

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that we are able to publish the first edition (volume 1, number 1) of the Innovative Practice in Higher Education online journal. We have taken a new and possibly unique approach, by publishing three student reflective essays and a poster presentation with associated audio file. There is also, as you might expect, a selection of full peer reviewed papers drawn from Higher Education institutions.

Our online journal offers a 'Student Voices' section which invites reflective work from participants who have experienced innovative practice during their studies. We are pleased to include three submissions which will be of interest to readers of this publication. Rachel Rimmer from Manchester Metropolitan University gets things underway with a reflective report relating to her experience of submitting a 'praxis' project as part of her Masters Degree in Contemporary Arts. The term 'praxis' refers to a mode of research where the student engages with their work from two perspectives; from the inside, or subjective position of being the artist creating, and additionally from the outside, the objectivist position. When submitting work for assessment, participants devise their own criteria outlining the way in which they would like tutors to assess their work. This approach aims to provide flexibility across the range of arts disciplines explored on the Masters programme. Rachel's submission carefully outlines her experience during the 'praxis' process.

Further reflective work from Gareth Nixon focuses on a task presented to his group during induction week and later expanded during a level 4 module. The theme of the submission is 'online peer assessments' and Gareth's reflective report provides an authentic account of his experience during the early stages of his academic career. The three stages of the online peer assessment process are carefully outlined and elucidated.

The peer assessment theme continues in the final reflective report from Samantha Jenks. Samantha describes her experience of peer assessment as "a revelation" and highlights some of the benefits as well as outlining some shortcomings. She notes how her views concerning the strength and structure of her essay altered during the peer review process, concluding that she will continue to engage in peer review during future work.

We present a real innovation of our own and our unique selling point, we are the first journal in this field to publish poster submissions with associated audio files in an academic journal. Our first offering in this section comes from Peter Simcock whose poster and associated audio file document a case study into the experiences of a deaf social worker during his studies at Staffordshire University. It is hoped that Peter's submission provides the inspiration for many more poster submissions in the future.

The full paper submissions report and interrogate a range of issues which illustrate the breadth and diversity of innovative thinking and practice to be found in the contemporary Higher Education context. The paper by Andrew Smith and Julie Jones is

an example of such innovative thinking, highlighting the perennial problem of 'equitable working' during summative group projects. They claim that increased tutor input has a positive impact on fair task sharing; however, they also acknowledge 'group disempowerment' as a consequence of this action and the effect this may have on the validity of 'shared grade' group work.

Jamie Bird stays with the theme of collaborative group work, though in this case the focus turns to participant perceptions of the emotional and academic outcomes during a group work experience on an undergraduate module. The paper explores positive and negative aspects of the group work process and recognizes the evolving significance of emotional competence in Higher Education and in particular, its relationship with interpersonal development.

Stevenson and O'Keefe shift the focus to how we may develop students' research and enquiry skills through information literacy. The paper draws attention to a perceived mismatch between student expectations and the reality of Higher Education study during early transition from Further Education to Higher Education and outlines a number of educational interventions that aimed to challenge students expectations of Higher Education and encourage them to think about their preparation and dispositions for becoming 'study ready'. The research findings highlight some positive outcomes and provide evidence of a positive experience for students.

Farzad Amirabdollahian presents work on ten pedagogical interventions in the context of teaching public health nutrition which aimed to enhance student engagement on the programme. As a result of the interventions it is claimed that student engagement in classroom activities increased and module evaluations showed considerable enhancement in 'student satisfaction'. It is suggested that interventions adopted for the purpose of the study may be applicable to other programmes.

To conclude the full paper section McFarlane and Wakeman offer insights into the use of audio feedback with participants on the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher & Professional Education programme at Staffordshire University. Issues arising from the research include the 'emotional response' to the audio feedback reported by participants, the positioning of the grade within the feedback file and the practicalities of access, particularly for those located in open access environments. Despite some small criticisms, however, the authors report a 'generally positive response' from participants and make some recommendations aimed at enhancing the process.

Thus we present to you an interesting and wide range of articles for our first edition. We believe the Innovative Practice in Higher Education online journal will go from strength to strength during the coming years and becomes a source of highly regarded academic papers for practitioners in the field. We are now accepting submissions for the next edition and invite full papers, short papers, student reflections and posters for this purpose. We look forward to hearing from you and sincerely hope you enjoy this first edition of the journal.

Dr. Chris Wakeman & Dr. Geoff Walton (Managing Editors)