Experience and Practice within College based Higher Education

Teaching and Learning Conference

Friday 4th July, University Centre at Blackburn College
Welcome to our annual Teaching, Learning & Assessment Conference.

This is a conference put on for the second year running. I am delighted to welcome external delegates to the conference and an international presenter. This is to share not only good practice taking place at University Centre at Blackburn College, but also from within the Higher Education sector.

This year’s conference has a particular focus on College Based Higher Education and celebrating the achievements of colleges in this sector. We are fortunate to be joined by colleagues from local colleges to share the work that they are undertaking in College Based HE, alongside contributions from lecturers and students across the Centre.

We’re delighted to welcome Alicia Nordstrom, Director of CETL at Misericordia University, Pennsylvania to Blackburn as our keynote speaker. She is talking about critical thinking skills in HE. We have been working on a joint project with Misericoria University during 2013-14.

We have had a focus on ‘students as scholars’ this year and some specific student contributions in our events during the year. I am pleased today that students in the School of Science and Technology will be showcasing their work and I hope you will take the opportunity to visit their displays.

Every year our students and staff at University Centre at Blackburn College do some amazing things. They break new ground with their research, find innovative ways of getting our students to engage in the curriculum and scholarship and present their work to peers. I hope you enjoy this opportunity to share our celebrations of College Based HE.

Dr Janet Thompson
Dean of Higher Education
Order of Conference

Time

Morning
09:00  Registration and Refreshments
09:30  Conference Introduction. Dr. Thomas Moore, Principal and Chief Executive, Blackburn College.
09:45 – 10:30 Remember the Data: Teaching Critical Thinking through Research-Based Assignments. Dr. Alicia Nordstrom, Director of CETL at Misericordia University, Pennsylvania
10:30 – 11:00 Establishing a Culture of Research and Scholarly Activity in College-based HE. Dr. David Elphinstone, Director of Research at Myerscough College
11:00 – 11:30 How to get LinkedIn with Employability in College Based Higher Education, Paul Styles, ILT Advanced Practitioner at St Helen’s College
11:30 – 12:00 Out of the Fog and into the Light - The Emerging Landscape of Higher Education in the UK Further Education Sector. Martin McAreavey, Lecturer and Programme Leader, Blackburn College
12:00 – 12:30 Question Panel with morning presenters
12:30 – 13:30 Lunch

Teaching and Learning Conference - Experience and Practice within College Based Higher Education

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<td>14:30 - 15:00</td>
<td>Dr. Adrian Sackman</td>
<td>A longitudinal study that explores the landscape of College Based HE in the wake of the dBIS paper ‘Students at the Heart of the System’ (2011).</td>
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**Dr. Alicia Nordstrom**  
Director of CETL at Misericordia University

**Remember the Data: Teaching Critical Thinking through Research-Based Assignments.**

Scientific thinking and integrative reasoning skills as an important component of undergraduate education for students in all majors.

Commonly referred to as "critical thinking", the process of acquiring and applying evidence to inform problem-solving, complex analysis, perspective taking, and decision making sits at the heart of most academic disciplines. However, these goals can be easily thwarted by competing social and cognitive forces including societally reinforced myths and misconceptions, thinking fallacies, and powerful testimonials that perpetuate pseudoscientific beliefs. This symposium describes empirical assignments designed to cultivate mind-sets of scientific, sceptical, and critical thinking. By using research as the foundational tool for learning and decision-making, these assignments provide students with a framework to examine claims and controversies and make data-based decisions about their beliefs. This presentation will describe the goals and methodology of each assignment using examples from an upper-level psychology course.

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**Dr. David Elphinstone**  
Director of Research at Myerscough College

**Establishing a culture of research and scholarly activity in College-based HE**

Myerscough College is a Further Education College delivering Land-based and Sports programmes at both Further and Higher Education levels. Approximately a third of student enrolments are at a Higher Education level.

We are proud of the success we have achieved in instilling an ethos of Research and Scholarly Activity to underpin the Higher Education. The presentation will be a reflection of our methodology to achieve this and an indication as to where we need to develop in the future.

The topics covered will include discussion as to why it was important to establish Research and Scholarly Activity at the College. Why most of our activity is in applied research related to the industries we support and to vocational links; whereas it is apparent that many other Colleges decided to take a pedagogic research direction. An outline as to how we achieved a research base, the structures we have put in place to establish this culture and the system of scholarly activity at Myerscough College will also be discussed.

As with all Scholarly Activity there are difficulties in measuring the success of research informed teaching and some of the issues will be highlighted, including looking at some of the literature in this area. The targets used to try and measure our research activity will also be discussed. We involve both staff and students in research at the College and the development of the research and scholarly activity culture and the methods by which we do this will be outlined.
Paul Styles
ILT Advance Practitioner at St Helens College

How to get LinkedIn with Employability in College Based Higher Education

How to make work based learning more real and how can I use technology to enhance and engage the process? That was the task at hand after taking over module leadership of the year 1 and year 2 of a foundation degree at St Helens College. Previously the module had been laborious with the students seeing the module as worthless with no benefit. After careful thought and planning the module was streamlined to be more efficient and effective by introducing a number of new initiatives such recorded mock interviews, externally assessed placement interviews and the introduction of applying to interviews by developing a LinkedIn profile. Hopefully I will be able to give you insights into the improvements it has made to our work based learning modules, the benefits the LinkedIn profiles have had for students and the future developments planned.

