Collaborative learning and "Unit X" at the Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University

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This paper discusses the use of cloud technologies to support collaborative learning in the delivery of "Unit X". "Unit X" is an innovative learning and teaching strategy developed by the Manchester School of Art. It aims to promote, extend and develop the student experience by forming meaningful collaborative projects across subject disciplines but also by engaging external partners in student initiated projects. This cross disciplinary development won the School of Art the prestigious "Sir Micha Black Award for Innovation in Design Education" for 2012 which was presented at the Royal College of Art in March.

As the tools in the MLE (Moodle 1.9) did not address the pedagogical requirements of "Unit X" we needed to explore social media tools as an alternative vehicle. Primarily the MLE integration with the student record system meant collaborative spaces across programmes was not possible The project, at Level 4, utilises a number of integrated social media tools, in conjunction with the institutional MLE, to facilitate the student experience, communication between project stakeholders, facilitate collaborative student interaction and the formulation of assessment. Primarily the students information gathering phase is a team activity and is shared via a group blog, mainly via "Posterous" although some courses use "tumblr" or "blogger".

Training sessions were set up and a training scheme devised for 450 students and 30 staff over 5 days. They were all trained and set up on the blog platform with individual private reflective blogs shared only with tutors for assessment purposes. They were also set up with group collaboration blogs which it was hoped would provide a collaborative space for interchange and cooperation as well as facilitating project communication and organisation.

4 interns were employed for core support of the Unit. The administration and organisation utilised a range of cloud technologies to support and facilitate programme set up and delivery. The programme had a hub and spoke arrangement with central events and input being organised by the unit steering group whilst individual academic programmes enhanced the core delivery with tailored input relating to specific student initiated projects. Similarly external speakers, presenters and facilitators were utilised in sessions which needed coordinating. Google docs enabled live authoring of timetables which in turn were embedded into the MLE so version control issues were eradicated. Full history tracking was implementable and live current data was accessible immediately by the students.

5 teaching assistants were employed in supporting students on blogs in terms of the pedagogy of blogging for assessment and reviews. They also provided technical assistance in drop-in workshops throughout the Unit. Their feedback will be critical in reviewing arrangements for the next cohort as Unit X roles in to Levels 5 and 6 (and the subject of further research).

The demonstration outlines the scope of "Unit X", how cloud technologies have been employed to allow cross-disciplinary work and highlights issues of concern as the project progresses – for instance the diversification from "posterous" to other platforms by certain programmes created some information and pedagogical issues that needed adaptation.

DIGITAL+DESIGN+DIALOGUES: Learning through near-synchronous collaboration

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_ABSTRACT+POSITION
The paper explores the potential of emergent digital technologies to extend and reposition the collaborative design process as a transformative social network of experiences and potentials. Through the use of near-synchronous cloud collaboration, the paper will explore the integration of social learning technologies within the context of the traditional design studio and suggests a hyper-collaborative learning future for art and design education.

_LIMINAL+SPACES
"*Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremony*" (Taylor, 1967, p.94)

Presented to first year students across the interior, product and transport design programmes at the University of Huddersfield, *Liminal Spaces* was a two week collaborative design brief which asked students to identify and improve the waiting experience; to explore the liminal (threshold) space which exists while we're waiting for a bus, a ticket or while travelling on the daily commute. This position of liminality was further developed within the student's own conception of learning, allowing students to see their own design education as a liminal position, betwixt and between dependence and autonomy.

_COMMUNITY+COLLABORATION+COMMONALITY
Collaboration within the design process is seen here as a series of design dialogues, surprises and mediations leading to a considered understanding of future experiences - but educational collaboration presents both opportunity and problem. The project team questioned how group experiences and research directions could be successfully captured and developed. They wondered how the nuances of dialogue and visual language within the collective discussions could be expressed and considered how each member of the team could jointly contribute to the collaborative creative process. Ultimately, the important driving force was a vision for learning and for collective design - that collaboration leads to a collision of potentiality.

