of students. Of course assessment does not occur in a vacuum, it is closely aligned to teaching/learning activities and learning outcomes through constructive alignment (Biggs 2002). Moreover, the QAA Quality Code's guiding principles state that in "designing assessments, the needs of students need to be considered, including those studying at different locations, from different cultural/ educational backgrounds, with additional learning needs, or with protected characteristics" (2018, p.5). Ensuring that students have variety in assessment and some individual choice,

e.g., in the topic or in the method/format of the assessment, can lead to overall enhancement of the assessment process to benefit all students. Involving students in both their learning and assessment (such as student partnership) provides opportunities for them to influence their progress, and use their own preferred methods to access the curriculum. Contributing to the choice and design of assessments ensures that they are able to contribute fully no matter what their access needs are. Assessment procedures and methods must be flexible enough to allow adjustments to overcome any substantial disadvantage that individual students could experience. Some examples that are inclusive and accessible from 'Making assessments accessible' (JISC 2017) are:

- ensure the assessment strategy includes a range of assessment formats
- ensure assessment methods are culturally inclusive
- consider religious observances when setting deadlines
- consider school holidays and the impact on students with childcare responsibilities when setting deadlines
- consider students' educational background and providing support for

unfamiliar activities eg, for students unused to group work and English as a second language

- consider the needs of students with disabilities or mental health issues
- involve students

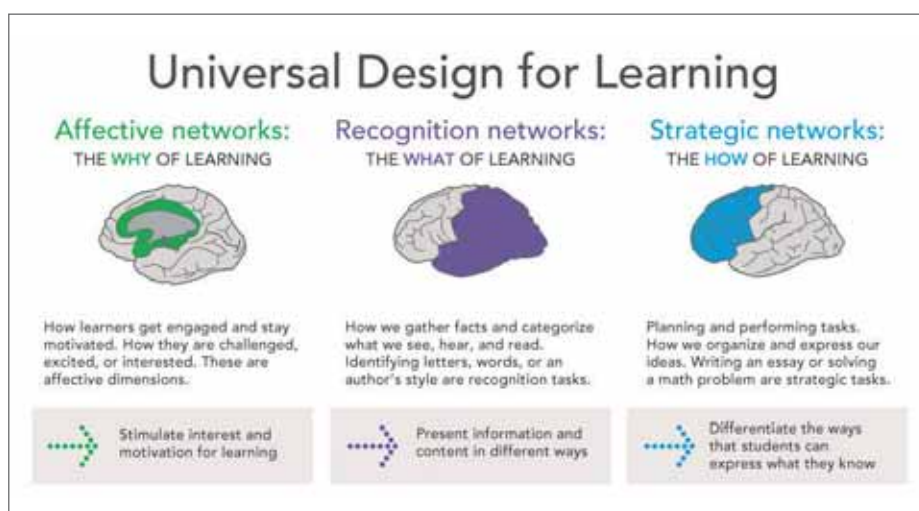
The third working group set up in April on Inclusive Assessment and Reasonable Accommodations is working on a document that aims to support staff on inclusive assessment practices through a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which in turn aims to increase inclusivity and minimise barriers to assessment and the need for reasonable accommodations for students. A number of Schools and student and professional services are represented in this Working Group to bring the staff guidelines on Inclusive Assessment and Reasonable Adjustments to fruition so that they fit closely under the institution's Assessment Handbook. The first meeting focused on a resource as a starting point of discussion around inclusive practices in assessment. Moving forward the intention is to capture best practice across Queen's in the form of inclusive assessment. This will complement CED's launch of the Assessment Hub. If you are already involved in a project that incorporates inclusive assessment,



CLEARING A PATH FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CLEARS THE PATH FOR EVERYONE!

please contact ced@qub.ac.uk for a case study template so your work can be disseminated across Queen's.

Overall, the three projects are under the umbrella of EDI by working with academic staff and the wider Queen's community to enhance the learner experience and ensure equitable academic learning outcomes for students. More importantly, for significant change to occur, middle and senior management and academics are instrumental in driving EDI forward by showcasing a commitment to institutional change, as 'one university' (as per the staff survey), to embed and celebrate Queen's values and mission. Nonetheless, for change to occur staff need to be supported, work collaboratively, be given time to reflect and undertake professional development opportunities in areas outside of their subject expertise, in particular in teaching, learning and assessment. Through Communities of Practice and support by Educational Developers, these projects can inform practice where all voices are heard, appreciated and celebrated.



Prisons Memory Archive

Prisons Memory Archive

By Professor Cahal McLaughlin, Arts, English and Languages

The Prisons Memory Archive (PMA) is a collection of filmed recordings of 180 people who experienced the Troubles' prisons, including prison staff, prisoners, teachers, chaplains and probation officers. The participants were filmed in 2006 and 2007 back inside the prisons of Armagh Gaol and the Maze and Long Kesh prison, using three protocols to address the political and psychic sensitivities of addressing the legacy of a conflicted past in a contested present.

Firstly, co-ownership shares authorship with the participants so that they retain a strong sense of agency in their own stories. Secondly, inclusivity ensures that as wide a cross section as possible of the people who passed through the prisons' gates were filmed. Thirdly, we use life-storytelling, which avoids leading questions and encourages participants to set their own agenda of what to talk about and, just as importantly, what not to talk about. We further embedded collaboration with participants by establishing a PMA Management Group, made up of representatives of participant groups, which takes strategic decisions about the project, such as where the archive should be housed and conditions under which it should be used.

The project has been primarily funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), both in its initial stages and more recently when a partnership was formed with the Public Records Office NI (PRONI) to preserve and make accessible over 300 hours of audio visual material, as well as thousands of photographs and documents. This is a three year NLHF project, managed by the Visual Voices Steering Group, made up of PRONI, the PMA Management Group and QUB representatives, with material incrementally available at PRONI. There

are also two documentary films, *We Were There* (2014) and *Armagh Stories: Voices from the Gaol* (2015) edited from the archive, which are available for public screenings and libraries, and an online site of selected material, at www.prisonmemoryarchive.com, much of which was funded by the Community Relations Council Media Fund. By the end of 2020, the online site will be updated with curated material that will be of benefit for community and school educational and research purposes.

Addressing the legacy of the past has been a difficult journey for many, including the political parties at Stormont, who have so far failed to implement the Stormont House Agreement, which includes three strands – judicial enquiry, truth recovery and an oral history archive. This vacuum has been filled by community groups and NGOs, who have initiated oral history projects, including WAVE Trauma Centre's *Unheard Voices*, Healing Through Remembering's Storytelling Network, and the Accounts of the Conflict website at Ulster University. The PMA is an initiative that focuses on the prison system, which was both touchstone and tinderbox during the Troubles; telling this story is an important contribution to the tapestry of stories that address the legacy of the past. One important conclusion is that for oral history to play a role in

addressing the legacy of our violent past, it must operate on a collaborative basis with survivors of violence who wish to tell their story. Because there is a risk of re-traumatising storytellers, it is important to share authorship with them – it is well known that trauma fragments your sense of wholeness, e.g. memory and identity, so it is crucial to help restore the sense of authorship over one's own story.

We have collaborated in screenings and workshops using the PMA material, locally and internationally, and have learned that the risk of re-traumatising audiences is of equal concern. We strive to ensure that community groups that request our films for viewing are aware of the sensitive contents and painful issues that might arise. We have had mostly successful outcomes, where, for example, the film creates a safe space for audiences to share their own experiences and views, even when difficult to do so, but have also been present at an event that re-stimulated the traumatic experiences of the period in a way that risked both pain and anger. Chairing and mediating such events is a highly valued skill. A sign of the maturity of a society is its ability to tolerate, to listen to, the story of the 'other', and this archive is one attempt to contribute to our society's transitioning out of thirty year's of political violence. We are not there yet.