Martin McAreavey
Lecturer and Programme Leader at Blackburn College

Out of the Fog and into the Light - The Emerging Landscape of Higher Education in the UK Further Education Sector

This short presentation explores the origins, historical development, current and potential future state of Higher Education as delivered in the UK’s 400 plus FE Colleges. Now accounting for 1 in 12 students studying to degree level, College Based Higher Education (CBHE) is seen by many within the industry as a model for future delivery, due to the innovative approaches, proximity to students and high staff-student ratios. Others, particularly those in traditional Higher Education Institutions (HEI) see CBHE as a significant threat to their future. Whilst the influence of CBHE in meeting the current and known needs of a significant part of the student population is clear, this session looks at issues that may well shape the future choices available to students and teaching staff journeying through the emerging HE landscape.

Matthew Allton
Student Union President at Blackburn College

The challenge of student partnership

In this session I intend to introduce the idea of student partnership. With more and more organisations such as the NUS really pushing a cultural shift from ‘student voice’ to ‘student partnership’, this session will explore the reasons why, the challenges we face in order to make it a reality and the outcomes it will produce.
Abstracts:

Peter Shukie, David Meir & Joanna Neil
COOCs and the Rhizome: What is rhizomatic learning and does it have anything to offer us in college based Higher Education?

Peter Shukie

COOCs and the Rhizome: What is rhizomatic learning and does it have anything to offer us in college based Higher Education? This presentation explores the ways in which a Community Open Online Course (COOCS) has encouraged a change in who teaches, who learns and how what is taught is decided. Looking at the development of the COOCS project we consider if fundamental changes in the roles of teaching/learning are likely to follow the widespread use of technology. Amidst the utopian visions of a world better connected by web technologies, with networked communities opening across borders, cultures and disciplines, we ask you to join in the discussion on how this may impact on our practices, our views of teaching and learning and how we see the integration of community + technology + teaching/learning to create a different space. This presentation is open to staff and students from any discipline, any subject area and those not directly involved in teaching and learning in any formal sense. Can enthusiasm and passion, interest and involvement be able replacements for formal and accredited teacher skills?

David Meir

This presentation will analyse the process of developing a Sport for Development & Peace (SDP) project called Leadership & Empowerment through Sport (LETS). This discussion will focus on current policy and projects within (SDP), the implications that could have on the development of a new SDP project (LETS), the reasons why they are developed and their relative success or failure. The project is being developed within Cape Town and the overall aim is to develop a sustainable sports leadership training programme that promotes education, leadership, community engagement, inclusive practice, individual responsibility and empowerment through the development of sports leadership skills. Research will be undertaken in Cape Town with programme participants in relation to how they can play a positive role within their communities, and potentially beyond, enhance their opportunities for employment, increase their self-esteem and confidence and ensure a sustainable future for the project.

Joanna Neil

The practice-led trial project: 'Making the Invisible Visible', captured and documented a creative process using visual and audio technologies, to make what would have usually been hidden, visible. This presentation explores the project as a rhizomatic studio space, where the practice explored the use of virtual and real spaces to create in and share with others. The auto-ethnographic ‘self-surveillance’ process enabled observations to be made of a creative practice, gain insight into the creative process and consider the benefits of documenting, reflecting, and using recall techniques. The process of capturing and documenting not only informed the work but also formed the work itself with visual and audio narratives being incorporated. The approach encouraged the adoption of performance type and documentary based practices as reflective practice.

The ‘making the invisible visible’ project was as much about making visible the parts of the creative process which are usually hidden to me as the creator, as it was about making them visible and accessible to a wider audience. Sharing, and making the creative process more transparent, or open, gave insight into a creative practice. It attempted to capture the thinking behind the production and decision making go beyond producing a series of ‘how to’ instructional videos. The project was shared as an on-going process on a personal blog and Community Open Online Course website (COOC). Both spaces enabled the sharing of the project as an open resource as well as being spaces in addition to the physical studio, to make, reflect and learn in. How we share our practice and produce Open Educational Resources that benefit our own practice and others’, has a potential impact on how we teach and learn from the creative process. Blog Link to project: http://feltlikeit.wordpress.com/category/phd-research/
Vicky Newens and Emma Cookson
Engaging students in critical thinking, reading and writing

Engaging students in critical thinking, reading and writing is often at the forefront of practice. The expectations for doing so differ amongst different levels of study and strategies for engaging students with these academic skills differ amongst each individual. On the FD and BA Early Childhood Studies programmes we have been working to develop strategies for engaging students in critically thinking, reading and writing for a number of years. Some of these strategies were introduced following research conducted in 2011 by Victoria Newens on the use of ‘reading records’ by FD students. They have further developed to include regular ‘homework club’ sessions for FD students and ‘journal club’ sessions for BA students. We look to continually develop these strategies and reflect upon their impact by conducting research over the coming years.

