

The Handbook of Innovative Teaching Project Report

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One of things that immediately struck me when I came to Warwick was that if you had an idea about how to teach something a little bit differently the answer wasn't "no", it was "why not?"

Professor Michael Scott (Classics and Ancient History), National Teaching Fellow

We need to share the excellent practice that is undoubtedly going on at Warwick [...] You can witness some great people doing great things and we just need to get out and see them.

Kate Mawson, Senior Teaching Fellow (Centre for Teacher Education)

What I take to be innovative teaching is something that has a more profoundly transformative affect [...] and that transformative affect might not manifest in the form of achieving higher academic marks but it might have some profoundly meaningfully impact on the student in other ways.

Ruth Leary, Associate Professor (Cultural and Media Policy Studies)

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Introduction

Innovative teaching is being developed and enacted in our learning spaces through responses to the particular demands and circumstances experienced by students and educators daily. As such, this project aimed to find those passionate, creative and dedicated individuals who are pushing boundaries to achieve the goal of an excellent educational experience, and to share their practice with the wider teaching community for inspiration.

The project defined innovation as arising organically from a diverse collection of ideas, presenting insights from staff and students working in a broad spectrum of departments. This allowed us to gather information from over 30 different academic departments and university services. In particular, during the 2015/16 academic year, 55 members of staff were interviewed; 4 focus groups were conducted with staff and students; 13 teaching sessions were observed; and 4 university learning events were attended.

The project team included two undergraduate researchers, led by a postgraduate researcher. As student researchers they offered invaluable insight and perspective when taking the 'pulse' of teaching and learning at the university. The student researchers particularly inspired and helped shape the 'Student as Teacher' concept and the 'Understanding Students' section.

Many of the educators interviewed are driven by intellectual curiosity and are committed to creating new opportunities for their students to participate in the creation of knowledge. This report provides inspirational examples and discussions of innovative teaching and offers reflective questions to identify and realise new collaborations. It is designed to motivate readers to reflect on what innovative teaching means to them and how they might translate these ideas into teaching practice. The project report therefore moves between different tones of voice, from a descriptive overview to interactive sections presented in boxes. This approach extends the innovative practices under consideration into an open-ended opportunity for the reader to reflect upon their own pedagogy.

Part One: Innovation and Teaching

Defining Innovation

These are just some questions to get you started on thinking about innovation and teaching practice.

- When you read the word ‘innovation’ what springs to mind? Theories, ideas, images, words?
- When you think of ‘innovative teaching’ what occurs to you?
- What positive or useful connotations attach to these notions? What is negative?
- What happens when you use some of these ideas and phrases as search terms?
- What is innovative teaching?

Innovation is seen as the embedding of a novel response to a problem or set of issues and innovative teaching is seen as teaching which engages with this process. There are four considerations that follow from using this definition that are useful for readers to bear in mind when using this report.

1. Innovation responds to an issue. The innovative process is not initiated for its own sake but for the sake of responding to a problem or issue. Without such a focus, what is happening is free play rather than innovation. As such, this report is structured to help you identify which problems and issues you would like to tackle and then think about how to approach them.

That is not to say that innovation cannot arise from playful activity. This is particularly the case if playfulness is a disposition to identify which rules are artificially created and imposed and to then change them or create new rules. Playful activity is thus precisely the kind of re-orientating and experimental activity that innovation often needs to get going.¹

2. Innovation involves the adding of value and embedding of practice. A direct upshot of innovation responding to issues is that it is deemed successful when it demonstrates added value by solving the problem it set out to address. IFSTAL’s (Innovative Food Systems Teaching and Learning) Education Co-ordinator Kelly Reed thought the need for embedding teaching practice helped explain why educators continue to call many things innovative even when the ideas and techniques contained have been around for a long time. Even if methods have been seen multiple times elsewhere, but appear to be a revelation within a new context, then they are sometimes classified as innovative and will retain this label until they are widely adopted, embedded and therefore, legitimised. Hence, this report is also geared towards helping educators reflect on how they might embed their own and other’s successful teaching practices.

3. The innovation must be separated from the innovative process. Many of the existing innovative teaching projects tend to focus on one instance of innovation, which may lead to a limited view of one project within its context. However, this report does not provide examples of generic innovation

¹ If you want to look at more activities to help you be playful in your approach to teaching then IATL’s *Playbox* is an excellent place to start:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/activities/projects/playfulnessinhighereducation

but instead details specific reflections on innovative teaching that encourage users to map their own innovative process. In other words, it takes instances of innovation as springboards for activity rather than centrepieces.