As a platform of commonality, the students were placed in mixed groups and asked to find, experience and record liminal waiting spaces over the first few days. In the subsequent period, each group would collectively explore their found problem, develop, negotiate, design and present additional (future) experiences within their liminal space. The process of designing and learning through collaborative engagement seemed an ideal place to explore new e-learning technologies - the traditional methods of collaborative creative development (sketching, conversation, notation) capture a collection of abstracted ideas, which become locked in the physicality of both the moment and the page. Conversely, our engagement with the ever-changing digital revolution presents a new social and hyper-layered context of links, connections, networks and dialogues, beyond the limitations of place and time.

Exploring this liminal position, the project trialed the use of PREZI not as 'a zooming' presentation tool, but as a creative canvas that allows students to interact, discuss, explore and connect a range of influences and visual ideas. It allows students to directly upload any drawing or piece of writing from a digital pen to an infinite virtual page, creating a collective design repository. Additional digital content; imagery, video, sound and hyper-linked information can then be integrated within the adapted flash technology, which allows hyper-media and drawn dialogues to co-exist within the same active process. The individual idea becomes part of a wider collection of ideas, juxtaposed against, and networked with, ideas which may collide and spark new avenues of creative learning and design.

Students were able to access this cloud technology from anywhere, and were able to work, as a community of individuals, in a near-synchronous manner on this single infinite canvass. The use of PREZI as collaborative tool created a design interface that allowed several students to become editors all at the same time, therefore allowing ideas to be posted and discussed within seconds without the need of being physically together. This near-synchronous relationship allowed the group to switch between the individual response and the collective idea – a series of reflections and surprises on each-others ideas and visual references. Each individual, as Schon suggests, was able " *to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation (Schön 1983, p. 68).*

During the intense (1 week) development stage, the project team were able to engage with each of the group PREZI's, to review progress and to actively post comments, add imagery and to upload digitally recorded feedback from earlier seminar sessions. Again, these commentaries were not tied to a specific time or place, and the ability to provide feedback while away from the studio proved popular to many student groups (excited by the idea that lecturing staff work as late into the night as they do).

_DIGITAL+BOUNDARY+SHIFTING

The use of these e-learning technologies is not a digital replication of our existing design tool set, but provides richer opportunities for students to respond and reflect on a wider range of experiences and research enquiries. As John Christopher Jones (1992) suggests, *boundary shifting* can be employed to re-position the original design problem within wider fields of inspiration; to move the exploration outside the problem boundaries (Löwgren & Stolterman, 1999). The infinite canvas allows a series of new fields beyond the original to be connected and acts as a continuous source of inspiration; allowing a series of seemingly unrelated design ideas, potentials and opportunities to oscillate throughout the creative learning and design process.

REFLECTION+CONCLUSION

The project suggests an exciting future for e-learning technologies within collaborative design and future projects are now in the planning process to support these developing notions of a hyper-collaborative field of learning within art and design education. Students are now selecting to use these e-learning methodologies to forward their own practice within the design studio and beyond . The use of social cloud-based technologies provides not only new creative potential, but supports a growing conception of learning as something which is achieved collaboratively; to be autonomous but not alone.

In the words of one collaborative group, "*Collaborative work is a lot more engaging…we learned that team co-operation and discussions lead to new ideas and we had fun along the way. We all learned that there is no need for a group leader if everyone is equally inputting ideas/visions and understanding. The group has learnt to be more open to new professional relationships and throughout the project we felt connected".*

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Collaborative learning design – a solution to the crisis in art education?

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This paper/workshop reports on the experience of a collaborative open education project led by the University of the Arts London and explores how this relates to recent discourse about the perceived crisis in art education. In the UK this crisis is manifesting itself in poor student satisfaction ratings, steep drops in undergraduate applications and, of course, in the removal of government funding to support teaching. While craft-based 'making' courses such as ceramics and textiles are in danger of largely **disappearing** from UK arts undergraduate curriculums due to cumulative cost-cutting.

UK art colleges, have on the whole, been slow to embrace technology and offer open and flexible learning opportunities. They have remained educationally conservative with a teaching model that is locked behind closed doors and firmly anchored in the constraints of a physical location, which demands that learning can only happen at the locations, times and modes that suit teachers, administrators and management. The result is a sector at risk of becoming marginalized, with a reduced subject base and increasingly vulnerable to a rapidly changing economic and social environment.

