Student-led Teaching Fellowships

inside

The Student-led Teaching Fellowship for Promoting Confidence in Learning
Best personal tutor, always giving advice, helpful and approachable...
Page 5

The Student-led Teaching Fellowship for the Best Preparation for the Future
He is very approachable and promotes confidence by being positive and reassuring...
Page 11

Recognising Excellence in Teaching...
Foreword

We are delighted to be able to present the outcomes of another productive year of partnership between the Cardiff Metropolitan University Students’ Union and the Learning and Teaching Development Unit.

In this booklet we again celebrate the achievements of all Cardiff Metropolitan University Teaching Fellows who have been recognised by their students for the quality of their teaching and their commitment to the student experience.

The partnership between learning developers and the Students’ Union allows the student voice to make a real impact on learning and teaching in the University. This is achieved by recognising the wide range of excellent practice that is identified by students and by disseminating this evidence and encouraging others to use it to develop their own learning and teaching practices. The words of our students provide evidence of the quality teaching and the positive impacts that staff have on student learning. The interviews with those staff awarded Fellowships offer some very useful guidance on the particular practices that have contributed to their achievement.

We extend our thanks to all the staff and students who contributed to the Student-led Teaching Fellowships for 2013 and hope you enjoy reading the comments of our students and Fellows as much as we did.

Dr Colleen Connor,  Mike Davies,
Dean of Learning and Teaching, Chief Executive, Students’ Union
Introduction

Cardiff Metropolitan University’s Student–led Teaching Fellowships, launched in 2011/2012, are now in their second year. These Fellowships provide students with the opportunity to recognise and reward excellent teaching practice.

In 2012 we celebrated the awarding of six Fellowships under the categories of: Outstanding Teacher, Most Innovative, Most Inspiring, Best Preparation for Work, Most Organised Module and Best Feedback (details of the 2011-12 recipients can be found below). From the nominations clear messages emerged as to what students value and these formed the basis of the first issue of this publication (available on the LTDU website).

In 2012/2013 the categories were chosen once again to reflect; areas identified in the NSS, the University’s Learning and Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and important sector-wide themes. Students were asked to provide evidenced based nominations under the following categories:-

• The Individual who has consistently promoted confidence in learning;
• The individual who has provided students with the best preparation for the future;
• The individual who used meaningful assessment methods that enhance learning;
• The individual who has brought a subject to life through innovative teaching;
• The individual who has brought a subject to life through enthusiasm and inspirational teaching.

These Fellowships once again identified the exceptional practice and enthusiasm of staff, their passion for enhancing the student learning experience and the importance they place on their own personal development in learning and teaching.

This report celebrates excellence, drawing on examples from across Cardiff Metropolitan University as highlighted by the students and introduces you to the 2012/2013 Teaching Fellows and their practice. Quotes from student nominations are used to illustrate the qualities that students have valued during their time at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Previous Recipients

Outstanding Teaching:  
Dr Rajendra Kumar (London School of Commerce), 2012  
David Acqaine (London School of Commerce), 2013

Most Innovative:  
Hannah Plumpton (2012)

Most Inspiring:  
Dr Dimitra Fimi (2012)

Best Preparation for Work:  
Olwen Mosely (2012)

Most Organised Module:  
Rose O’Driscoll (2012)

Best Feedback:  
John Dobson (2012)
Recognising Excellence in Teaching

Promoting Confidence in Learning

Students felt that their confidence in learning grew when they were:-

- Provided with information about the course that helped them to develop clear expectations
- Helped to develop strategies to succeed
- Given support, help and encouragement to define their own values and develop their practice
- Recognised as valued members of the University by tutors who believed in their capacity to achieve
- In an environment that promoted questioning, critical thinking and fostered independent learning
- Provided with formative feedback that signposted ways to improve, and given tools to develop their own ideas
- Guided by passionate, inspiring tutors who were keen to ensure understanding and meet different learning styles through variation of practice

Students were asked to provide evidence for those who had promoted confidence in learning by:

- Providing academic support to enable them to reach the academic requirements of their course
- Encouraging student participation
- Creating a safe environment for risk taking and practicing skills
- Making each student feel like a valued member of the university community
- Providing examples and opportunities for improvement
- Providing information on course content and expectations up front
“I have found _____ to be an inspirational tutor, she is very accessible and always able to give me pointers about how best to research and develop my work. As a mature student I am very much out of my comfort zone and she has taken time to ensure I fit in with my much younger colleagues, helping me identify with them academically. Under her guidance I fully understand everything that is required of me, not just in terms of the basics, but in detail, so that I understand what I need to do to reach the higher grades.”

“When we have done a good job, either in group work, individuals participating in class discussions, exam/assignment results, she always highlights this. When I started University I had crippling confidence issues surrounding my academic ability. She has such dedication to making students like me feel confident in their abilities. Being able to get things wrong and learn constructively for next time (without being patronised or talked down to) and receiving a 'well done' when I have earned it worked wonders for me. I am by no means the exception to the rule.”

“_____ has helped to build my confidence throughout the past year. She has helped me to be more inventive and adventurous with my use of colour and composition. I feel I have gained a deeper understanding of these. She organises small group tutorials which encourage us, as students, to be more involved in each other’s work, and not be afraid to ask for other opinions (tutors and peers alike). She will often organise workshops to learn new skills, which I have thoroughly enjoyed as I feel it provides an opportunity to take risks and try something a little different, but in a safe and guided environment.”

“When I have struggled to find direction with a project, she is quick to help, encourage and inspire. In this way she has supported me academically, helping me to reach the requirements of my course. I really feel valued as an individual student by her and I am certain that I am not the only one. To me she has clearly promoted confidence in learning on my course. I cannot praise her enough.”

“When I have tutorials with _____, he takes the time to properly look through my work, read my notes and evaluations, and he really listens to what I am saying. He doesn't rush through the time or try to come to a quick conclusion, but takes time to really talk through ideas, giving support and feedback constantly on the conclusions I have come to. He is always busy, but he will always stop and answer any technical questions, and he will always take the time to explain what he is telling you. He has a huge wealth of knowledge and understanding and he goes out of his way to instil this knowledge into his students’ practice. His knowledge seems to be endless and in every tutorial we discuss new and interesting and inspiring people/techniques, that I would never have found myself. He encourages us to think outside the box and develop our own practice by inspiring us.”

“_____ has a particular capacity to define and clearly explain to her students their strengths and weaknesses. She spells out the pitfalls that we might fall into, knowing us as she does, yet at the same time says (to me anyway) that she believes in my capacity to achieve. It is the latter which is crucial in bolstering my self belief, confidence and determination to see through this third year and achieve a First!!”

“_____ creates positive and supportive learning environments. He places a lot of emphasis on group work and discussion to develop your ideas and question concepts. He will relate educational ideas to the wider social context and create links between concepts. He encourages participation and the presentation of ideas in a way that develops the learners’ confidence, without making them feel under pressure or judged. Most importantly, he treats learners as equals and values their views, enabling them to develop into confident graduates.”
The Student-led Teaching Fellowship for **Promoting Confidence in Learning** has been awarded to...