Filming outside Armagh Gaol, 2006

Work Related Learning Community of Practice

By Roisin Copeland and Christine Boyd, Careers, Employability and Skills

A Work Related Learning (WRL) Community of Practice was established in January 2018 by Careers Employability and Skills to support staff university-wide, in preparation and support of students in work-based learning and placement activities.

The purpose of the community is to acknowledge and share the diverse experience of staff in the increasing area of work related learning across the University and to establish a framework of policy, guidance and models of practice.

The forum brings together academics, professional and administrative staff to have a dialogue around WRL issues and with the help of invited experts, to develop solutions that could be applied to all manner of programme embedded or centrally supported activities including short placements, internships, year-out placements, work simulations and case study work.

Achieved to Date

We set out to facilitate a number of interactive workshops within each academic year, all of which were hosted in the Student Guidance Centre Hub (see photo).



Five workshops have taken place to date across 2017/18 and 2018/19 availing of experts within the University as follows (and a sixth workshop is pending on 11th June 2019) see table below.

We are providing opportunities for staff to meet on a face-to-face basis and network with colleagues to ensure they are aware of the different areas of support available and raise awareness of the various contacts that staff can get in touch with in relation to specific queries.

Expertise (All workshops facilitated by Careers, Employability & Skills)	Date	Theme	Outcomes / Resources
Queen's Careers, Employability & Skills (Academic & Student Affairs Directorate)	28 Feb 2018	Establishing the Community of Practice	Website PowerPoint of session available on request
Queen's Insurance Team (Finance Directorate)	27 Mar 2018	Insurance in relation to WRL	Website Outcomes document available on request
Queen's Health & Safety Team (Estates Directorate)	28 Jun 2018	University Safety Service in relation to WRL	Website PowerPoint and Outcomes document available on request
Queen's Disability & Wellbeing Team (Academic & Student Affairs Directorate) Supported Employment Solutions (External)	29 Jan 2019	Hidden Disabilities & Mental Health in relation to WRL	D&W Website SES Website PowerPoint and Q & A responses available on request
Queen's International Student Support Team (Academic & Student Affairs Directorate) Student Circus (External)	11 Mar 2019	Supporting International Students in relation to WRL	ISS Website Student Circus Website PowerPoint and Q&A responses available on request
Queen's Careers, Employability & Skills with input from Queen's Educational Governance & Partnerships (Academic & Student Affairs Directorate)	11 Jun 2019	Review of QAA & Queens General Regulations 'for Work-Based and Placement Learning'	tbc

The Community membership includes approximately 80 members of staff involved in work-related learning activities. All three Faculties are represented including clinical placement staff and all members are invited to each workshop with refreshments or lunch provided. On average, 30 staff members attend each session enabling cross-University networking and informative discussions. All participants have received workshop resources via email after events.

Continuing to Develop

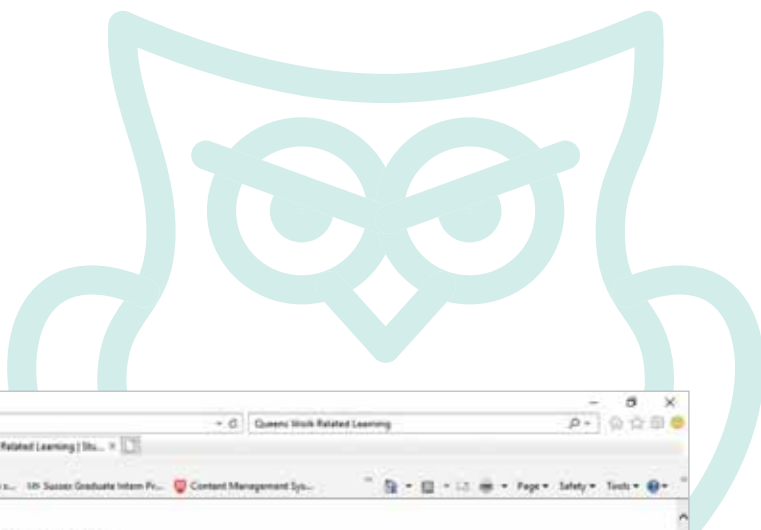
We have created a dedicated website for [Work Related Learning](#) providing a reference to policies, procedures and resources on both general and specific areas that we have been dealing with. In addition, we are also looking into the best way to set up a resource bank for staff to share templates and guidelines and to this end we have been exploring the potential for a Community Sharepoint site.

The website is very much a work in progress and we are keen to develop it into a one-stop-shop for staff. In addition, we would like to review what work we can facilitate for the Community in 2019-20. This will take place at the final workshop on 11th June 2019.

Going Forward

At the next workshop entitled *Revised QAA Quality Code and Queen's General Regulations for Work-Based and Placement Learning* on 11 June 2019 the main focus will be to discuss alignment with the new QAA WBL Quality Code and the revision of the Queen's General Regulations for Work Based and Placement Learning. There will also be the opportunity to agree the next WRL workshops series in 2019-20.

For any queries on the above, please contact Christine Boyd at Christine.Boyd@qub.ac.uk.



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the 'Work Related Learning' website. The page has a red header with the title 'WORK RELATED LEARNING' and a sub-header: 'The Work Related Learning Community of Practice page provides staff with a reference point for the policies and resources relating to Health & Safety, Insurance, GDPR and Student Wellbeing policies and procedures for Queen's students undertaking Work Related Learning Activities.' Below this, there are several content tiles: 'HEALTH & SAFETY WORK PLACEMENT, TRAVEL & DUTY OF CARE', 'INSURANCE STUDENT WORK PLACEMENTS', 'GDPR PRIVACY POLICY', and 'STUDENT WELLBEING DISABILITY & MENTAL HEALTH'. The website is viewed in a browser window with the URL 'http://qub.ac.uk/workrelatedlearning' visible in the address bar.

Digital Learning Specialists – Joining Forces for Professional Recognition!

How a regional, cross-sector group of learning technologists created a community to support professional accreditation.

By Emma McAllister, Educational Developer, Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

The digital learning specialist may go by many names (e-learning developer, learning technologist, instructional or learning designer), and is a relatively new type of role in most educational institutions. It doesn't quite fit into the categories we apply to jobs within Higher Education. Digital learning specialists require technical expertise, but they're not IT or technical support.

Digital learning specialists are involved in the design of learning activities and assessments, but they are not lecturers or teachers. For this reason, it can be difficult for people in this role to document their professional development in a way that colleagues can understand.

“Our challenge is how we engage with ourselves, our institutions and the wider public and make them aware as to who we are, what we are and what we do.” (Barry, 2015).

Beginnings of the group

An opportunity to form a regional, cross-sector approach to professional development for people working in digital learning arose last year when the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and the Irish Learning Technology Association (ILTA) announced they would sponsor five scholarships for Northern Ireland applicants for the Certified Membership of the Association for Learning Technology (CMALT).

CMALT is a portfolio-based accreditation scheme developed by ALT which aims to help people working in learning technology to:



- have their experience and capabilities certified by peers;
- demonstrate their commitment to professional development.

Craig Dooley and Clare Thomson of the local ALT members' group developed a programme of events to support the five people who won the CMALT scholarships. Due to the number of applicants, they opened the programme to anyone seeking support for their CMALT application.

Meetings and support

The group of 15 digital learning specialists, from a range of FE, HE and compulsory sector organisations, had their first meeting in January this year in the Ormeau Baths Gallery. Most participants were digital learning or instructional design specialists (although job titles varied widely) but a number of lecturers with a strong interest in the use of learning





The meetings became a space where digital learning specialists from different institutions and sectors could talk about their professional practice and discuss shared issues. A recurring theme from the meet-ups was how people involved in learning technology could disentangle their work from the multi-disciplinary teams they often work in to present a clear picture of their individual impact on projects. By discussing this as a group, members started to find a language that could describe their role within their institution.