The concept of jointly designing open learning resources and entire courses and then sharing them openly and freely with the world presents a powerful and subversive counterbalance to those tendencies towards a narrow and exclusive approach to art education. By positioning our work within a wider and growing global cultural and educational commons we can draw on powerful source of support (a form of counter cultural capital) that can help in creating a more inclusive and dynamic form of art education.

This paper/workshop describes the experience of collaborating within and between institutions to create open learning resources and courses and explores some of the key issues that this has thrown up including; revealing personal and institutional philosophical positions, technical infrastructure problems, digital skills needs amongst staff, the use of ‘educational’ language and the pedagogical design skills required for open and flexible learning. The paper/workshop examines the prospects for such collaborative open educational activities in playing a role in the development and reinvigoration of art education in a time of crisis.

Anatomy of expression: beyond the screen and into the studio

Blake Ketchum
Pennsylvania State University

We have designed and implemented a 15-week online undergraduate-level course that introduces the musculoskeletal anatomy of the head and its applications to art, forensic reconstruction, comparative zoology, and computer animation.

When we set out to design the course, we faced numerous challenges:
1. **Online, yet Studio.** How do we develop a studio course in an online environment?
2. **Cohesive and Integrated.** How do we present both artistic and scientific material in an integrated manner?
3. **Interesting and Valuable**. How do we present course material in a manner that connects to students in a variety of disciplines?
4. **Confidence and Success.** How do we create an online environment that fosters confidence and success despite the newness of the material to students?
5. **Diversity.** How do we attract a wide range of continuing education and undergraduate students for strong sustained enrollment?

1. Online, yet Studio
The course is presented through an online interface that guides students through a linear progression of media and activities. Activities require that the student work step-wise between the online environment and hands-on projects. Online educational resources include readings, videos, image galleries, external links, rubrics, online submission tools, and an online studio in which students can display and comment on each others work. In addition to the online media, the course uses a paperback textbook, peer-reviewed articles, and weekly hands-on activities using a variety of materials.

2. Cohesive and Integrated
The course is divided into two halves. For the first half of the semester, students learn the anatomy of the head by building a forensic reconstruction of a human head out of clay and a life-like plastic skull. In this segment, each lesson involves both sculpting activity and a lab report. This lesson and submission formats provide opportunities for students who excel in either the sciences or art to excel, expand their understanding, and show their aptitudes.

3. Interesting and Valuable
During the second half of the semester, students take on a less-structured and increasingly self-directed project that involves their newfound knowledge of facial anatomy. This segment of the course offers four options from which students choose: Comparative Anatomy, Conceptual Anatomy, Portrait Sculpture, and 3D animation of the human head. The wide variety of options enables the students to use facial anatomy in a way that is meaningful to them as individuals. By sharing their work in the online studio, a broad spectrum of anatomical applications is revealed. The digital animation unit is the most popular unit. The likely reasons for this are twofold: the software and course materials for this unit are free, and it appeals to the sensibilities of popular culture. The comparative anatomy unit appeals to biology and anthropology majors, where the conceptual art unit draws many students with artistic interests across all disciplines. The portrait sculpture unit seems to attract fewer but seriously dedicated students.

4. Confidence and Success
Content: Within the lessons, detailed stepwise instructions are given, with photographs throughout. Led in small and discrete steps, students of any background can successfully complete the lessons. An embedded pictorial glossary, with links throughout the online content enables the use of scientific anatomical language without any intimidation.

Evaluation and Communication: Detailed rubrics are presented at the beginning of each lesson so that students clearly understand the goals and expectations of each lesson. Rubrics contain a relatively even mix of scientific and artistic criteria, ensuring fairness regardless of an individual student's of strength. The online rubrics also facilitate grading, so students can receive feedback on their work quickly. The instructor also provides individualized constructive critique for each submission. Communication for the course is primarily through email, which has proved to be accessible and convenient for both students and faculty. Face-to-Face office hours and informal course meet-ups have been scheduled, but are rarely attended by students. To-date students have preferred limiting interaction to the online environment.

Student Response: According to spontaneous voluntary feedback, as well as anonymous reporting at the end of each semester, students regularly meet course with enthusiasm and complete it with a sense satisfaction.