“Mark provides comprehensive, balanced and encouraging feedback and support throughout his lectures and assessments. He uses his efforts to get to know each student as individuals to enable him to provide informative and instructive feedback, outlining strengths and areas for improvement with enough support for the student to be able to build on their skills independently.”

“Mark gave me and my workshop group feedback on our flexibility workshop presentation in the Trampoline and Gymnastics modules. He gave each of us the chance to identify our own strengths and weaknesses before discussing with us as a group and individually our performance, leaving us all satisfied that he was fair and constructive and very happy with our progress throughout the module. His positive outlook, encouraging support and enthusiasm are always apparent in the way he teaches and makes the lessons much more interesting and engaging…”

“Mark has always been one of the top lecturers. He has helped me progress not only through my studies but has also given up his free time to help with training. During lectures he is very enthusiastic and comes across as a very approachable lecturer. His knowledge is extensive and he really draws responses out of his student in both practice and theory lectures. He allows students to try things out for themselves and trusts us in our abilities. He always encourages people to get involved even when they don’t want to. Mark is an exceptionally polite lecturer who will always make time for you, just simple things like acknowledging individuals in the corridor and always asking how you are. He treats his students with a lot of respect and not just as a student…”

“Mark learns all his students’ names and engages with them outside of lectures. He makes the student feel important. He manages to get all involved in practicals and provides good knowledge about the subject. Mark also makes the course and the content easily understandable and explains why and how each skill and activity should be performed…”

“Best personal tutor, always giving advice, helpful and approachable.”

…Mark Samuels
Mark, can you tell me your experience of students coming into university and their confidence level?
There are a range of confidence levels that I have experienced over the six years that I’ve been working here at Cardiff Met, even in the final year of undergrad and at Masters level. Furthermore, I see a range of confidence levels which differ when students are in groups or one-to-one situations.

Students comment quite often of their lack of confidence entering higher education, in particular relating to academic expectations. How do you think that we as lecturers can help that transition in those early first few months or over the first year?
One way that we’ve looked at over the last year is trying to include more formative based feedback and assessment. We’ve implemented different projects, including getting students to complete formative coursework which is marked and on which they receive a lot of feedback, electronically and from staff, which really helps them to get an idea of the expectations of higher education. That is one tool that we have used over the last year to develop course work, expectations and confidence in terms of academic writing. Other techniques that I use in trying to promote confidence are getting students to work in smaller groups, using icebreakers with individuals, peer feedback and having discussions in pairs to get a collective opinion rather than expose the individual student. So I think promoting confidence through small group collaborative based tasks and tasks where students are pushed outside their comfort zone is key.

One of the things that you have been using is the e-reflect tool, which is an online tool that enables students to reflect on their own work and also on the feedback that they are given. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
Yes. We implemented a project this year within one of the first year programmes for students which looked at developing course expectations of higher education and academic skills. Students were set a formative coursework based task over the induction period, which was submitted and marked in the standard University mode. Once the student had completed the coursework and received the feedback they went through a process where they completed an online questionnaire, which generated generic feedback around specific areas of developing academic work, academic writing and also helped them to identify strengths and areas for development from the individual feedback that they had been given. Once they had completed this first stage the students went on to write a reflective blog in which they had to really focus on the key aspects identified by the tutor, the feedback that they got from the e-reflect questionnaires, together with their reflections on their learning and from this identify what their strengths were, areas for development and how they could move these forward. The feedback that we get from students on e-reflect is positive in terms of the both feedback that is generated and also how the reflective part gets them to think about what they have done well, one aspect that we don’t really promote enough. It also helps them focus on areas for development and what they can do to develop. The final stage was for the students to then discuss their reflections with their Personal Tutor. This stage was key, as it allowed the loop to be closed off and for the students to ask questions around the process that they had gone through.
If you were going to give advice to other staff members, as they may not have heard of e-reflect, what would your advice be to them?

Get in contact with LTDU for some initial advice, as it is a straightforward system and I think the only issue is getting it up and running. Once it is up and running it is a tool that is self-contained and easily usable; user-friendly for staff and students. Having this tool, which is self-generating by providing automated feedback that is customised to students’ responses, pushes them to engage in the reflective aspect, which is a key aspect. I think technology sometimes scares some members of staff. E-reflect is a must-use tool within higher education.

One of the other things that the students commented on was the fact that their confidence grows because they are allowed to experiment and that you trust in their abilities. Can you tell me a little bit about your experience of students’ abilities and the sorts of things that have come out of you trusting them?

I’m pleasantly surprised most of the time. When I first started at Cardiff Metropolitan University, it was more, ‘I need to deliver and that students need to listen’ and then I went to a couple of workshops and realised that this was more of a dictatorship and wasn’t student-centred. It took a bit of time to empower students, however, once doing that I found that the students come with a lot of prior knowledge and are willing to contribute. So for example using tasks where they work in small groups and they have to present information, putting the ball in their court, ‘actually well here’s a topic, I’ve given you enough information to scratch the surface, you need to now add the full discussion to it’, and allow them to go off and talk in small groups and discuss who is going to present what information and why it is important has actually been an eye opener because students are a lot more capable than some people give them credit for. In lead lectures I build in tasks where they have a chance to participate in small group discussions and they understand that most of the people in the group are going to be asked questions. The key aspect is that there are no wrong answers; as long as you can justify what you have said and why you have said it, I am more than happy to take that on board. So it is just trying to set up a conducive environment where students don’t feel threatened and are happy to contribute in a constructive way.
Best Preparation for the Future

Students felt prepared for the future through:

- Being given the opportunity to interact with employers and work places
- Teaching and learning that was centred on real-life scenarios
- Assessment that promoted and valued the development of employability skills
- The provision of extra-curricula activities that enabled self promotion
- The integration of personal development planning throughout their programme of study
- Staff who were passionate about their chosen subject or profession

Students were asked to provide evidence for those who had provided the best preparation for the future by:

- Providing real-life experiences that help them apply theory to practice
- Providing or signposting opportunities to engage with the workplace
- Providing or signposting opportunities to develop their skills for the future
- Encouraging risk taking and innovation
- Creating a safe environment to practice skills
- Providing team-working opportunities to develop problem-solving and leadership skills
- Offering clear channels of communication.
“During the Uni year, _____ has given his time, effort and expertise to encourage, challenge, and definitely improve my experiences and learning and has influenced my career both inside and outside of the University setting. He has gone out of his way using personal and professional contacts to provide opportunities for networking, learning, and challenges from leaders in the field of my profession. These opportunities are unique. In addition, the practical delivery from him, guest lecturers and world leaders in the field have been wholly inspiring.”

“The feedback and encouragement is extremely valuable and I feel gives me the tools to develop my own ideas that are relevant to the course and to the assessment for the module. In addition he often offers ideas that can be applied in the world of work and especially in regards to teaching and learning. I always leave his classes with something to think about and consider for the future.”

“If there has been something going on in or outside of uni that _____ has heard of and thinks it would be of interest to me, he has let me know. From journal articles he has read that he thinks would relate to my studies through to opportunities of employment and money.”

“Throughout the academic term _____ has given us countless opportunities to practice our skills through practical sessions he has laid on with guest lecturers. We would sit in a lecture theatre for an hour or so, and then instead of going off home and forgetting what we have just been told, it would be followed up with a hands on practical every week so that we could learn the new skills hands on.”