There were lots of opportunities to talk about the technologies, practices and procedures that were used in different institutions. It was a chance to exchange tips and advice about their work - and most importantly of all, have a bit of craic!

technology also attended. The group continued to meet on a monthly basis (alternating between face-to-face and online catch-ups) - a total of six sessions. They explored topics such as identity, communication, technology use, teaching and assessment, and policy and legislation.

“the formation of a community of practice is also the negotiation of identities’ (Wenger, 1998).”

The meetings were an opportunity to get guidance on how to write a professional portfolio for the CMALT accreditation. Clare and Craig (who are also Lead CMALT assessors) gave advice on how to create a successful application. They also invited other presenters, such as Kate Molloy from National University Ireland Galway and Susan Greig from the University of Edinburgh, to mentor the group and provide an external perspective.

Moving on

The initial programme is nearing its end now, with most members aiming to submit their CMALT applications at the end of May. However, the group is already discussing setting up virtual meeting spaces so that the community of digital learning specialists can continue and grow! Read more on the ALT NI website: www.altni.com.

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What has being part of the CMALT accreditation support group meant to you?

“It’s just brilliant hearing what others in similar roles in other institutions do, and although VLEs, tools and technologies differ our opportunities and challenges are all quite similar ... The reflective [aspect] helps you really appreciate your own work, your contribution to education and educational practice and how you can continually strive to improve and enhance your own practice to keep making that difference!”

Áine MacNeill, Instructional Design Consultant, Ulster University

“It has pushed me to be more driven in my use of technologies. It’s also made me more cognisant of the technology I use, its purpose, and reminds me that I don’t give myself credit enough for the things that I do!”

Dr Declan McLaughlin, Queen’s University Belfast

“It’s given me an opportunity to think critically about my own practice and learners.”

Julie Gray, Instructional Designer, Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

“The camaraderie and the support from the other members and the feeling of being part of a professional community pursuing a shared goal, i.e. completing portfolio for accreditation for CMALT. I need to make time to prepare for the session, gathering my thoughts and putting pen to paper before the meetings. This helps me to focus on what I have done, and reflect on my progress in a way I couldn’t without the motivation of the rest of the group.”

Aideen Gibson, Educational Developer, Queen’s University Belfast

“I think it has made me think of my work in the broader context and motivated me to work in a more focused, future-oriented way.”

Shelby Hanna, Digital Learning Officer, Queen’s University Belfast

“It has helped me identify areas for professional development and the steps I need to take to improve my skills and experience to improve my job offering. [I’ve learned] that my role is not standardised. Other people doing the role can be doing very different things, but we have a lot of overlap in terms of skills and support.”

Daria Casement, E-Learning Officer, Queen’s University Belfast

“I have learned how to evaluate my work more efficiently, to reflect on what I have achieved and view the importance of my work. I am updated on opportunities that are available to me that will enhance my skills and abilities for future projects.”

Kirsty Gillen, Digital Learning Developer, Queen’s University Belfast

“Designing and facilitating the CMALT cohort workshops with Craig, was personally and professionally fulfilling. I drew on my online network to bring in outside voices and perspectives to the workshops, strengthening my personal learning network. Sharing experiences with a diverse group of learning technology professionals enriched my teaching and learning knowledge. It was hugely enjoyable which and increased my insight as an assessor.”

Clare Thomson, Digital Education and Enhancement Consultant, Ulster University

It’s been a great opportunity to bring people together from different organisations and sectors to a neutral space where they can discuss and share freely. I’ve been delighted with the incredibly high level of engagement from each member, and the networks formed will continue beyond the immediate goal of CMALT accreditation.

Craig Dooley, eLearning Development Advisor, King’s College London

Developing a Community of Practice in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

By Professor Christine Brown Wilson, School of Nursing and Midwifery

The School of Nursing and Midwifery has established a SoTL Community of Practice (CoP) to develop and use evidence generated within the School for evidence-based curriculum design and development.

There are often multiple stakeholders with an interest in investigating the impact of educational innovation in Higher Education (HE); the SoTL CoP enables the School to demonstrate the evidence base upon which it makes curriculum decisions to these stakeholders.

What is SoTL?

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is becoming increasingly important for lecturers in Higher Education to develop an evidence base for teaching and learning. Scholarly teaching is often grounded in a specific discipline with academics ensuring they use sound sources, thoughtful construction creating a meaningful, clear course design that engages students. Scholarly teaching is then reviewed through academic processes and amended or developed according to feedback from stakeholders. SoTL, on the other hand, is a structured activity that is available publicly for critical review and evaluation and accessible for use by other members of the scholarly community. This may be through conference presentations, reports or publications. Activities involved in SoTL are generally concerned with best practice or innovation in teaching and learning, resulting in an output that disseminates best practice thus developing a systematic evidence base for teaching and learning.

Why a SoTL Community of Practice?

Across HE, many academics are engaged in innovation in Teaching and Learning that is often not disseminated through SoTL. This may be due to limited funding or institutional support to undertake SoTL. As a result, academics struggle to undertake

SoTL projects alongside their other teaching duties. The School of Nursing and Midwifery Community of Practice addresses these challenges by providing peer support, mentorship and opportunities for collaboration whilst supporting the dissemination and uptake of SoTL projects in the curriculum.

Lecturers new to academic work may require support in developing SoTL activities, so bringing experienced academics in SoTL activities alongside less experienced colleagues in the Community of Practice enables peer support and dissemination of experience. This process can also bring different disciplines together to engage in interdisciplinary SoTL projects.

What does the SoTL Community of Practice do?

Creating a CoP encourages academics to explore their teaching and learning practice, to describe the innovations they are delivering and consider how their innovative practice might be developed into a SoTL project using available resources. In the School of Nursing and Midwifery, creating a nexus of staff meeting together with a common purpose of identifying opportunities for SoTL enables academics to share similar interests, identifying collaborative teams to share the workload of a project. This may be connecting people on different teams with similar interests to develop projects or supporting members to implement findings from previous educational research/ SoTL projects in their teaching and learning as part of their day to day practice.

Support with ethical conduct and review is a key consideration where academics are researching their teaching and learning practice. The School of Nursing and Midwifery CoP



supports academics in navigating the ethics processes relevant to teaching and learning. As SoTL projects are often time limited within the teaching of modules, it is important to have a timely review process. Feedback from the CoP was used by the School Research Ethics committee to develop a more streamlined process for ethical review proportionate to the level of risk of the project.

Given that SoTL projects rarely attract large funding, it is important for academics to ensure they are able to manage the data generated, enabling them to complete the process of analysis leading to dissemination. Creating a peer review process within the SoTL CoP enables academics to consider the scope of their project to ensure it remains manageable with access to peer support along the way.

Once the SoTL project is complete, dissemination is often a challenge for busy academics, particularly when writing for publication. The School of Nursing and Midwifery funds Scholarship retreats that provide protected time for academics to write up their results for publication to increase the proportion of projects being disseminated to a wider audience. The SoTL CoP provides peer support during these retreats in the form of critical friends who peer review manuscript drafts and provide support with accessing reputable HE journals. This process enables academics to disseminate their SoTL projects beyond the institution.

If you are interested in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, you are welcome to join this SoTL Community of Practice. For further details email Professor Christine Brown Wilson: c.brownwilson@qub.ac.uk

The Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies as a 'Community of Practice'

By Dr Daniel Roberts (CECS President), School of Arts, English and Languages



Professor Moyra Haslett of CECS with students of the Irish Studies Summer School at the Robinson Library in Armagh

The term 'community of practice' - referring to a group of people communicating with each other toward a shared interest and purpose in learning - has become a useful way of describing what has been common practice in academic circles, and more broadly in the social realm, for a long time. The Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies (CECS) at Queen's (<https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/CentreforEighteenth-CenturyStudies/>) is one such community, drawing together staff with an interest in the long eighteenth century and developing student interest in the area.