5. Diversity
The class is currently offered to students through local campus registration and Penn State World Campus registration. The course is listed as an Art Course, but is developed as a general education course that is available to all students. The class has been offered to over 120 students over 4 semesters, attracting students from departments ranging from fine arts, to engineering, to forensic science and psychology. The implementation of the course employs HTML, CSS, Drupal, and Angel CMS. The course is offered through the eLearning Institute at Penn State University.

Directions

- There has been relatively large attrition in the first two weeks of the course (~20%). We suspect that this has to do with students "holding" a place the course in case their schedule has room for it, and those who are not immediately comfortable with the online environment who opt for a traditional course. We continue to seek ways to reduce this initial attrition. Among our ideas are to send friendly email correspondence about the course ahead of the semester to build anticipation and ease concern, and softening any potentially intimidating content in the initial lessons.

- Due to the popularity and demand for the 3D animation unit, we are considering developing a similarly structured course for the entire figure that includes an expanded 3D animation section.

- There has been interest in using the course as a part of an online Forensic Science degree program at Penn State. A 2D forensic illustration module would be added to the existing course.

iPad & film education in a multi-disciplinary learning environment

Andrew Lee
University of the Arts, London

A demonstration of the use of the iPad in supporting learning in film production, specifically in engaging multi-disciplinary groups with an unfamiliar area of practice. Using the iPad as the sole technical device to complete a short film production, negotiated, planned and directed live by the student group. This is part of an opening session of a series.

The session begins with examples of production planning, research and scheduling methodologies and an opportunity for the students to reflect on their current practices. They are asked to make brief notes during these first stages, thinking about visual references they notice as the session progresses - ideas for shots - what would they film if they had to cover the lecture as a video event?

Their ideas can be emailed or Tweeted during this introductory stage and moving from pre-production to production negotiated and expanded through group discussion. The shoot is then planned using storyboards drawn on the iPad and when agreed, the shots are filmed utilising the camera app.

The filmed material is then edited live, constructing the negotiated sequence. A basic music soundtrack and titles are added and the final short piece is uploaded to an online account. The production process complete, the film is viewed for immediate feedback and a link emailed to the students for continued reflection, again, all from the iPad.
The lack of 'camera' and 'editing suite' removes pre-conceived obstacles and techno-fear that may otherwise hinder the learning experience. The sole use of iPad aims to make the production technology invisible thus emphasising thought, research and concept over technical considerations.

Pedagogically, this approach offers a blended learning environment, aiming to make teaching values explicit from the outset, signaling to the students a collaborative and open approach to learning. The student group takes on a level of ownership, demystifying the production process and focusing instead on the conceptual base of filmed content.
Furthermore this approach encourages concentration and real-time visual deconstruction techniques. This begins to engage the students with notions of structure and film language in moving image construction. It also aims to show openness and a self-reflective teaching approach - a willingness to be 'directed' by the student body encouraging wider participation and constructive peer review.

The ability to complete a full, albeit condensed production journey also highlights the parallel lessons for scholarly productivity in their respective disciplines - demonstrations of production methodologies for email, search and social media based research and archiving, exploring innovative approaches to idea mapping and planning. These are transferable skills to multiple activities.

This approach aims to encourage group cohesion in a multi-disciplinary environment and embed the first stage of understanding approaches to creative production. This can be a single lecture but can also be placed as the introduction to further sessions that build on the individual areas in more depth to reinforce the methodologies covered.

Del 2012 **Parallel Session 5**

Thurs 6 September | 4:00 - 5:30 | Stream 5C Room HH313

Yammering on: growing a constructive community to support and sustain lifelong learning

Tony Reeves
University for the Creative Arts

Postgraduate students at the University for the Creative arts have high expectations that their experience will be life-changing, and integral to meeting these expectations is the creation of a strong and supportive community. During an intense, 12-months course students from a diverse range of backgrounds and cultures embark on a creative journey that exposes them to a rich, inter-disciplinary programme of learning. As part of their experience they will share and discuss their work and ideas with fellow students and tutors in order to develop their practice.

And then they leave. Their departure often brings an end to many of the personal and professional relationships the students have developed as part of their course, but more importantly these new graduates no longer have access to the constructive, critical voice of the Postgraduate community. Feedback from graduates has indicated that the inability to discuss their work formally or informally, online or in the café, often has a negative effect on their practice.