“He said that he wouldn’t want to bore us with him stood at the front of the lecture week in week out. So what he did instead was bring in industry experts with the highest levels of knowledge and practical experience so that we could learn from them, and see first hand where we could be 5 to 10 years down the line; very confidence boosting stuff, and also very positive in that I know that if I keep working at it then hopefully I can be in their position one day.”

“_____ has helped us broaden our horizons in the projects that encourage experimentation and play. Recently she set us a charity project which has given students the opportunity to make contact with charities they are interested in and turn our Uni projects into live projects. We also had the option to work on a neuroscience project instead of the charity project if that’s what we preferred, which I did. I was encouraged to work large scale, and when we were given feedback, it was very concise and clear. She would point out what works really well and how our work could be improved.”

“Her assessment and teaching is multi-faceted, and avoids the mundane by providing challenging tasks ranging from completing a therapy based computer program to engaging in role play debates. These assessments give us as students further specific skills, which will be readily transferable in our first posts as clinicians. _____’s holistic approach to therapy reminds us of these fundamental observational skills that as newly qualified practitioners we will be able to apply to any post.”
The Student-led Teaching Fellowship for *Best Preparation for the Future* has been awarded to...

"I am nominating Stephen Moore for this award as he really shows his enthusiasm for his subject. In particular the Marketing for Tourism, Hospitality and Events seminars he conducts are completely different to any of the seminars I have been in before. He always begins the seminar by recapping on the knowledge learnt in the last lecture to ensure we have re-read our notes and understand each element of the topic. Then an activity will take place, such as applying the 4 p’s to an organisation within our sector."

"He gets the group to actively engage with our learning. He encourages group discussion at each of the tables and ensures every table feeds back their ideas at the end to share with the group. However when you leave one of his seminars you feel you have learnt something new and are taking away valuable knowledge that you can apply to the workplace."

"Instead of simply setting the task of a written 3000 word assessment where we are expected to quote theorists and their theories, Steve has made our marketing assessment into a creative task. This is because the way we are being assessed is through an assignment which requires all students to carry out research within the industry. We have a set of questions about marketing that enable us to conduct an investigation into an organisation within our service sectors (Tourism, Hospitality or Events). This meant we had to set up an interview with a relevant member of staff at an organisation and ask the questions, then our assignment will be drawing together the findings. When he set the assignment I recall him saying that he wanted to get us out into the real working world and apply what we had learnt in lectures/seminars to a fully functioning company."

"He is precise and specific in his teaching and brings enthusiasm and clear explanations to his lessons. It becomes interesting and easy to understand, making me want to learn and listen even more. This gives me respect for him as he has helped me a lot with the model and created an interest for me. An example for me would be the assignment briefing he gave which was to the point and very concise. Another example is his interactive seminars which engage everyone in the class."

"He is very approachable and promotes confidence by being positive and reassuring. He involves everyone in the seminars and is easy to listen to and makes seminars and lectures interesting. He is passionate about the subject and has made his students interested in pursuing the subject as a career choice. Most inspiring teacher as well."

"Steve uses real life examples to ensure ease of understanding and relates everything to the workplace. Always provides positive and constructive feedback."

"Enthusiastic - always supportive of your opinions and thoughts."

...Dr Stephen Moore
Students commented on how they valued the application of theory and practice and how your seminars allowed them to do that. What are the sorts of things you do within those seminars?

Ok, what I always try and do is make it very topical, so when I am teaching Marketing to the year 2 students or Strategic Management to the final year students I always talk about current issues that are going on. Now clearly if they are within a Tourism Hospitality Events context that is even more helpful, but even if it is not, if it is something generally about marketing and marketing applications or strategic applications that is happening in society, I try and build it into both the lecture and the seminar programme. So straight away what I am trying to do is build the link between the theoretical concepts that we cover here in the University with the reality of life outside. I never like students to go through one of my units and think well that was great but it was very ‘textbooky’ and it was just totally theoretical. Right from the start I am always keen that we make the link between what we do here and life outside the university. Whether it is the THE (Tourism, Hospitality, Events) focus or whether it is a more general society focus, as long as they can make the link, for me that is the key factor.

Students talked about an assessment and commented on the enjoyment of that assessment and how it provided them with the opportunity to interact with the workplace and develop employability skills. Can you tell me more about this assessment, how it is made up and why you developed it in that way?

Absolutely, the assignment, again, is about taking a piece of theory, so in Marketing what we do is that we take the marketing mix, which is the four p’s – price, product, promotion, place and apply it within the context of an organisation that they choose. So it can be an organisation that they are working for, that they have a part time job with or they have done a placement with. It is their choice of organisation as long as it falls within tourism, hospitality and events. Basically what I do is generate a list of questions that we jointly approve, to make sure that all the ethical considerations have been applied, and then they go out and using the underpinning theory from the university in the questions that they ask, they can make the link between theory and the organisation. So again, as I said earlier, it is about making the link between theory and practice, but they choose the organisation, so hopefully it is some organisation that they like or want to work for at the end and then straight away they are going to an organisation that they favour. Often the nightclubs in town are popular, pubs in the city centre, but that is fine, because they all have marketing applications. They talk to the owners of these places about how they apply the marketing mix in their day to day operations. Straight away then, they are seeing that a business, until now they thought was ‘out there’, actually applies the theory that we cover with them in the University.

Are there any other assessments that you employ that are in that same vein?

Yes, they do a small presentation that they give to their peers and it is based on the research that they have undertaken and they sometimes use photographs to support the presentation and then at the end their colleagues will ask them questions. So again, it is about linking the theory with the practice. The fact that their colleagues ask them the questions rather than myself is often better because they then see that their colleagues are interested and engaged and want to find out more about how they apply marketing in the organisation that they have chosen.

Employability is high on the agenda of Higher Education, particularly at the moment. How do you think we can best prepare students for the future?

I think to be honest with you, it is all about making the assignments match the workplace. You know obviously as a student myself I did many assignments that when I reflect back I thought “blimey, what was the purpose of that
assignment? Why did we do it?” Students will leave us and will need jobs. One way to get into employment is the ability at interview to apply the theory that we cover with them on the degree programmes to the working environment. I think assignments could be much more constructive, useful and engaging for students; far more interesting and relevant for them as well. So I think the message for my colleagues would probably be to try and make the link between theory and practice and get students out there so that they do the research with industry or in the vocational sectors that they want to work in.

Students commented on the positive influence that you have on their future career choice, they talked about your enthusiasm and they talked about their desire to follow the same career choice. How can we embed professional identity in our students from the outset?

I was really pleased, obviously, with the comments that they made. I always try and be very professional in all aspects of the work role that I carry out. I worked in the hospitality industry myself and I try and bring that sort of flavour back into the teaching that I do with Tourism, Hospitality and Events students. I think it is about them not making a distinction between an academic and life outside university. Sometimes it is about ivory towers, you know the criticism gets levelled at us as university lecturers, that we don’t represent the reality of working life and I am very keen that we do. I think that comes across and the students that I teach, they comment about the fact that when they go out for interviews they are prepared for those interviews via the subjects that I have taken them for and therefore can contribute more effectively to the organisations that they join. We could all improve and I could improve. It is great to be awarded this but you don’t stand still, all the time you try and improve yourself even further, but I think the key message is about professionalism and keeping up to date and being passionate about these industries. You know these students have made career choices and you have got to be upbeat and positive and up to date about the industries that they want to join.