4. Innovation is contextual. It is maintained that there are spheres of innovation and this was an intuition shared by almost all the staff interviewed. For example, a teacher or department might legitimately say that something is an innovative approach or idea *for them* regardless of whether the same thing has been applied elsewhere, and they can be said to be innovating if they arrived at the idea without encountering it in use somewhere else. As such, the reader may encounter some ideas that they do not deem to be innovative or may even see as commonplace. However, the hope is that every reader will encounter at least one example or idea that is innovative for their sphere and can take something away about the process of innovation in general. Additionally, those who have not attempted to innovate before can access innovation through ideas that may be overlooked by others more familiar with innovative teaching practice.

Whilst some of the fundamentals of good teaching practice appear because of the talented educators who are quoted and whose projects and ideas permeate these pages- this is not an introduction to good teaching.

Approaches to Innovative Teaching

Your teaching philosophy²

"I think innovative practice is about a motivation and an ethos [...] What am I doing as a teacher? What is education for? What kinds of relationships am I trying to develop? How does what I'm teaching relate to the real world? If you start articulating from that as the value base of what you do, then the practice will come out of it." Will Curtis

"I just see it as my practice. I don't make a distinction between what is innovative and what isn't; it's just the way I approach things." Ruth Leary

University educators may have already thought about their teaching philosophy, but clearly articulating it is particularly important when innovating, as it can give direction to their process. For example, considering what issues exist within current models of teaching that one wants to challenge, can help articulate alternative futures for higher education and new ideas of innovative teaching.

These are just some questions to get you started on thinking about your teaching philosophy.

- What is teaching and what is a teacher?
- Why do I teach and what am I trying to achieve?
- What is education for?
- What is a university for and what should it be trying to achieve?
- How do I hope students are different after one of the following?
 - Attending one of my lectures/seminars/workshops?
 - Taking one of my modules?
 - Being supervised by me?
 - Being a student in my department?
 - Completing a degree in my department?
 - Their time at the University of Warwick?
- What kind of relationship am I hoping to achieve with my students?
- How do/should I interact with colleagues or students who don't share my philosophy or hold different values?
- Is there a better way of doing what I'm doing and why am I not doing it if there is?
- Have my opinions on these questions changed over time? How? Why?
- Are there other answers to them and why don't I agree if there are?

You may want to summarise and articulate the fundamental principles of your teaching philosophy by looking for recurrent themes and ideas in your responses.

² A lot of this section was influenced by material from Phil's teaching on sports coaching, especially Cassidy, T., Jones, R. & Potrac, P. 2009. *Understanding Sports Coaching*, 2nd ed., New York, Routledge, pp.55-64

Considering such questions can also help us communicate our intentions and reasoning more clearly when writing funding applications or when speaking to other members of staff and, crucially, to our students.

A teaching philosophy is not a static thing and it is rare to be able to hold a single, entirely coherent ideal. The interpersonal relationships and shifting context of the classroom often make that impossible. As such, trying to frame a teaching philosophy in terms of generalised, immovable maxims can be problematic. Moving into uncharted territory can often lead to goals being called into question, presenting problems for even the most fundamental of ideas. It is suggested that educators continually revisit their teaching philosophy throughout any innovative process. You can test the flexibility of your philosophy by looking for absolute statements in your answers and asking yourself: should I *always* adhere to this or can I conceive of scenarios that are going to be problematic? Do you need to adapt or qualify your philosophy in response to this?

Similarly, if you come across a significant or difficult teaching moment, note down what happened and what you did. Did you act in accordance with your teaching philosophy? If not, why not? Do you need to change your philosophy to fit with the principle you acted by or do you need to identify how you could act differently if you still think your philosophy is applicable, achievable and best?

More playfully, you may take the opportunity every now and then to completely rethink your teaching philosophy. Adorning the glass of The Teaching Grid at the University of Warwick Library are Joseph Boyes' words: "To be a teacher is my greatest work of art." Many of us will also have heard some derivative of the famous phrase "Teaching is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire" or the rhyme "Be a 'guide on the side' rather than a 'sage on the stage'". How about Parker Palmer's, "I [have] learned that my gift as a teacher is to be able to dance with my students,"³ or L Dee Fink's "the teacher [is] the helmsman for the learning experience"⁴? Many of these are metaphors or are informed by metaphor. Take a second now to write down ten different metaphors that begin "teaching is...".