In many ways, CECS is a particularly appropriate example of a community of practice, as the eighteenth century was famously a sociable period which witnessed the development of numerous clubs and societies with precisely the aim of propagating knowledge and promoting ideas. Informal spaces such as coffee shops and pleasure gardens which arose in the period helped foster such developments, enabling people, often from differing backgrounds, to mingle and exchange thoughts. Indeed, such conversations when properly conducted were understood to be educational or 'improving' and hence a key strategy

of childhood education in the home. This eighteenth-century sociable ethos is very much alive in our CECS at Queen's, as we meet both formally and informally: at committee meetings, over train or plane journeys headed for the same conference, at seminars or lectures delivered or organised by us, or simply as we pass each other on University Square or in the cafes around Queen's.

CECS was established as an interdisciplinary initiative within the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in 2002 with Prof Simon Davies (French) as its first Director. It draws together expertise in the

eighteenth century from a variety of subject areas including English, History, Languages, Literatures, Geography, Performing Arts and Music. Over the years, events hosted by the Centre have included conferences, public lectures, research seminars, workshops and creative performances by students. Though primarily focussed on sharing the research interests of staff working in the period, the activities of the centre have involved both postgraduate and undergraduate students and have energised our teaching practices in a variety of ways. Indeed, within a community of practice such as CECS, the boundaries between research and teaching are often blurred.

By sharing our subject-area expertise in eighteenth-century studies we have been able to develop a range of practices impacting on teaching and learning. For example, an interdisciplinary MA module on 'Culture and National Identity' developed and convened by Dr Sarah McCleave (Music) was co-taught by staff from

across the Faculty. Undergraduate and MA projects involving the special collections of the library and the use of specialist eighteenth-century databases have emerged from such collaborations too, involving students taking advice from staff in different subject areas. One important database which we share is the Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO for short), a major database of over 180,000 volumes including nearly all published material in English. This is indispensable for research and offers wonderful opportunities to engage students at all levels with digitized versions of eighteenth-century texts. Through digital technology, students are able to see for themselves how books were often revised and transformed through successive editions, influencing other books and generating imitations, parodies, satirical attacks and illustrations. Rather than studying texts in isolation, students arrive at a far more sophisticated idea of how historical, musical and literary texts are part of a wide-spread and evolving culture over the period. The CECS prize for the best essay at Levels 2 or 3 in the area of eighteenth-century studies from across the Faculty has stimulated undergraduate interest in the area, and several of our prize-winning students have gone on to do excellent Masters' level and Doctoral work on the eighteenth century.

At CECS, we are happy to welcome anyone with an interest - at any level - to attend our events. Our outreach programmes such as the public lecture series on Urban Culture attracting distinguished speakers from across the UK and Ireland have drawn in wider audiences and included students taking modules such as 'Sounds of the City' at Level 1 in English. The 'Irish Song Project' funded by the AHRC and led by staff from CECS involved a long-durée study of musical traditions in Ireland. This generated doctoral and postdoctoral work at Queen's and brought together professional and academic students and practitioners in fruitful collaborations. Its website (<http://irishsongproject.qub.ac.uk/>)



A detail from Johan Zoffany's 'Tribuna of the Uffizi' (1772-1778) showing art connoisseurs in discussion – a 'community of practice' from the eighteenth century

<http://irishsongproject.qub.ac.uk/>) remains a permanent resource for students and academic researchers alike. CECS is a member of the Consortium of Humanities Centres and Institutes (CHCI), the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (BSECS) and the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ISECS) and is linked to numerous other societies in the UK and Ireland, as well as the U.S., Europe and South Asia, connecting staff and students to resources, people and events globally. Networks with Europe, U.S. and India have been particularly fruitful to us, attracting postgraduate students and leading to research grants and collaborative and interdisciplinary publications. Within QUB, CECS is

connected with other communities of practice such as the Institute for Irish Studies which organizes a Summer School each year. CECS staff have taught summer school students from all over the world about our eighteenth-century heritage in Ireland, leading them to local eighteenth-century resources such as the Linen Hall Library and the Robinson Library at Armagh. To sum up, CECS is an excellent example of a holistic 'community of practice' informing our teaching and research in a thoroughly enjoyable and sociable way. If you are interested in our events and would like to be on our mailing list, please feel free to write to me (d.s.roberts@qub.ac.uk).

Inclusion in Music Through Innovations in Technology

By Alex Lucas and Dr Franziska Schroeder, School of Arts, English and Languages

The Performance Without Barriers (PwB) research group at Queen's University Belfast creates new bonds with inclusive community music organisations on the continent.

Since the mid-1980s, local community music organisation, the Drake Music Project Northern Ireland (DMNI), has been using music technology as a means of enabling individuals with disabilities to independently compose and perform music. In those initial years, the charity used a combination of mainstream music technology and commercial assistive technologies to achieve their goals. However, through their research partnership with Queen's University and PwB, the charity has been able to explore the use of custom-built devices for their musicians.

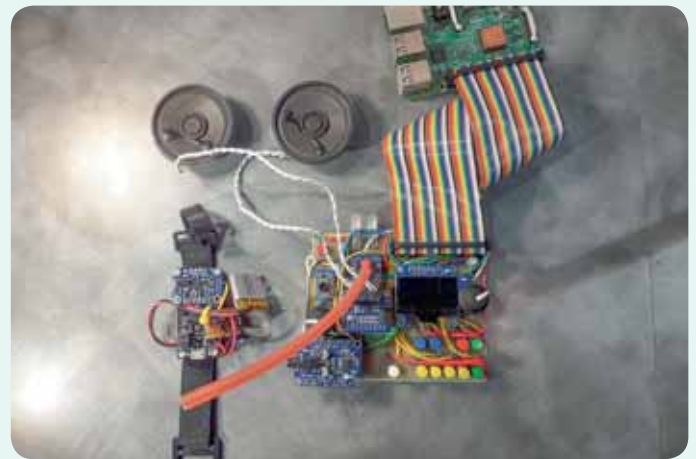
The physical design constraints of traditional musical instruments can often lead to disabled musicians being excluded from playing, and therefore from learning and acquiring skill on such instruments. In contrast, digital technology has inherent flexibility; the interface for playing and controlling digital musical instruments is not dictated by acoustic requirements and can, therefore, be tailored to the needs of each individual musician.

Within the disabled community, the lived experience of individuals with disabilities can vary considerably. While some 'off-the-shelf' technologies can go a long way in meeting the unique access requirements of an individual, often the most effective and affordable solutions are reached through a DIY approach.

Throughout several workshops, DMNI Access Music Tutors become familiar with workshop participants; they can gain a keen understanding of the problems some disabled musicians can face in operating music technology and, most importantly, begin to see solutions to such issues. Even cheap, low-tech materials, such as masking-tape, have the potential to enable access when combined with some creative thinking.

The maker movement, (i.e. hobbyists, designing and building technological gadgets and devices) has gained momentum over recent years; this "democratisation of technology" has significant implications for community organisations working within the field of inclusive music. Through the wealth of open-source technical information shared by online maker communities, it's now viable for those without formal training in electronic engineering to fabricate assistive music technologies, utilising a variety of low-cost sensors and actuators. Although not yet fully realised, the maker movement has enormous potential to significantly reduce the cost of assistive technologies to the end user.

PwB has embraced this cultural and economic shift by actively researching ways in which maker technologies can be utilised by inclusive community music organisations. Importantly, PwB



is particularly interested in how the use of DIY assistive music technologies can be supported in the long term. Organisations involved in the manufacture of commercial technologies handle the maintenance of their products through dedicated support and engineering teams. Such resources are not available to individual makers. PwB is considering ways in which local communities of technologists, such as those at Belfast-based makerspace, Farset Labs, can provide support.