What future developments do you have in mind to further prepare the students for the future?

I guess to be taking on board more technology within the assignments. That is a difficult one, because you know if something works you are sort of loathed to change it but these students are of the technology age and they all blog and tweet and all these things. I am going to have to embrace that in the assignments that I use without spoiling those assignments. Quite how I do that I don’t know but it is something that I am going to explore over the next 12 months, how I can embed that sort of current social media more effectively. The industry uses social media a lot and therefore I think it is important that within the assessments I also try and bring in that sort of current thinking in terms of applications of social media. This change, to move with the technology, represents what the students are comfortable with and are using themselves.
Assessment that Enhances Learning

Students valued assessment that:

- Was varied, providing opportunities to develop different skills
- Demanded exploration at the ‘cutting edge’ of the discipline
- Provided student choice, increasing meaningfulness to the individual
- Promoted risk taking but balanced this with guidance on pitfalls to be avoided
- Clearly outlined expectations with a mark scheme that enabled identification of actions necessary for achievement
- Provided opportunities for timely, individualised feedback and guidance that enabled development

Students were asked to provide evidence for those who had provided assessment methods that enhanced learning by:

- Being useful and relevant
- Providing feedback that helps students understand and identify areas for improvement throughout the learning process
- Promoting creativity and allowing risk taking
- Being well organised and achievable
- Providing students with clear expectations and criteria that enable you to succeed.
“_____ provides a range of methods of assessment allowing all students to excel in what they are good at but challenging others and taking them out of their comfort zone. Whether it is an essay, presentation, poster, placements, portfolio, and personal chosen topics for research, her modules are always designed to excite. By taking students out of their comfort zone she allows them to learn new skills which can be transferable into the work place but also enable critical thinking when engaging with literature and policy.”

“A variety of methods of assignments have been used this year in the _____ module and they have all made me think and use my creativity to produce the best work that I can. This was especially the case in the poster presentation assignment and the portfolio assignment.”

“She always gave positive feedback on areas for improvements and always gave me points to look into for further exploration in the topic area.”

“_____ is a hugely intuitive teacher. Her insight is directed not only towards our work and its strengths and weaknesses but also towards our capacity to achieve. She gives very clear feedback and balances always, the need to encourage us to take risks whilst at the same time flagging up the difficulties which might occur. I have grown and developed as an artist under her tutelage in ways that I could not possibly have imagined prior to starting this degree.”

“Our assessment was to produce a lesson within a group that we had to deliver to our peers, the assessment needed to cover a global issue and we were allowed to choose the topic of the lesson. As a class we then marked each group using full marking criteria that we had discussed prior to the assessment. The reasons why this type of assessment worked so well was because it was all inclusive and empowering for us. Not only did we benefit from group work and task management to get the project done but we were also involved in every aspect of the marking process. Our learning happened through our own research for the topic, through groupwork, and then through participating in other people’s lessons (we all covered different topics). Marking each other at the end was a valuable experience, it really helped us to understand the thought process behind marking a lot more than an assignment brief or a module handbook. We learnt what the tutors look for and why. This is something that will continue to influence our assignments until we have finished university.”

“When delivering a new brief, _____ often organises an informative and incredibly helpful presentation, including many inspirational works which inspire and encourage us. In the briefs she includes a hand-out which outlines expectations and project aims. These really help to keep students on track with their given project.”
The Student-led Teaching Fellowship for Assessment that Enhances Learning has been awarded to...

"At the start of the year, she develops and gives you a handbook that clearly details the expectations of you in the forthcoming terms, when things are expected from you (including a very detailed schedule of events/activities). There are clear descriptors of assessments and how they will be assessed (e.g. what she is looking for/marking criteria). She also provides a book/journal list in order to give us a starting point for our independent learning. Her lectures are engaging as students are not passively listening to rote lecturing but are actively engaged with the material in order to complete activity based handouts. These handouts also give us a 'leg up' when it comes to revision…"

"Typically we are assessed in a number of pieces of work over the year and a number of different methods are employed; Exams - MCQ, traditional exam essays, detailed essay plan formats. Assessments - typical essay formats, detailed planned essays (which aims to develop our structuring and critical thinking that can be used in ANY module, for any assessment method). Student led seminars (marks awarded for participation, attendance, group work etc). By structuring learning/assessment in such a way it highlights areas in which we are strong/weak, so we can learn to improve at the bits we're struggling with. It also, means that we learn to be more organised with our workload, get to be creative (in seminars) and take control of our learning. That stands us in good stead not only for her modules but for all the modules we have to learn…"

"She took the time to give us a lecture on how to take effective notes. She made it known that what works for one doesn't necessarily work for many but I found her ideas helpful and learnt a great deal from the help she provided. I am currently using what she taught in preparation for my exams in May and feel more prepared than I would have if she hadn't given those helpful tips…"

"Use of weekly hand-outs ensures we leave lectures with good notes. Continual engagement during lectures with students ensures everyone is attentive and taking an active part. Annette does not just stand at the front of the room and talk at students but instead manages to engage with us as if we were a small group. This results in lively group discussion during which topics are challenged and explored. Her control is such that she is quickly able to bring attention back to herself when it is time to move on. No mean feat considering the size of the year group. Her assignments ensure further reading and research is done including how to prepare for and deliver essays. Annette is an excellent lecturer and deserving of recognition…"

"She always uses engaging activities in lectures to help the class understand the topic, uses current examples to help reinforce subjects and has a good sense of humour which always breaks the ice in the room."

...Dr Annette Daly
Students have commented on the usefulness of your Module Handbook and how it helps clarify the expectations of the course and assessment, can you tell me why you think this is important for students?

The module handbooks set the tone for the whole module. The backbone for those handbooks are the module descriptors which underpin what we teach and my aim, in the module handbook, is to be as transparent with the students as possible about reasons for the module, the aim for the module, how it links with the rest of the programme, the expectations around the learning and teaching methods that are within that module, issues to do with the assessment for the module and how that links to the learning outcomes. So, having all of that clear and made available from the outset and available on Blackboard sets the scene for the module. So everything is laid out in a transparent and clear, structured manner as a source of reference for the students.

The use of formative feedback is seen as vital in promoting student learning. Students highlighted how good you were at providing formative feedback and assessment opportunities. Can you give me some examples?

I think formative assessment is something that I have developed particularly over the last few years, recognising that summative assessment at the end of the module isn’t really sufficient in itself. At that stage it is almost too late for it to have an impact. One of the things that I have seen in final year students is a lack of confidence in tackling the type of reasoning that is needed for analysing academic journal articles. So, I have incorporated ‘bitesize chunks’ into my 2nd year module. We have lead lectures on particular topics, where we identify a theme and questions surrounding this area. The students, within groups, are then each assigned a particular academic journal article to read for that week’s seminar and given worksheets during this seminar to help structure their discussion. They share these articles, collaborate and integrate their findings, receiving feedback each week. So it becomes a feedback and a feedforward exercise, telling them about their style of academic approach and how well they have identified and evidenced the key elements from the articles that they have read, helping them to improve on this week on week. The essay that is required at the end of the term ends up being at a higher level from the skill and knowledge development that we have supported in this way.