Once you have done that, try to think: "if this were the metaphor I ascribed to, how would that mean I would teach?" Are there are positives to this different approach to teaching you might want to incorporate?

Given that innovation occurs within departmental, faculty and institutional contexts, many of the educators interviewed suggested reflecting on teaching philosophies and projects in relation to the pedagogic philosophies that already exist at Warwick. The below are three examples of pedagogies that were highlighted to us as a starting point. However, they are just three amongst many, and they should be supplemented by, at least, reading Warwick's Education Strategy and the ADC webpages.

³ 1997, *Courage to Teach*, New York, Wiley & Sons, p.72

⁴ 2013, *Significant Learning Experience*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, p.278

1. Student as Producer

It has become common for educators in higher education to voice the opinion that undergraduate students approach their learning as passive consumers of knowledge and information; “they act as though someone else should take responsibility for their learning (isn’t that what they are paying for?)”.⁵ Whether this is fair or not, and wherever this perception derives from, many of the educators and case studies in this report challenge it by providing students with the opportunity and support to become active researchers and producers. Cathia Jenainati addresses this in relation to the supervision of undergraduate dissertations and asks herself, what framework is needed “to facilitate a student’s transition from dependent disciples to creative, critical and independent producers of ideas”?⁶ The idea of Student as Producer is one that has taken a firm hold at Warwick.

What does the phrase ‘Student as Producer’ mean to you? Is this something that you see as important to your own teaching philosophy? Why/Why not?

Are you aware of the following resources available internally?

Reinvention Centre:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/cetl/about/evaluation/reinvention_centre_final_evaluation_report.pdf

The Kings-Warwick Graduate Pledge:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/cetl/fundingopps/centreprojects/graduatepledge/

2. Learning from failure

The staff interviewed work beyond the fear of failure, considering it to be a legitimate risk within pedagogic practice and an important part of the process of change. Thus learning from failure is central to experimental teaching and to enabling innovation. In general, they seemed comfortable that the university is a place full of determined, resilient and focused individuals who recognise the necessity of creative failure, support each other through it, and trust one another to make use of the lessons to be learned. They recognised, as Jeremy Smith put it, that “we must expect four to five failures for every one successful project and not blame and admonish people for this”.

⁵ Cotterill, S. 2015. ‘Tearing up the page: re-thinking the development of effective learning environments in higher education’, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 52:4, Oxon, Routledge, pp.403-413 [409]

⁶ Jenainati, C. 2015. ‘Framework for Practitioners 1: Coaching for Research Supervision’, *Coaching in Professional Contexts*, C. van Nieuwerburgh (ed.), London, SAGE, pp.159-60

Do you agree? What is the role of creative failure in innovative teaching? Are there any conditions under which a failure in innovative teaching might be considered unacceptable? How can you add to this ethos in your own teaching practice and process?

Here are some resources from pedagogic projects that have made room for creative failure at Warwick:

CAPITAL Centre: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/capital/about/hefce_final_evaluation/
Open-space Learning in Real-World Contexts: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/sharing-practice/formative/archived-projects/osl

3. Social Constructivism

Vygotsky “argued that all cognitive functions originate in (and must therefore be explained as products of) social interactions and that learning did not simply comprise the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community” [gsi.berkeley.edu, accessed 23/05/19]⁷. We found that several Warwick innovators were informed by this approach to teaching and learning.

“A lot of innovation in this university stems from a set of epistemological and ontological assumptions about how knowledge is created and construed. It comes from a constructivist paradigm, in which you need to believe that the world is changeable, that students are always becoming and not finished, that knowledge is provisional and contestable, and that we understand the world not on our own but in relation with others. That is a deep epistemological foundation which, if you don’t believe in it, then a lot of the innovative work done here is not going to be for you.” Jonathan Neelands

Do you agree with the conditions of this paradigm? Why/why not?

Do you see your own thoughts as being in line with any theoretical frameworks?

Further information is available here: <https://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/learning-theory-research/social-constructivism/>

⁷ Vygotsky, Lev (1978). *Mind in Society*. London: Harvard University Press.