Several European inclusive community music organisations are on a similar trajectory to PwB; in realising the value of maker technologies in providing access to music for disabled musicians, many are developing novel and enabling devices.

Recently, organisations from six European countries were represented at the 'Soundform: Instruments for All' conference in Hamburg in March 2019. In addition to sharing details of their research, PwB played a pivotal role here by facilitating discussion between makers, musicians, policy makers and concert programmers from around the globe.

It's apparent that while there's an abundant supply of online technical information available to digital musical instrument designers, what's somewhat lacking is practical information on how digital technologies can be used to provide access to music. The European community of inclusive music organisations that connected during the Soundform conference made a positive step forward in overcoming this obstacle.

The overall value of assistive music technologies is ultimately determined by how they are used in context, and for devices to be used effectively, they need to be developed collaboratively between inclusive music tutors, technologists and, most importantly, the musicians facing the access barrier in question. For the practice of using DIY assistive music technology as an enabling force to continue to grow, it's of paramount importance that those within the inclusive music community continue to share ideas, innovations and aspirations for the future.

Staff Choir; hitting all the right notes

By Amanda Kirkpatrick, Music, Events and Performance Officer, School of Arts, English and Languages

The Queen's University Staff Choir is a community of practice that has encouraged me to build networks within the University and has aided my wellbeing as a new staff member.

Staff Choir meets every Friday in the Harty Room located in the main site Music Building from 1.10pm-2pm. Staff from all departments gather once a week to sing a mix of contemporary and classic songs arranged and directed by Una McCann. Una draws on her years of experience playing in bands such as Malojian and Wookalily and has spent the last few years working with choirs across Northern Ireland. She is also a song-writer and performer with guitarist Ciara Butcher who provides support for acts such as Mary Coughlan, Cara Dillon, Grainne Duffy and Juliet Turner.

The weekly rehearsals encourage staff of all singing levels and backgrounds to come together, sing and have fun. They begin with physical and vocal warm ups of stretches and techniques to loosen the body and vocal chords and move onto short sessions of practice of the chosen piece in 3 or 4 part harmonies. The Staff Choir has had many opportunities to perform both internally and externally, with the most recent performance being a main feature of

the St Patricks Day Carnival in Belfast City Centre. Their repertoire is varied with songs from the 60s to present day being performed.

Joining a large organisation can be daunting and can prove difficult to get to know colleagues, especially across departments. Although I am based in a busy office, with lots of people coming and going, I found it difficult to get to know people on a more social level. I had come from being self-employed and running my own events company to working in a University with procedures, policies and an extensive training schedule, which although extremely helpful, I did find a little overwhelming. Staff Choir has been a fantastic way to meet new people across campus, learn new skills and to round off the week feeling great.

I was first introduced to Staff Choir through Paddy Brannigan (IT Training & Assessment Manager, QUB) who, after a quick chat, had convinced me to join. Paddy is what I would refer to as the

choir anchor; he is constantly promoting it and would be the one to introduce new members to the rest of the choir, at rehearsal. Paddy also records the audio of all our rehearsals which he later shares on the choir's private What's App group, which serves as a great learning tool outside of rehearsal time. The What's App group also gives us a place to share ideas and information and get to know each other better. I look forward to Friday afternoons and catching up with everyone and would encourage other staff to come along and try it out.

Singing is known to release endorphins, help with stress and improve mental alertness. The social benefits can widen your circle of friends, encourage confidence, broaden communications & listening skills and also increase your ability to appreciate other singers. The act of communal practice in a relaxed learning environment could help to maintain a healthy work/life balance which may be beneficial for all.

For more information on QUB Staff Choir, please contact wellbeing@qub.ac.uk



A Dementia Friendly Partnership

By Dr Gary Mitchell & Susan Carlisle, Lecturers (Education), School of Nursing & Midwifery

There are approximately 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK and these numbers are set to rise to over 1 million in the next five years (Alzheimer's Society, 2019a). Dementia is a medical term that is used to describe a number of progressive cognitive diseases which includes Alzheimer's Disease, Vascular Dementia, Dementia with Lewy Bodies and Frontotemporal Dementia (Mitchell & Agnelli, 2015).

In the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia (Department Of Health, 2015) outlined the vision to create a society, by 2020, where every person living with dementia, and their care partners, receive high quality, compassionate care from diagnosis through to end of life care. The challenge (Department of Health, 2015), which echoes Northern Ireland's own dementia strategy (DHSSPS, 2011) highlighted the need for a "society where kindness, care and dignity take precedence over structures or systems" (Department Of Health, 2015) [pg.6].



The 'Dementia Friends' Programme at the School of Nursing & Midwifery

There are a plethora of initiatives that seek to challenge the way that dementia is understood by people. Removing stigma is a priority because dementia is not well understood. People living with dementia, or their care partners, may not ask for help because of the stigma attached to the dementia diseases. They may also incorrectly perceive the symptoms of dementia to be that of normal ageing which is also incorrect.

In 2015, colleagues from the School of Nursing & Midwifery recognised the importance of challenging the public perception of dementia. This led to a partnership between the School and the Alzheimer's Society whereby

undergraduate nursing students would be facilitated to participate in a two-hour 'dementia friends' workshop as part of their course.

Becoming a 'dementia friend' means the person learns about what it's like to live with dementia. The workshop empowers participants to turn this understanding into action (Alzheimer's Society, 2019b). People who attend the 'dementia friend' workshop do not have to be from a medical background or have any experience of dementia. The two-hour workshop considers; what it might be like to live with dementia, how to effectively communicate with people living with dementia, how the environment can positively or negatively impact the symptoms of dementia, how to support people to overcome distressing symptoms and the importance of using non-stigmatising language. The workshop, co-designed by people living with dementia, uses the methods of face-to-face teaching, facilitation of small group exercises,

individual reflection and media clips. The dementia friend workshop is most compatible with tutorial-style teaching and is facilitated by Alzheimer Society Community Champions, free of charge. Each person who completes the workshop receives a 'dementia friend' pin-badge and a certificate.

Impact

This intervention has culminated in 2,003 students becoming 'dementia friends' at the School of Nursing and Midwifery. The impact has been significant with the vast majority of students stating that their perceived knowledge in dementia care and their perceived confidence in communicating with people living with dementia have significantly increased post-workshop. An evaluation of the programme was published in *Dementia: International Journal of Social Research and Practice* in 2017 (Mitchell et al. 2017). The collaborative work between the School and the Alzheimer's Society was also shortlisted at the 2016 Student Nursing Times Awards in the category of 'Partnership of the Year'. The School of Nursing and Midwifery was also runner-up in the Northern Ireland Dementia Friendly Awards in 2017 and 2018. Finally, the School was a finalist



in the 2018 QUB Staff Excellence Awards in the category of 'Community Engagement'.

The Journey Ahead

The School of Nursing & Midwifery continues to support almost 500 students to become 'dementia friends' each year. The School has also recently received funding, from the Alzheimer's Society, to evaluate the longer-term impact of the programme on students through qualitative research methods.

Earlier this year the programme was also piloted in the School of Medicine. As a result of the positive feedback received from students, this workshop will be offered to more than 200 fourth-year medical students in 2019/2020.

In addition, a 'dementia friends' workshop was held at the Graduate School in late 2018 for postgraduate students from across the wider University. Nineteen postgraduates favourably evaluated the workshop and plans are in place to offer postgraduates the opportunity to attend future workshops each semester at the Graduate School.

Getting Involved

If you are interested in providing 'dementia friends' awareness training, for undergraduate or postgraduate students at your School, please feel free to contact us for a chat about this.

Our contact details are: Dr Gary Mitchell – Gary.Mitchell@qub.ac.uk and Susan Carlisle – S.Carlisle@qub.ac.uk

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Creating Communities of Practice

By Gareth Tribello, Andrew Brown and Myrta Gruening, School of Maths and Physics

Don't believe the hype: innovation in teaching is hard. Particularly so if you are teaching a subject like mathematics where both lecturers and students can be quite conservative. Furthermore, publications such as this, special groups for innovative teaching and the annual QUB teaching and learning conference are not always helpful.