Students felt that student-led seminars had really improved their confidence and ability to communicate with each other. Can you tell me a little bit more about those?

Absolutely. I am conscious that in Psychology we have very big year groups and, for some of the students, they struggle to get to know each other beyond their immediate circle. So I allocate them into groups, mixing them up, which helps with social engagement (which has been linked with academic engagement). As far as using the peer input, I got the idea from when I was a student at Queen’s University where we were involved in group discussions and the value of this was recognised through a peer evaluation score. So, the students evaluate peer contributions for the seminars at the end of that term. They are told up front what is included in these evaluations, things like facilitation, having done the preparation, enabling other people to make their point and to be heard. So, they understand something of team working, which - let’s face it - is a key employability skill. Teamwork is more than doing all the talking; it involves listening to others and facilitating others. This skill development is recognised and rewarded through the peer assessment scheme and that becomes a small percentage of the module grading.

Students commented a lot on how you promoted their critical thinking and ability to analyse through your questioning, even in large lecture theatres. What sort of activities do you use to embed this into the programme?

I think critical thinking is “critical” for want of a better word (1) and students struggle with it. I remember struggling myself with what was required for that when I was a student so I can identify, in a way, with the confusion around it.
think I use a mixture of humour and various different illustrations, to try and help students to understand what is required. In many ways I talk about them being an “academic detective” and I use an analogy that, if there was a murder case and you were the detective investigating that murder case, just reporting what witnesses say is not sufficient. Therefore for students to report similarly at an academic level, that this researcher said this and that researcher said that, is not really enough. They must dig deeper in terms of what the evidence is for these various researchers saying this and to be able to consider, “is this evidence at a suitable level?” Another thing that I have used when looking at childhood is to think about “if you were a parent and had a child who had this disorder”; as that would drive your critical analysis of the options for your child. It brings a level of reality and application for the need for really digging deep into the options that there would be for your child and it helps the students to get to the level that is required. I can see from their faces when the penny starts to drop and then I facilitate the setting up of activities that will enable them to engage at this level, this sort of “digging deeper”.

You use a variety of assessments and these assessments ensure further reading, research and the development of different skills. Can you provide further insight into this? I do provide a variety of assessments ranging from short answer questions, to essays, to the seminar peer contributions that we have talked about. We have done workshop presentations where they do round table presentations to a small group and develop expertise in a particular topic, which then feeds into open questions in exams. So I am conscious of doing a variety to stretch the students in their ability to think outside the box and to consider the various different possible applications of what they are learning. I am developing that further now with some modifications that I am introducing for next year. I am looking at, for instance, instead of writing an essay about a child disorder, getting the students to develop an information leaflet aimed at a particular audience and considering the type of information and the evidence behind that information for that audience. I want to bring the notion of what research is all about, that research isn’t just for research’s sake but it is done for a real reason. If they can see how their research is applied, that it has meaning, it is going to be a lot more engaging and it is going to inspire them to want to do it!

Students commented in their nominations about how they were fully engaged within your lectures despite, at times the large group size, even comparing it to feeling like they were in a small group. What tips would you give others in engaging students in large lecture situations? I think I’ve grown a lot in this respect myself, because I came from a model of lecturing where the lecturer would stand at the top and the students would be all packed in and wrote copious notes and listened and that was it. I began, in some ways in my teaching, from that sort of model because I felt that that was what was expected. I have grown and changed considerably from that mind-set, because all I had to do was look at the sea of faces in front of me and it was very obvious who was engaged and who wasn’t! I want them to learn, I want them to be engaged, I want them to enjoy the session. I am up and down the steps and going down the rows and looking over their shoulders when they have activities to do. I am sort of chipping in and chipping out with them at different times. I break it up by, maybe, introducing a topic like “adolescence” and getting them to think what are the key issues, looking at their own experiences. So, sometimes asking a question that draws on experience rather than knowledge is less threatening in getting the ball rolling and getting people to start talking about their experiences and what they think. This in itself gives a great sort of hook into what does the research say about this thing? We also have things such as buzz groups, where they have to consider various things or look at what the evidence might be and their opinions and then feed it back. I suppose another thing that I do is that they have gapped handouts that they fill in and so that also helps them to engage with video clips where I may give them specific things to look out for or observations to make and then we feedback after that. So, I am trying to get them actively learning rather than just passively listening.
Innovative Teaching

Teaching was seen as innovative when it:-

- Provided opportunities for students to learn from each other and develop communities of practice
- Explored difficult concepts through personal story telling and real-life examples
- Promoted interaction, through social media, learning technologies and exploration of the world outside the classroom
- Allowed for flexibility of learning through e-lectures, adobe connect, ‘school in a cloud’
- Developed breadth and depth of thinking through exploration of social, cultural and political issues through the utilisation of multimedia such as song, picture, popular culture and observation of the outside world
- Utilised current technologies such as QR codes, mobile technologies, digital printing and technologies that promote interaction between the teacher, peers and developed self reflection

Students were asked to provide evidence for those who had brought a subject to life through innovative teaching by:

- Bringing something out of the ordinary to engage you in learning
- Using methods that get you to look beyond the classroom
- Using new technologies or social media to enhance your learning, promote communication and encourage relationship building.
These student-led lessons allowed people to be creative in the ways that they taught. I will never forget learning global issues with my classmates. We learnt about tea production across the world, poverty distribution, global trade, exploitation of workers in sweatshops and solar energy. Everyone was included in activities that we could transfer to our work situation making this educational and professionally developmental. We made people into ‘human tea bags’, we participated in a sweatshop activity and were made to feel under huge pressure (this had such a massive impact). We also assessed how solar energy can be used within urban and rural environments. The lessons that we taught each other were so involving and inspiring that I have taken to writing about global issues online and want to develop this after I have completed my degree.

In every workshop he teaches he has a unique and exciting task for us to do as a class that helps our learning. For example, we will each write a line of a poem and pass it to our left to make 13 or so complete poems that have different points of view on the same subject. At first I wasn't very open to learning about writing poetry, which changed after 5 minutes in a room with ______. His passion is infectious and I now love every second of his workshops. He encourages everyone to write about what inspires them and recognises us all as individuals. He shows us new poets every week that write in a different way and even shows us song lyrics that we can relate to. He encourages us to read other poets’ work and write our own poems every week. He has made the task of writing 20 poems by April seem, not just manageable, but easy.”

Throughout the educational modules taught by______ he has injected new ideas by using contemporary sources from newspapers and the internet to stimulate new ideas and develop concepts. His effort to interact with each student on a personal level has allowed a great deal of respect for _____ to develop over the past 3 years. As a result of this, feedback only serves to be positive, causing me to be more critical and focus my efforts to improve minor areas for future development. He employs a wide variety of teaching methods to allow me as an individual to develop my skills base; as a result I have been able to apply them when in the workplace.”