This presentation examines ways of creating and sustaining an online community to support and sustain these students' lifelong learning beyond the end of their course. Research was undertaken by the course tutors in conjunction with a Learning Technologist to identify appropriate methodologies and technologies that would facilitate a constructive, self-sustaining online community. Consisting of students, tutors and practitioners, the purpose of this community was to enable learning conversations, critical reflection and information sharing to continue indefinitely. The research team began by exploring the available internal tools before looking to external collaboration platforms to provide a suitable solution. In addition to choosing an appropriate technology, the team also investigated the complexities involved in growing and sustaining a functioning online community of engaged learners.

This research is challenging Postgraduate students to take control of their learning experience by encouraging them to share ideas and support each other through critical conversations.

Collaborative peer assessment in large online course environments

Keith Shapiro
Pennsylvania State University

Online environments free educators from the limitations of physical classroom space yet provide students the potential of experiencing a robustly interactive learning environment. To achieve this, the online class-space can be an environment specifically designed to engage students in collaborative critical thinking as a method of learning.

Online environments also present the possibility of teaching large numbers of students without the need of the expensive physical infrastructures such as classroom facilities. Teachers often believe large class sizes present serious challenges that reduce or eliminate individualized teaching. However, online class space can be designed to critically connect students directly with each other's work regardless of the size of the class. In fact, it can be argued that, when designed properly, large online class environments can provide students with a greater level of critical feedback. An important key to achieving this is the use of peer assessment as a learning tool.

Research has shown peer assessment methods to be beneficial in the areas of feedback, reasoning ability, communication skills, and group work skills. Most importantly, in the large class environment, it is plentiful and has shown over time to be often as accurate as instructor or TA assessment.

At Penn State we have been experimenting with peer assessment techniques in our large-enrollment online photography course, Photo 100. This undergraduate general education course is comprised of students from every discipline. Our goal has been to help these students better evaluate the effectiveness of their digital photography under a variety of social contexts with different audience groups. Our large class groups, typically 400 to 500 bridging several sections, provide students with a diverse peer group demographic. This large group more closely resembles the modern multicultural and multidisciplinary audience for photographic work, which is more likely to be accessed through the Internet by varied audiences than it is anywhere else.

Since there is no single litmus test for the effectiveness of photographic work the critical intention of peer assessment in Photo 100 is to provide student with a clearer understanding of the communicative effectiveness of their photography across a broad spectrum of reviewers. Instead of relying on the critical evaluation of one (perhaps biased) instructor, we have developed unique applications that allows students to work in a virtual environment where they can show their photography to a large collaborative peer group, receive and give pertinent quantitative and qualitative critical evaluations, and statistically reveal the effectiveness of their photographic work across various sectors of the group. Thus, the peer evaluation method more closely relates to the challenges students will later face in understanding how various large and possible remote audiences will evaluate and accept their work, photographic or otherwise.

During my presentation I intend to discuss and demonstrate the techniques we are experimenting with in Photo 100, the relevant peer assessment and peer assisted learning research, and ways in which these techniques can span across other disciplines.

The use of video for student evaluation and feedback in art and design subjects

Lynne Hugill
Clevland College of Art and Design

‘Using video to bring feedback and evaluation from the written page to life’
This paper reports on the use of video for formative and summative feedback and student evaluation of art and design subjects. The study involved HE students at Cleveland College of Art & Design (CCAD) and shows how video can be used as a tool to increase collaboration between students and tutors, with the aim to increase learning. Initial findings show how students and staff enjoyed using the video for feedback and students gained improved feedback compared to in the usual written format. Tutors also gained an increased knowledge of the students development needs through the videoed student’s responses. The positive student feedback prompted further investigation of the video as a tool for student evaluations of art and design projects. Further ongoing studies allowed students to practice essential presentation and communication skills, whilst evaluating their progress. During the project the focus was on video as a media to increase student and tutor collaboration to enhance learning.