When listening to talks or when reading articles it is easy to feel that everyone else is managing to make radical changes in their teaching and to doubt whether the relatively small changes that you have struggled to make were really innovative at all. Obviously, that is not to say that such events and publications do not serve a purpose. We absolutely should celebrate and publicise best practices. At the same time, however, it is important to have forums in which staff can simply exchange ideas. This article is about how we created such a group within the School of Mathematics and Physics. We offer a simple prescription that other staff can use to create their own group and we try to give a sense of why we believe that such groups are essential.

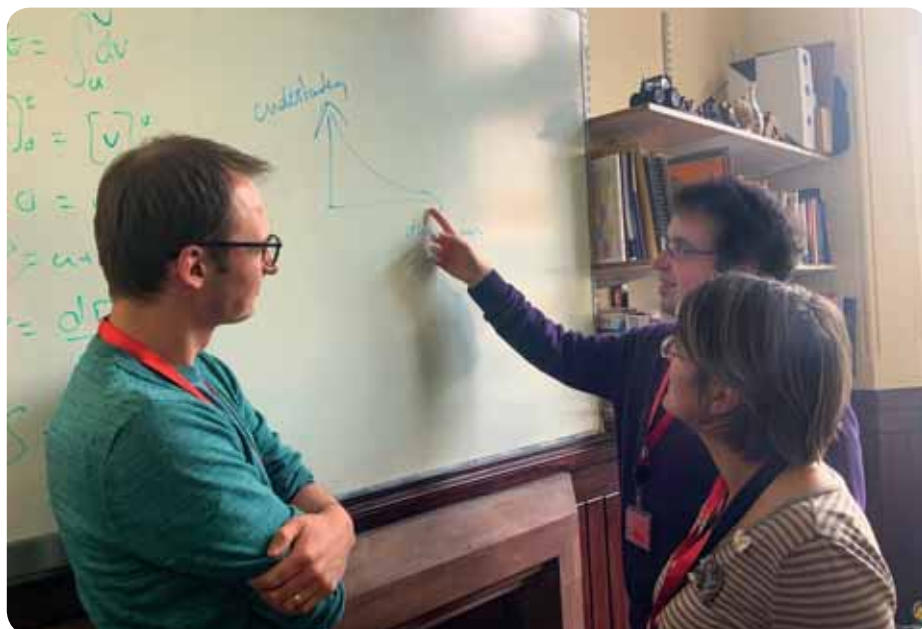
In June 2017, the three of us created a community of practice within the School of Mathematics and Physics. We did so by agreeing to meet for an hour at 4 pm each Tuesday to talk about teaching. That really was it. The initial idea was that each week one of us would bring something they were interested in trying— a new markscheme, or a different type of exam question— or something that the students had produced for an assignment (usually something that was genuinely baffling). We would then spend the hour discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the idea or trying to determine why the students had so fundamentally misinterpreted the task they had been given. In the almost two years that we have been running this group we have had sessions where we discuss how the assessment for skills such as computer programming could be better designed, sessions about how the process of module review could be improved and countless other discussions. For each of us the opportunity to meet and discuss

teaching each week in this informal setting has been transformational.

To give a sense of why, consider that in our School most modules are taught by a single lecturer. The advantage of this arrangement is that each lecturer has total control of their module. The disadvantage, however, is that it is easy to become isolated from what your colleagues are doing. You can thus find yourself working hard to produce teaching resources, while at the same time feeling that nothing you are doing is really working. Furthermore, because all these changes are being made in isolation, it is easy to pin the blame for their failure on a collective lack of imagination with regards to teaching in the rest of the department or, worse, a sense that you are an imposter. We would argue that communities of practice can counteract these feelings of isolation and give lecturers greater confidence in what they are doing in

a way that the broader teaching and examination boards simply cannot.

We are told that imposter syndrome is rampant throughout academia and that countless academics wake up every morning convinced that they are faking it. Given that the vastness of the published literature makes it impossible to have knowledge of everything that has been written about any topic and the number of different strands there are to any academic job, however, surely we are all engaged in fakery to some degree. In other words, perhaps this belief that we are imposters is not so irrational. In universities, however, we are lucky enough to spend each day working with remarkable people who have a broad range of expertise. It has been our experience that by making even a little bit of space in our week to consult with just a few other such experts— even those whose skills and experiences are close to our own— we have each grown in confidence, and perhaps even improved the quality of the teaching that we offer. We might not give a highly-polished keynote talk at a teaching conference any time soon, but at least we have been able to teach each other a thing or two.



The Technician Commitment and Developing a Technician Community of Practice in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences

Dr Nuala Tipping, Technician, Centre for Biomedical Sciences Education and Gillian Riddell, Technician, School of Biological Sciences and Co-Chair of the University Technician Commitment Steering Group



FMHLS Technician Event June 2018

Queen's University signed up to the Technician Commitment as one of the founding signatories in May 2017. Since then, with the support of the University, the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences (FMHLS) technical staff have formed a self-driven technician community.

The Technician Commitment is a national initiative supported by stakeholders including the Science Council, Advance HE and the Gatsby Foundation and is designed to promote four key themes of Visibility, Recognition, Career Development and Sustainability. The Technician Commitment highlights technical expertise which exists in the Higher Education (HE) sector. This initiative addresses the need to support the technical community within HE institutions and to develop and safeguard our future technician community and technical skills. Additionally, signatories self-assess and evaluate the impact of action plans to help review progress relating to the Technician Commitment key themes and are regularly audited by the Science Council. Currently there are over 75 institutional signatories pledging to support technical staff and address issues identified within the Technician Commitment.

A University-wide Technician Community

Queen's recently established a Technician Commitment Steering Group (Institutional Lead, PVC Professor Mark Price; Technical Lead, Gillian Riddell; University Technicians, Senior Academics, People & Culture and Unite representation) to implement the Technician Commitment within our institution. In January 2019, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Ian Greer,

attended the first QUB University Technician Event pledging his support to back the Technician Commitment. The University currently employs approximately 250 technical staff members, each providing a vital role in the delivery of teaching and research at our Russell Group University.

Starting a Technician Community of Practice in FMHLS

140 technical staff are presently employed in the FMHLS undertaking a range of technical roles in education, research and Core Facility and Technology Units. Technical staff are often in a student-facing environment and contribute in many ways to student learning support, e.g. giving advice in the purchase of chemicals and consumables for research and education, providing technical knowledge and demonstration in experimental protocols and IT, problem-solving around technical issues, training in the use of scientific equipment, facilitating and teaching in laboratory practical classes and giving instruction in Health and Safety.

In March 2018, a group of technical staff came together, through self-selecting membership, to form the first FMHLS Technician Committee, chaired by Professor Alan Stitt. Since then, the Committee has worked to promote the values of the Technician Commitment initiative for all FMHLS technicians, including launching a dedicated FMHLS Technician Commitment website which can be found at <http://www.qub.ac.uk/about/Leadership-and-structure/Faculties-and-Schools/Medicine-Health-and-Life-Sciences/TechnicianCommitment/>.



FMHLS Professional Registration Workshop

The Committee launched this Technician Commitment Faculty-wide initiative with a Technician Event in June 2018 that included talks from the Science Council, Institute of Science and Technology, HEaTED and the University of Newcastle. Reaction from this gathering of Faculty technicians, getting together for the first time, was overwhelmingly positive. Feedback from event attendees included a need for more technician networking opportunities and further information on the core pillars of the Technician Commitment with requests for support and access to achieve these.