_____ led a year 3 coaching seminar group and managed to create an environment where everyone within the group felt comfortable to share their own experiences in coaching. At the start of the year, when the seminar groups were assigned, he allowed us as a group to state our expectations of him and our peers - making us responsible for the learning environment. Suggestions were thrown into the mixer, and he structured and gave the scaffolding for us to enhance our learning. It gave us a sense of ownership, a belief that our own learning, though facilitated by him, was initiated by our peers. He allowed us to manage our own communities of practice, whereby he would spend time interacting at a small group level, providing guidance and assistance.”

_____’s use of Blackboard as well as other often free software has significantly enhanced my personal learning experience in higher education. The use of mobile technologies, interactive participant learning tools (such as Adobe Connect), are new fresh ideas that I feel are really beneficial to my learning. The use of real-time online lectures are great and are something that I feel should feature more in university as an supplement to class based lectures. His recommendation to use cloud storage, such as dropbox and google-drive has dramatically changed the simplicity and security of storing my work at university as well as allowing the sharing of information when working together on presentations and group tasks.”

What the students had to say...
The Student-led Teaching Fellowship for the **Innovative Teaching** has been awarded to...

“What can I say?! Ingrid is constantly looking ahead at the newest, innovative technologies that might assist us in learning. These range from the introduction of QR codes, to digital printing, to the use of Augmented Reality in learning and expression. Her seminars are extraordinary and will be remembered by all for many years to come, e.g. discussions surrounding sublime experiences, ideal objects or personal values and engage all individually or within groups in deep enquiry and decision making...”

“A special feature of the Ceramics course is the trip to the Ceramics Residence in La Perdrix, France. During the week there, Ingrid exposes us to all manner of experiences through her dedicated leadership and involvement at all levels. Brilliant!...”

“The Professional Practice module is by far the best preparation for life after college that I have ever come across - the exercises we work through and information we are given is providing us with a strong grounding in the requirements of artistic practice after university. It is surely the reason why so many ceramics graduates find employment so soon after graduation...”

“She is possibly the most inspirational person you could ever meet, and I’m sure the whole of Ceramics would agree with me hands down. Every lecture and tutorial is a treat and you find yourself feeling overwhelmed with inspiration and leaves you feeling rather invigorated...”

“Ingrid’s love of teaching shines through in her seminars with us as each week she presents new ways of considering ourselves as artists. Her ability to analyse the qualities of ceramic objects is truly inspirational, and rare, if not unique. Her ability to communicate this skill to us as budding artists is crucial for the development of our own practice. It is Ingrid’s drive, intuition, passion and creativity which make this degree course very special...”

“Ingrid’s excitement and enthusiasm every time she shows us a new piece of technology (and what we can do with it) carries us all along with her - even the least tech minded student. Her analysis of the role of social media and the role it plays for the promotion of our work is outstanding...”

“...Many discussions on Contemporary Practice, organised events such as Hatfield and New Designers for graduates. She sends us many emails for opportunities at home and abroad, competitions with deadlines and encouragement to enter. Great CV building sessions, SWOT and PEST analysis! A lot of team building during foreign trips - networking/skills/opportunities...”

“Ingrid facilitates incredibly useful sessions regarding professional practice, incorporating a huge variety of options available to graduates. She provides continuous emphasis on, and assistance in, development of our own voice as artists, channelling group-led discussions on the same.”

**...Ingrid Murphy**
Ingrid, you teach on two courses, Ceramics and Makers, which in general would appear to teach traditional skills, however, students comment on your constant innovation and use of technologies. These seem to be at two ends of the spectrum, so how do you marry this up in your teaching?

Well it is really quite interesting because at this particular time in society we are entering what we would call a hybrid reality between the physical and the digital. Obviously students that make artefacts are very much dealing with the physical, particularly students in Ceramics or ‘Maker’ students who are dealing with materials and processes that are traditional. But the world we now live in is a very digital one and with technologies such as 3D printing, Augmented Reality and scanning, different synergies are happening in how we make things. And this also has an impact on how we conceive and perceive the making of objects.

Once I gained knowledge of these technologies I found it quite easy to embed them in the teaching. In 2011 I received a Creative Wales award from the Arts Council of Wales to investigate how new technologies can be used by the sole practitioner in ceramics and became a fan of open source software and technologies. So I try and encourage the students to use everything that is free ware and open source so that there is actually no cost to them or the department but they get the full benefits of new and emerging technologies.

One thing students have highlighted is their use of Augmented Reality (AR). Can you give a brief explanation of what this is and potentially how it might be used in other subject areas?

Well, interestingly, we have just done a week long project on Augmented Reality in France. The students were asked to make their own funerary urn which was interactive Augmented Reality markers and content. What they were asked to do was to embed information on to physical objects. So you use image recognition software that allows you to link an object to any amount of content that you wanted to, this could be an image, film or sound.

Using a smart device, your audience can have an enhanced experience of the static object. Interestingly we teach this from the outset of our new Artist Designer: Maker course, so when a student is actually making an artefact for the first time, they are learning new processes, as well developing new skills. They will be asked to document their learning and ordinarily that will go on a blog but with the use of Augmented Reality we can actually take that content, processing new material and knowledge and embed it directly into the object itself, so that when they come back to review an object that they have made, they literally have to scan it with a smart device and it will reveal all its technical information or whatever they have embedded within it.

**How would people use Augmented Reality with students in other areas?**

It is really quite interesting. I have been to quite a few conferences on Augmented Reality and I have seen how it had been used in different subjects. If you wanted to take students on a field trip to a specific site, for example, you could embed the information of that site in that location. Students can actually arrive at a specific site using GPS and using a smart device are able to access historical information or contextual information that allows them to have a more location-based approach to their environment and to learning. There are many different ways you could approach using AR because you are dealing essentially with web based content so it can be constantly updated, whereas text based content can become outdated quite quickly. So in terms of instructions or manuals, or being able to look at any process, any practice, you can literally put a marker on an image and students, through a smart device, will be able to access that straight away.
Innovative Teaching

Ingrid Murphy

You take groups of students out to France and they highlighted this as inspirational. Why do you think that is? We are very lucky to have a space and studio in France where we can work and having just come back from there I can speak very freshly about it. Students have an incredibly immersive experience, it is unlike a cultural study trip, we don’t do lots of tours and see or visit museums. We literally lock ourselves into a very old gated property where we live together for a week. We cook, we socialise together, but more importantly we work really hard. Students don’t know what they are going to do until they arrive so there is a big level of trust and they have a series of challenges, sometimes almost insurmountable challenges. We take them away from the University environment, which is quite regimented and where they have a myriad of responsibilities, to a place where they can focus solely on their creative work, with resources and the time, where they will quite happily work away in the studio until midnight.

We also engage with processes that we can’t really do on a city centre campus and that again is something that can really bring people together because where there is frequently an element of risk, there is also a huge sense of physical and technical challenge and this means students leave their comfort zone. Their achievements in that short time never cease to amaze me. We engage with it all as equals, the challenges are new to us all and this is important, it means we go off road a bit. Frequently the students come into the week with an understanding that at the end of it they are going to have a professional level exhibition. We invite artists from the community to come and engage with their work. For some of them it is their first time actually meeting other artists as a professional, so the expectations are huge. I suppose my ultimate aim is forging in their minds the link between incredibly hard work and a moment in time where they were probably at their happiest, and then you have forged a great connection that will keep them motivated for a long time in their individual practice.