Introduction
Cleveland College of Art & Design (CCAD) is the only specialist art and design college in the north east of England and one of only three in the UK, in the further education sector. The college has an FE campus in Middlesbrough and an HE campus in Hartlepool. The project centers on the HE provision which delivers BA and FdA courses in Textiles, Photography, Entertainment Design Crafts, Graphics, Fashion, Film and Applied Arts. All the college's Higher Education courses are validated by Teesside University
The importance of feedback for effective learning is well known (Race, 2001[1]; Juwah et al., 2004[2]) but the type of feedback and the way it is given can be differentially effective (Hattie & Timperley 2007[3]). At CCAD students are given written formative and summative feedback during each module. A pilot was undertaken to evaluate the use of video feedback compared to written feedback on our BA and FdA fashion courses. During the pilot students choose to evaluate the video feedback also by video, this lead to trials of students using video as a media to evaluate their work. Design projects usually include a ‘Crit’ at the end of the project, tutors recorded student’s presentations, allowing the students to be able to watch the video again and learn how to improve their performance.

Approach used:
In the first trial tutors gave summative feedback using an iPad to film and give feedback to students on a BA level 5 fashion project. Students were given headphones and a computer to listen to the feedback. In the second trial a Flip camera replaced the iPad to film and give summative feedback to a group of level 5 FdA fashion students. Students listened to the feedback again on a laptop with headphones. The FdA students evaluated this method of feedback using the Flip camera and shared their responses with the tutors.

The student's use of the Flip camera as an evaluation tool inspired tutors to ask students to evaluate their projects using video. Screen Capture technology allows users to capture video and audio from the computer screen, which can be used as a communication tool between student and tutor. Using already available software 'Quicktime' for screen capture on the college Apple Macs, students were able to record evaluations of their projects for formative feedback. Student folders for individual access were set up, allowing students to share videos with tutors for the trial. Students could access the folders both on and off site. Tutors could evaluate student progress through accessing the videos. Where modules were taught by more than one member of staff, videos could be discussed to inform student Individual Learning Plans. Currently at CCAD although all courses use our Blackboard VLE, it is not used for grades and feedback. We would like to incorporate the use of video into the grade center when we upgrade our VLE early next year.

Using Flip cameras with mini tripods, tutors recorded student's presentation of their work at the end of module Crit. Students was able to watch the videos and gain feedback on their performance.

Results
The student feedback on the use of video for summative and formative feedback was very positive and all students in the trial preferred this method to written feedback. In each trial two tutors were involved in the feedback. Projects consisted of a sketchbook, final A3 boards and in the FdA project, also lingerie final garments and branded packaging. The tutors were able to point to specific areas for development, which the students found clearer than written comments. The video also recorded an overview of each project, which allowed the students to revisit the project, evaluate and reflect. Students liked the option to replay the videos and view the comments away from other students and staff. A surprising result of videoing the work was the impact on the tutors, when comparing student development needs, some tutors found that where videos had been used they could recall students work and ILP's easier than projects where written feedback was given. The use of the Flip camera as a tool proved a better option than the iPad. The Flip camera's ease of use and software improved workflow. The iPad was heavy to hold when recording compared to the Flip camera. Students could easily film and view videos using the Flip camera and due to low comparative cost we were able to purchase several cameras for student use. Some tutors were reluctant to use the video, but after recording the videos did could see clear benefits. Initially the recordings took longer than written feedback, but with practice tutors were able to record more quickly and with further practice this could be more comparable with time taken for written feedback.

The initial trials of using screen capture software for student evaluations are still ongoing at this point. Level six students have submitted videos for formative feedback on their fashion illustrations for their Final Major Projects. Tutors who taught on the module were able to view and discuss the work together to give more united feedback. The trials will continue to include evaluations of the Final Major Projects, allowing students to practice critical thinking and presentation skills preparing them for the workplace. Tutors will be able to use the evaluations for marking.

Level four BA and FdA student presentations were videoed and tutors were also able to record comments for students to review. Initially some students were not happy about the use of the video, but could see the benefits of watching the performance and been able to learn from experience. As presentations are an essential part of a fashion designers role, this method also helped students be more organised and better prepared for the crit.

Conclusion
The results from our initial studies on video for feedback and evaluation are extremely positive. Students reported increased learning from the feedback and a better understanding of their development needs. The tutors who took part could also see more benefits with the use of video. From the videoed evaluations, tutors gained a better understanding of the students, which improved student/tutor relationships. The college will continue to develop efficiency and workflow of the use of video and the integration into the VLE.

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