Professional Registration for Technicians

Professional Registration supports professional recognition, development and proven competencies. There has already been success with a number of FMHLS technical staff achieving Professional Registration status. FMHLS technicians have supported each other to work toward attaining Professional Registration such as becoming a Registered Science Technician (RSciTech), Registered Scientist (RSci), Chartered Scientist (CSci), or becoming a STEM Ambassador and, most recently, applying for an Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). We recognise we are all at different stages of our careers and as such have adapted to form various groups and workshops, from meeting in person at lunch-times to forming social media platform forums, in order to help each other attain these achievements regardless of career stage.

Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy for Technicians

Laboratory technicians contribute to student learning in a variety of ways including translating the scientific theory given to students in lectures into practice at the laboratory bench. However, it is possible that technical staff facilitating the laboratory learning environment may be unaware of educational philosophies or teaching methodologies, even though they are most likely putting elements of these into practice by virtue of their own expertise and laboratory teaching skills.

Recent discussions between FMHLS technical staff and Karen Fraser (Centre of Educational Development [CED] Educational Developer) regarding recognition of technician teaching practice led to a well attended AFHEA Information Session held in March 2019 for FMHLS technical staff interested in attaining this Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation. CED already has an accredited AFHEA course aimed at Post-Doctoral staff. Technicians worked together with Karen at the session and tailored the existing AFHEA course to suit the teaching needs of technical staff and the course will pilot this summer.

Technician Commitment Ahead

This is an interesting time for all technicians across the University as technical staff have increased opportunities to engage and share best practice with their peers and continue to develop a self-improving technician community with support from technical colleagues and the University. We look forward to increasing technician networking along with further University engagement and support for learning and development, professional accreditation, improving technician contribution visibility and addressing recognition within our research and teaching.

The Value of Communities of Practice for Building Innovation and Citizenship in Higher Education Curricula

By Dr Emma McKenna and Ms Eileen Martin, Science Shop, Queen's University Belfast



Over the past 25 years, QUB Science Shop has been working as part of a community of practice across Europe and beyond to develop community engagement in research. Over time, this developed into the Living Knowledge Network (www.scienceshops.org) which brings together an international community of people involved in Science Shops and community based research.

In initial stages, this community of practice focused on developing the rationale for public engagement with research both within individual institutions and at system level. Members of the community of practice were successful in applying for European Commission funding to undertake elements of this work, thereby developing capacity for communities to engage with academic research across Europe, an idea which at the time was radical, although, of course, has since entered mainstream research practice. This funding enabled international partners to explore how Science Shops could operate in different regional and institutional settings and led to the first international Living Conference held in Leuven in 2001, attended by delegates from 19 different countries over 4 continents. The conference laid the foundations of the European Science Shop network, 'Living Knowledge', which continues to connect people interested in opening up the knowledge resources of universities to citizen groups working towards achieving social or environmental improvement. This work confirmed a role for Science Shops in facilitating research in direct response to the expressed needs of community organisations working in partnership with researchers and academic institutions. Such research continues to reflect the concerns of civil society today.



The EnRRICH Consortium who examined community engagement in academic curricula 2015-2018

Because Science Shops are just one of the players in the field of science and society interactions, the international community of practice moved on to discuss options for improving the interactions between different stakeholders including universities, NGOs and public bodies. The aim was to improve the exchange of information and knowledge among all involved

in community based research and provide a forum where information on community based research, carried out in both community and academic settings, was shared and developed. This work received further funding from the European Commission with Queen's Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Community and Communication at the time recognising that both engagement with



International members of the community of practice visiting Belfast in 2009



Dr Emma McKenna from QUB Science Shop and Jozefien De Marree, EnRRICH Co-ordinator, mentoring Nadja Gmelch and colleagues at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

the community and communications with society required a strategic approach at an organisational level.

This cooperative way of working enabled not only the sharing of good practice at international level, but also the identification of areas of shared concern across different countries, including issues relating to the local and global environment, health, unemployment, poverty, disability, and national and international development. One issue identified was a lack of resources in universities to address community research issues. This led to the Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Society (PERARES) project which was funded through the European Commission's 7th Research Framework programme and ran from 2010-2015. This project trialled a range of different ways of supporting research organisations, including universities, to engage with communities on research issues and

supported the establishment of ten new Science Shops throughout Europe, all mentored by experienced partners including staff from the QUB Science Shop. Three of the new Science Shops piloted cross-national research on domestic violence during pregnancy in cooperation with Civil Society Organisations in Belgium, Norway and the UK, and made recommendations for policymakers regarding research agendas on a national and European level. Other collaborative research carried out by Science Shops in Ireland and Hungary focussed on the needs of minority groups, such as the Roma, both in a local and a European context.

One small-scale exploration in this project focused on developing curricula to facilitate societal engagement. At this time, European education policy was also stressing the need for students to acquire advanced transversal skills and key competencies such as autonomy, critical thinking and a

capacity for problem solving, identifying that well designed curricula are crucial in this respect. In particular, activities based around real world problems offer opportunities to develop these skills. It was therefore seen as vital to support educators to design, build and deliver robust study programmes which allow for this type of engagement, not only to build transversal skills but also to encourage the development of citizenship amongst students and graduates.

Based on the PERARES experiences, and in response to this education policy agenda, within Living Knowledge a more focused community of practice emerged to examine how and where engagement could be embedded in academic curricula. Developing spaces for engagement within academic curricula can be challenging for both academic staff and for students themselves. Science Shops enable students to learn about community-

engaged research as part of their degree programme whilst meeting the real needs of community organisations. This approach differs from other models in that the focus is equally on student learning and on producing usable outcomes in response to community need.

Together with partners from Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Spain, the Science Shop in Queen's secured additional funding to trial and develop practices as part of the Enhancing Responsible Research and Innovation through Curricula in Higher Education (EnRRICH) project. This ran from 2015-2018 and within Queen's University was focused on developing a community of practice for embedding engagement in Masters programmes in the University. This community of practice has enabled The Science Shop to broaden its work across different disciplines and at different levels, thus exposing a wider range of students to the concepts behind engaged research, whilst providing communities with useful pieces of research. Opportunities for engagement have been built into curricula across a range of Masters programmes particularly in the Management School. Resources produced by the project include:

- The EnRRICH tool for educators including competences for students to develop as part of engaged research projects;
- Training resources for PhD students to develop their understanding of Community Based Participatory Research;
- Case studies for engagement through academic curricula from a range of disciplines and countries;
- A series of policy guides to help with embedding engaged research at a policy level;
- Micro-communities to share good practices at a local level;
- Methods of streamlining working practices.

This network has also enabled the sharing of good and innovative practices both from the community of practice into Queen's and from Queen's to the wider world, gaining recognition for the work we do. The UNESCO chair for Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education (and Advisory Board member of EnRRICH), Professor Budd Hall, recently visited Northern Ireland to share good practices with both staff and community partners at Queen's as part of the Public Engagement with Research Action Plan. In April, Dr Neil Galway, who runs the MSc Planning and Development in the School of Natural and Built Environment participated in a webinar along with Helen McGuinness, one of his students. This webinar was facilitated by Dr Catherine Bates of Technical University Dublin and her colleague David O'Connor, Head of Environment and Planning. This webinar offered an opportunity to promote good practices in both institutions and highlight the benefits to students and staff, as well as to community partners.

If higher education is to play its part in facing up to Europe's social and democratic challenges and addressing the Sustainable Development Goals, the strengthening of topic level communities of practice is vital for academics, communities and practitioners. Breaking down barriers between higher education and the rest of society can help students develop their social and civic competences, and research with, and for, communities can help students develop their wider practical experience and skills. Students also learn about the relevance of their academic knowledge to a range of societal issues. Higher Education institutions are developing new solutions to economic, social and environmental problems. Learning between different institutions is critical. One way to innovate is to strengthen the relationship between institutions, and between teaching and research, including promoting research-based teaching, interdisciplinary education and research, and bringing practical

innovation into the classroom. Further development and testing of teaching methods for creativity and innovation should be supported and this calls for increased working as a community of practice.