Students commented that you allow them to take risks, but help them recognise potential pitfalls. What would you say to others about letting students take risks? Well I think that it is very important because students see a great value in it and in our field we see monumental leaps happen if you take risks. But I think it is very important that I get to know them very well and that is very difficult at times in a very formal lecture based scenario, to know what a student is capable of. If you really get a chance to watch them and watch them in a group dynamic and see how they work in a team you will be able to understand clearly what sort of risk they can take. They will take risks if they know they are in an absolutely safe environment and to fail from a justifiable risk is not a bad failure.

And finally... students commented on how they felt prepared for the future. What advice would you give to others in trying to prepare their students for the future? Well we try and ensure that they have as many real life experiences as possible because they are not going into conventional jobs; they are going into career paths that they have to carve out for themselves. So we have to begin that at the outset really. We all make sure that they undertake relevant work experience and have a variety of work placements across the sector. They don’t see a distinction between what they are doing here and outside university, this is not a 9-5 course, it is very much that everything that they do socially, everything that they do academically is linked because that is the kind of commitment we need for them to progress and we do produce some of the best practitioners in the field. It helps that all the staff are practitioners. As a practitioner, students see me in the studio at the weekends scrabbling like them to meet exhibition deadlines. I love coming in on a Saturday and working in the studios alongside the students as peers. They see me make mistakes and get things wrong and it is encouraging for them, that they see us with our struggles and I think that is good insight from a professional practice point of view.
Most Inspirational Teaching

Students see tutors as inspiring when they:-

- Are passionate, enthusiastic and positive about their subject
- Use creative means to get students to engage, debate, reflect and explore
- Provide personal stories and experiences to link theory to real world applications
- Are motivational, encouraging students to meet their full potential
- Challenge and question to promote criticality and originality of thinking, whilst providing support and encouragement
- Value students' opinion through openness and good communication
- Are outward looking, promoting learning outside the classroom

Students were asked to provide evidence for those who had brought a subject to life through enthusiastic and inspirational teaching by:

- Encouraging debate and critical thinking
- Showing enthusiasm and breathing vitality into their subject
- Using assessment methods that inspire creativity of thought or action
- Inspiring them to achieve to the best of their ability
- Challenging them and encouraging further exploration of the subject
- Providing team-working opportunities to develop problem solving and leadership skills.
“_____ is the most inspirational teacher I have had this year. Her sheer passion and enthusiasm for the subject makes every seminar; a) hilarious, b) the most positive learning environment provided, and c) full of memorable experiences to help you remember the information. Every seminar is full of debate. We are always encouraged to think critically and not be afraid to answer a question. When assessing our presentations not only did we have to evaluate ourselves, we also were given the opportunity to ask other students questions which was beneficial for everyone’s learning. Our seminar sessions are full to the brim of team work opportunities, we are constantly problem solving. Our presentations provided us with the experience of leading a seminar.”

“During lectures _____ always sets aside time in which we can debate issues that are central to the module being taught, encouraging critical thinking and keeping most students engaged in the topic. Topics are not just taught from research articles and books, but brought to life with her real life examples that are always built into lectures, through videos, photos, quotes from sports people or even her own experience. As my dissertation tutor, she has been invaluable in critiquing my work, always expecting more in a way that challenges me to push myself further to achieve the highest grade possible, whilst always building my confidence and reassuring me of my research capabilities.”

“_____ also encourages me and others to explore the subjects of ethics and sociology in sport further, by sending us articles individually, that she believes will be of interest and to keep us engaged with the modules but also the wider social problems of the topics we learn about during lectures.”

“_____ has the patience and determination to see all his students through their challenges. He is always positive and even his constructive criticism is positive. He gently but firmly pushes us all. He never wants his students to be discouraged and he allows us the freedom to experiment and wants us to know that failure is part of the learning process, meaning that we can learn more through our mistakes than our accomplishments.”

“The debate that has occurred as part of the support and encouragement is invaluable. I can honestly say that my project would not be where it is today without the hours of debate that stemmed from his understanding of product design. I cannot stress the passion that he has for his subject with the numerous extra meetings and emails that have allowed me to gain the guidance I needed for my products and my personal development. Challenging previous perceptions and inspiring me to explore areas of design that I would have otherwise left unturned.”

“_____ has always encouraged debate amongst the class allowing many different people to view their opinion, and makes a conscious effort to allow everyone to have their say and to further develop ideas that emerge as debates evolve. He will often pick up on points, enhancing my criticality of the points I am making by encouraging me to look at ideas I present in different ways and how they would be affected by additional factors. He tries hard to inject new ideas in modules by using contemporary sources from newspapers and the internet to stimulate new ideas and develop concepts, employing a wide variety of teaching methods to allow me as an individual to develop my skills base. As a result I have been able to apply them when in the workplace.”

“_____’s meticulous investigation into the relevant material and desire to pass this on, has for me been infectious. Her enthusiasm for subjects always leaves me wanting to explore these topics further myself; and her lectures, with their mixture of humour and student involvement, never fail to be enjoyable as well as informative. She has a particular talent for giving us the skills we need to discover information for ourselves, both as a group and in smaller teams, which has the effect of giving us students a great sense of achievement and ensuring that facts are easier to retain. She tirelessly encourages us to always react to new knowledge with a ‘why?’ instilling in us the importance of critical thought.”
The Student-led Teaching Fellowship for Most Inspirational Teaching has been awarded to...

“Chantelle is a knowledgeable lecturer who inspires others through her enthusiasm and true passion for Early Years...”

“She looks beyond what others would see, enabling true understanding and criticality when undertaking research and assessments. She is known for making us do warm ups, jumping around and encouraging us to be reflective and engaging in team tasks. Lectures and seminars are always engaging and this follows through to assessments too. Chantelle provides a range of methods of assessment allowing all students to excel in what they are good at but also challenging others and taking them out of their comfort zone...”

“Chantelle has been inspirational since year one. She is fun, energetic and creative. She is a great role model and really cares about students’ ideas, thoughts and opinions...”

“Chantelle is the lecturer who has provided most opportunities for me in the workplace and has given me a chance to discover what road I want to take in the future. In lectures there are many guest speakers and her seminars are always fun and engaging. At the start of the year I told Chantelle what career I was interested in and she helped me make contacts through volunteer work. I feel that Chantelle creates a very safe environment, not only physically but socially and emotionally...”

“Chantelle is always fully approachable, genuinely caring and consistently enthusiastic and passionate when teaching. She always gives students lots of food for thought, actively encouraging students to continue discussions and debates outside of seminars. She always captures and keeps my attention due to her passion, and her enthusiasm is highly motivating. Chantelle likes to encourage students to work in groups regularly, often with students outside of friendship groups. This has enabled me to feel confident and comfortable discussing and working with students I do not know very well which will benefit me in the future. At the end of her module I feel confident, enthusiastic and well prepared to continue both with my study and in practical work volunteering in schools...”