The programme leaders for the FD and BA Victoria Newens, Emma Cookson, along with Blackburn college’s research coordinator; Cheryl McElroy invite you to attend our breakout session to engage in sharing our observations and strategies with others interested in developing critical thinking, reading and writing skills.

Alison Martland & Suraiya Baghdadi
Widening Participation

The Widening Participation (2006) remit is central to practice at the University Centre at Blackburn College. Considering the diverse needs of our students; their attitudes, aspirations and the barriers they face is paramount to successful engagement and outcomes. Moving away from solely traditional forms of assessment is a strategy worthy of contemplation. Achievement of programme outcomes can and should be demonstrated in multiple ways; we invite you to come and join the debate surrounding the use of inclusive assessments to reduce barriers for all students.
Dr. Alex Shukie/Geoff Disley
Adoption of mixed method approaches to the delivery of HE modules

The focus of this presentation is the mixed method approach developed and used to support a distance based cohort of students on the Professional Issues module. This represented a fundamental shift from previous delivery methods and helped to make the module content topical, relevant and specific to engineers. We will also look at the pedagogical changes adopted to adapt this approach to support delivery to full time on campus students.

Dr. Dawn Wood/Michael Seedall
Bridging the employability gap in challenging times

Eighteen months ago many students on the Computing Foundation Degree were struggling to find placements. This was due to a number of factors including, difficult economic times, and lack of confidence and motivation on the students’ part. In collaboration with the department’s technician an idea formed around how the needs of the department could be supported by our budding computer students and provide many of them with a safe and secure place to practice their skills for the first time on real world problems and tasks.

What was initially developed as an ad-hoc solution last year was taken forward into a more robust structure for this year. Internal projects and tasks were posted on a job site; students formally applied for these roles and were then interviewed by third year’s students. Next year the intention is to expand this model: to engage the first years earlier with this process in their reflective practitioner module with internal and external projects; and provide second years with project management and mentoring skills via overseeing the first year students.

This workshop is looking to present the ups and downs of this journey highlighting some of the key success and issues yet to be solved. Looking to the future the workshop will conclude with a presentation of this year’s model and process with a view to opening the discussion up to how we, as educators, engage in work-based learning with our sometimes less than confident students with limited resources and time.

Dr. Adrian Sackman
Student Engagement: A Longitudinal Study 2014 - 2017

All degree level providers, both in the university sector and College HE, are now conscious of the move to a more student-driven model of higher education in the UK, whether this be as ‘customers’ or as partners (see Gibbs 2013). The government signalled that students should be the key focus of the system as (see Students at Heart of the System (BIS, June 2012). Retention and achievement have therefore become key issues for strategic managers, middle managers and tutors who are increasingly judged by their performance. In this regard our study will investigate student perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning at UCBC by a longitudinal study of representative student cohorts as they move through their degree courses at the University Centre Blackburn College. This will produce a ‘moving picture’ of student experiences, possibly unprecedented in College HE, and will function as a tool for all stake holders in understanding how best to engage with students now and in the future. The work is based on a heuristic model of organisational analysis and employs quantitative and qualitative research methods, and incorporate students as active participants in the framing of survey questions. We hope to publish periodic reports of our work in appropriate peer reviewed journals and academic conferences. It will also function as an evidence based tool in policy development for strategic and middle managers at UCBC and beyond.
Sandra Nichol and Aziz Hafiz
Conference Co-hosting

A workshop that will examine the experience of conference organisation in collaboration with other academic institutions.

Dr. Valerie Todd & Audrey Spencer
Show them what you can do: Increase student recruitment, retention and progression through meaningful engagement with the local community.

The session will demonstrate how a final year on-site academic student conference can showcase student work to local communities and employers, to increase community engagement and develop collaborative relationships with local organisations. Blackburn is the 17th most deprived area in England, and most students are local and will be seeking employment locally. Employers, voluntary sector organisations and local community leaders are invited to attend a 1 day conference, where EVERY final year student on the psychology programme will present their research, either orally or by poster presentation. There is a prize awarded to best presentation, and this is judged by an external representative panel. The conference is filmed and disseminated on the VLE, providing future students with examples of good practice. The event is run as a traditional academic conference and there are opportunities for the students to chat informally with the delegates, in addition to showcase their work. As a result of this, a number of local employers are now engaged with the programme and have become stakeholders in forthcoming conferences, and some dissertation projects have been commissioned to meet the specific needs of other local organisations, widening the educational contexts and creating a win-win situation for both the institution and the employer. Furthermore, the quality of dissertations has improved significantly because students can see an end goal beyond that of an assessed mark, and student progression has also improved significantly. A number of students have gone on to present their work at National academic conferences. It has also led to increased student recruitment from the local community, and an increase in student applications from those that exceed the entry requirements for the programme.