Whilst in some ways the UK and Queen's University Belfast is at the forefront of the movement in terms of having one of the longest established Science Shops outside the Netherlands, there are still opportunities to broaden reach across disciplines and to newer academic staff. Alongside four existing partners in Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, Spain, QUB Science Shop has recently been involved in an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership proposal to build a community of practice in Queen's amongst academics new to Science Shop practices, offering them peer support both within and outside the University. If you would like to register your interest in this project (pending evaluation) or in finding out more about The Science Shop or the Living Knowledge Network see our website: www.qub.ac.uk/scishop or contact Emma McKenna or Eileen Martin for more information science.shop@qub.ac.uk.

Citizen Trainers Engage with Nursing and Midwifery Students



By Johanna McMullan, Nursing and Midwifery



September 2018 students at the Injured Exhibition Display in the MBC after their WAVE tutorials.

'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland resulted in the immediate death of some 3,800 people with estimates in excess of 40,000 having suffered severe injury. In addition, an indeterminate number of the citizenry suffered significant and ongoing psychological and subclinical symptoms as a consequence of the extremes of civil unrest.

The legacy of 'The Troubles' is further reflected in disproportionately high levels of antisocial behaviour, family dysfunction, drug and alcohol dependency within the province (Wave 2014). WAVE, as an organisation, was formed in the early 1990s and is a cross-community voluntary organisation offering care and support to anyone bereaved, or suffering trauma or injury as a result of the violent civil conflict. Following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the 'conflict' related incidents have significantly diminished.

As most of the student nurses were born after this time, they are less likely to understand what impact 'the Troubles' had on society in Northern Ireland.

A significant number of patients and clients that current nursing students will be attending to in the course of their nursing and midwifery training or subsequent to qualification, may present with primary or secondary conditions associated with their experiences of the conflict. Many of the students will be drawn from social and geographical areas previously impacted by 'The Troubles'. Therefore, a joint educative initiative between the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's and WAVE was established to better inform nursing and midwifery students of the skills, knowledge and context required in working with those who have experienced trauma directly or indirectly as a result of the Northern Ireland conflict. As co-educators, WAVE delivered a core lecture (augmented by online material), which was then followed by tutorials with nursing and midwifery students. The tutorials



Susan Carlisle and Johanna McMullan from the School of Nursing and Midwifery with Wave's patron, Jimmy Nesbitt.



Nursing students viewing the WAVE portrait exhibition.



A number of the citizen trainers with Grainne McKenna, Wave's Education Officer



were substantially led by those who had been involved with, and experienced, loss and trauma as a result of the conflict (Health Service users and carers) called Citizen Trainers and provided an opportunity to share their experience and their recollection of personal interactions with medical and nursing professionals. This year 'The Injured Exhibition' was also displayed in the MBC to coincide with the delivery of the WAVE tutorials to evoke discussion and raise awareness for all.

This approach is relatively unique in that it involves many of those directly involved and injured by "The Troubles" as "citizen trainers" and clearly reflects the School's policy of progressively engaging with users and carers of health services as co-educators to students. The potential benefits of such a co-educative approach is reflected in other studies (Rhodes, 2012; The Health Foundation McKay et al, 2009).

Delivery of this teaching by WAVE forms part of the final phase of first year teaching in the Health and Wellbeing module. This module addresses the context of health; the anatomy and physiology of the body and human health (Life Sciences) but also the psychological, social, health education and public health dimensions of nursing and midwifery and the context of care.

A paper which evaluated the WAVE teaching initiative from the students' perspective found the students rated the teaching extremely highly (McMullan et al, 2016). Students reporting that the sessions made a significant impact providing them with necessary skills to communicate effectively with survivors of the conflict and that they were now better furnished with the information as to how to signpost anyone in their care that they might encounter who is struggling with issues associated with the conflict. A second qualitative study found that Citizen Trainers overall found the initiative helped them, however it was with significant personal cost both physically and emotionally.

If nurses and midwives are to adequately respond to the existing and future needs of victims/survivors of the conflict in Northern Ireland, it is essential that they gain cultural competence by addressing issues of sectarianism within their training context (Coulter et al. 2012). From the volunteer's point of view, there is clearly a benefit in having nursing professionals with a knowledge and understanding of the effect of the conflict on health in a broad context of different communities in Northern Ireland. Benefits are also evident in terms of appreciating the impact on the health of individuals who are victims and survivors of the violence of this past. However, when embarking on such an initiative with users, carers, citizen trainers etc. one must be mindful that although it would seem the process does have benefits for those involved, there is a significant cost in terms of stress at the time and an emotional cost to them personally. All of those involved must be respectful, ensure there are robust preparations and anticipate for potential negative emotions and ensure they are addressed adequately.

Canvas: Collaboration, Contact, Community

By Liza Zamboglou, Canvas Support Team, Centre for Educational Development

Canvas is Queen's new, University-wide Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It has the potential to enhance academic teaching, student learning and assessment practices across the University.

After Roadshows in February 2018 and two phases of initial training and rollout to early adopters during this academic year, Canvas will be officially adopted by all Schools in AY 2019/20, replacing the current VLE provided through Queen's Online (QOL).

Key indicators suggest that core messages have been penetrating across key audiences, with 61% of academic and professional support staff having undertaken Canvas VLE training to date. Uptake of School based training has been very good and feedback received from School sessions has been very encouraging. Anecdotal, including feedback during training sessions and willingness among staff and students to take part in testimonial videos, also indicates that early adopters are engaged with the change and are embracing the Canvas VLE platform.

As the current academic year draws to a close, we reflect back on the adoption of Canvas to date where we have witnessed communities of practice beginning to emerge. Early adopters are acting as advocates of Canvas within their respective staff or student communities. They have demonstrated a keen willingness to take part in various activities that enable them to share initial experiences of setting up and using Canvas VLE for the first time.

Events such as 'Canvas, Coffee & Conversations' offered staff a chance to hear what early adopters had to say about their Canvas experiences and to take a glimpse at how they were developing their modules in Canvas. Short demonstrations on useful features and open floor discussions also served to outline the educational potential and many opportunities that the new VLE offers.

The 'Canvas, Coffee & Conversations' events were the first chance that many early adopters had to hear from others on how their Canvas course

developments were progressing. Early adopters were eager to be involved, spoke about their hopes for using Canvas to create student-focused learning experiences and discussed the various challenges that come with designing a module on Canvas when teaching as part of a large team. It is evident to see that people are drawing from the experiences of others and trying out new approaches which they may not have previously considered for presentation and delivery of their own modules in Canvas.

In addition to these contact events, a number of early adopters have also created blog posts to share online their experiences of using Canvas VLE with their students during AY2018/19 to support a blended learning approach. Each blog post outlines favourite Canvas features, advice for new staff getting started with Canvas and a number of short videos featuring 'Three Things' in Canvas that have worked particularly well for their students. These articles speak directly to colleagues about the opportunities for saving time and creating efficiencies and show how to

leverage Canvas to enhance and support instructional practices.

With the recent introduction of Virtual classes, staff have also been using this opportunity to post and answer questions in the online chat facility during the live sessions. They have come prepared to ask questions, have engaged in practice activities and discussed together as they focus on developing skills required to build their module in Canvas.

In summary, Canvas has been an enabler for communities of practice to naturally emerge. People from across the entire university are eager to connect and learn from one another and to share knowledge acquired from trialling various educational tools provided by Canvas. This is a great opportunity for people to regularly come together, both synchronously and asynchronously. This growing community will most definitely flourish as Canvas VLE is adopted across the University in AY 2019/20.

For more details about Canvas, the training and support available for staff and students, and various blog posts from early adopters, visit the Canvas@Queen's blog:

<https://go.qub.ac.uk/CanvasLatest>