“Chantelle has provided me with the most inspirational teaching whilst at Cardiff Metropolitan University. From the beginning of the module she encouraged us to think critically about all aspects of our work and how we should critically think before and debate our views and the views of theorists in our essays/assignments. A variety of methods of assignments have been used this year and they have all made me think and use my creativity to produce the best work that I can. She always gave positive feedback on areas for improvements and always gave me points to look into for further exploration in the topic area...”

...Chantelle Haughton
Some of the words that students used about your lecture and seminar sessions were; exciting, invigorating, inspiring, real-world, helping them link theory and practice. Can you tell me what sort of activities you use that illicit these comments?

Gosh, I'm not sure. My research, community practice and enterprise work informs my teaching and the students seem to take a lively interest in what our lecture team do beyond the lecture rooms. Working in partnership with students who volunteer on projects and stakeholders as part of my everyday work joins up all the thinking - maybe that's part of it? I feel very new to the world of lecturing and I work within a fantastic team. I am lucky to be surrounded by support and idea sharing. I use case studies a lot and my own experiences from practice in the stories I tell, woven in with some of the theory that we are looking at. The students are interested in our different guises. Also in the Early Childhood Studies programme we are lucky that we have a lot of practical activities that we can do to make a situation come to life. For example, if we are talking about 'sustained shared thinking in play' then we could do a five minute practical activity and maybe explore and critique how students could link that with things they have read about for improving opportunities to develop childrens’ thinking. We are very proud of our developments in Queens Wood of the Outdoor Learning Centre and Forest School areas, which now includes a new story circle. This new log circle is one of four and is big enough for a whole seminar group to sit on comfortably and sit outside. Children and practitioners often work with us on site and in the community, but actually if we are talking about outdoor play and critiquing a journal or having a discussion, maybe part of that seminar/lecture may take place outside with just the student group. I am also known for playful energisers which the students like to try out with the children they work with. It helps to bring in a moment of fun and laughter when thinking about children between 0-8 years. Often the interactive element is very short and snappy but it is something that helps them remember something about that session that we have explored.

One of the things the students commented on was that you managed to create a safe environment and yet really challenged them. How do you marry up those two?

That is difficult to answer. I think that it is really important for me, that I get to understand where the student is coming from, so take time to talk to the students about their interests, about what they want to do and about what they think. Also creating a sense of a learning team within a seminar group is very important, so I suppose it comes from a very early years approach. Students are encouraged to work with different students all of the time, they will be very used to working with each other in different groups. So they all become generally quite comfortable with each other and everyone has an opportunity to talk. If a student raises a point, I just always ask them a question back or encourage another student to ask a question back. So I think there is lots of questioning and they become quite comfortable with that over time. Getting them to understand that there may be lots of different answers can be a challenge but is a positive place to be. This also prepares them for working with children, if that is what they want to do.

One of the other things students commented on was that they feel well prepared for the workplace and are able to recognise their skills. How do you achieve this?

I think that that is embedded in everything that we do as lecturers. Explicitly helping students to see transferable skills is crucial for their employability. I think that what is helpful for students is how we help them recognise the use of interpersonal skills, analytical skills and communication, all things they develop on the Educational Studies degree. So I think it’s really important to give them opportunities to pause, think and talk about what skills that they have gained or are in the process of developing and how they would be useful. Initially, when I was working with students I realised that students were not always seeing that they had those skills and how they could use and develop them further. So we have open conversations about, “OK, so how could this be useful to you in future?” We talk about how the assessments could be helpful in ‘real work-life’ situations. Last term, I brought in some students who had recently graduated to talk to the current students - that was very
poplar because of the clear connections they made between the course and the workplace. So they could see that, despite the challenging assessment blend, they are developing skills that they could be using out in real-life work and I think that resonated with them more, hearing that from other students rather than me. Module evaluations highlight that students value visits from practitioners and experts - we are lucky to have generous investments of interests from stakeholders beyond the University. I enjoy making time to keep this active.

Students feel that their opinions are really valued and that you really listen to the student voice and I was just wondering, given the time constraints, what are the advantages of listening to the student voice and how do you do that?

If I’m honest, it sometimes happens beyond the sessions, so walking with the student after the sessions to the next room, I think students are very keen to ask further questions and usually we can go to the wire because our sessions are getting shorter. So having the opportunity to walk and talk, or for them to drop into the office or share something over email, students will be keen to ask questions and continue the conversation as you leave the room. I have an open door policy which is really challenging to maintain with the number of students that we have and I’m not sure how we can strive to sustain that approach in the future but I am passionate about creating positive listening and talking spaces wherever possible like the rest of the team I work within. If a student has a question, then we need to listen to them and talk to them and feed them with other food for thought, so suggest some further reading that they can do or maybe it is something that they can talk with practitioners about. I think as well it has been really useful to have the process of PDP embedded in some of the modules and embedded in the dissertation process like on our course. It’s not just me alone but all the lecturers on the team, we often are sign posting students to work with other departments, Student Support Services, the Library Services, the Career Services and we have really strong links across the University and with other agencies in the wider community.

Reflection is one of the things that is seen as really important in critical thinking but something that students often struggle with. How do you go about helping them to learn the skills of reflection?

I think encouraging the students to ask questions and to answer their questions in sessions with further questions stirs further interest for reading about different perspectives in theory and policy. For the observation task, which is more practical, some of the things we did in preparation for the placements was to experiment and think about how they could use different observational techniques in a learning environment. We used video images of real case studies, snap shots of children playing and they would trial different observational methods within their seminar groups, followed by discussion and evaluation. They realised that they needed to do a lot of planning, to shape what it was they were looking at, who it was they were looking at and how they were going to collect and organise the data. Discussions based on practical activities are partnered with the use of journals – their own research forms the base of seminar sessions and opens up space for lively discussion. Their portfolios were exciting for me to read because each student had all individually tailored and designed their work to suit the child and the learning environment they were immersed in.

You have embedded PDP within existing modules, with a lot of signposting along the way. Can you tell me what you think the advantage of this approach is?

I think that you really get to know the students. I think that you have opportunities to understand what it is that they want to do long term and see how that changes over the three years. Many of the students come to us in year one, not really knowing what they want to do and lots still don’t know by the end of year three exactly what they want to do but they start to refine their ideas about the types of roles that they would like to do and how they can use their skill set, so having a little bit on continuity for PDP tutoring really helps the students build up a relationship with you in terms of talking about their development. It’s rewarding to be involved in short term and long term planning with them, which for them is helpful and for us it is exciting to see.
We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those students who took the time to nominate staff. We are thrilled with the outcomes of our 2012/13 Student-led Teaching Fellowships. Analysis of the content of the nominations has provided a rich source of evidence and a clear focus on what students value. This evidence will be used to help shape future practice across Cardiff Metropolitan University.

We are delighted with the engagement of students in this initiative to capture the student voice. The collaboration between the Learning and Teaching Development Unit and the Students' Union has provided an opportunity for increased dialogue around learning and teaching and what really matters to the students. We look forward to further developing this fruitful partnership.

Further information can be found on: www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/sltf