Structuring for innovation

“We may not agree on what we consider innovative, but the more we can share that practice and the more we can talk about it then the more we might be able to move towards that next step of collective innovation.” Jonathan Heron

“If you’re innovative in a bubble where no one cares about what you’re doing and you’re not making connections with anyone else then you’re just being an eccentric – you have to build those relationships and you have to explore where your practice intersects with what other people need and do.” Juliet Raynsford

In their paper ‘What can managers do for creativity?’⁸, Warwick’s Chris Bilton and Ruth Leary argue that the popular image of the creative genius – a divergent thinker with access to an irrational understanding of the world and subject to spontaneous moments of insight – has led organisations to produce environments that stifle creativity. These organisations overlook the fact that creativity does not regularly stem from an individual making isolated, unprecedented and sudden leaps forward but is more likely to be part of an incremental and collective process. As such, it is not enough for an organisation to focus upon providing temporary funding, time, space, and permission to creatively engage with problems or concepts. If the individual is not situated within an environment which contains a stable and supportive community, one which recognises that the necessary process is a prolonged one, then their creatively charged state is likely to amount to very little.

Instead, an organisation must seek to create structures and spaces for sharing ideas and materials between diverse bodies of people where their contributions can unpredictably collide. Although Chris and Ruth’s paper distinguishes creativity from innovation in different ways (which were presented earlier), terminology aside, the ideas can be productively interpreted for our purposes. Structures that allow for collaboration as well as idea collision and exchange are necessary if innovative teaching within Warwick is to flourish for exactly the reasons their paper highlights. Innovation, like creativity, is often not the product of individual moments of insight and genius, but of communal collaboration, incremental adaptations, and the unusual moments that occur during such processes.

The Warwick Education Conference, Academic Development Centre events, the Teaching Grid’s ‘Windows on Teaching’ sessions, and faculty and departmental away days are part of the attempt to create such structures and environments. The Centre for Professional Education (CPE) stood out as one of the university’s instances of excellent teaching practice in this area.

After speaking to the teaching fellows for secondary school initial teacher training and the Head of Primary Teacher Education Des Hewitt,⁹ as well as observing one of the department’s core

⁸ Bilton, C. & Leary, R. 2002. ‘What can managers do for creativity?’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1, 49-64

⁹ See Des’ co-authored book *Innovative Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools* (2015) for a variety of ideas and reflective tasks useful for understanding innovation not only in primary but all areas of education.

secondary school Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) teaching days, it became clear that the ways in which CPE staff work as a team and encourage trainee educators to develop their own teaching practice through collaboration, has created an environment that nurtures individual teaching innovations and supports the innovative process.

The core PGCE teaching days, such as the one observed, are designed by CPE to enable their trainee's development as educators, but they are also sources of innovation, and model outstanding teaching practice in terms of supporting the innovative process. Having regular, dedicated days and forums during which trainees can share their experiences of sustained teaching practice in schools means they can communicate and discuss the positives and negatives of the techniques, technologies, and lesson plans they are using, as well as gather ideas and teaching practice from each other. They are also actively encouraged to select and try new approaches in their respective schools before the next training day. The trainees are offered continual support as they adjust the materials they encounter for their context.

Interdisciplinary collaboration during tasks and presentations on these days also means the trainees and staff are exposed to a variety of discipline-specific technologies and techniques that they may otherwise miss. These tasks and presentations are followed with scaffolded reflection on generalisable concepts and skills. As such, staff and students are involved in the unpredictable collisions within a diverse environment, and even if nothing presents itself as immediately relevant, the process means their teaching toolkit is rapidly expanded in diverse ways. It is this toolkit that can then create avenues for innovation, as well as develop the educator's ability to improvise when teaching.

The CPE teaching fellows we interviewed highlighted that a similar process occurred within their team. They team teach, support each other in using new technologies or techniques, review each other's ideas, practices, and processes for developing ideas, and create new lesson plans and courses that involve collective endeavours. Indeed, it was highlighted by the team that having regular and honest team discussion is a major factor in allowing them to continue to innovate in their teaching.

CPE not only fosters an incremental model of innovation but the department has also created environments that allow for the dissemination of a diverse range of ideas, and this process is supported by the kind of ethos of collaboration and mutual development that is argued for by Chris and Ruth.

CPE focuses on teacher training, and their staff are experts in teacher training and the practice of teaching across all levels of education. As such, they already have an abundance of the theoretical and practical expertise, which Chris and Ruth identify as a prerequisite for creative or innovative activity. The authors of this report hope that CPE's expertise can be disseminated and built upon elsewhere in the university, but, in the meantime, the individual reader should not be dissuaded from striving to develop structures around themselves that support innovation.

You can become part of the wider teaching community by attending the next institutional Education Conference (ADC) or Teaching Grid 'Windows on Teaching' session. After attending, take an idea you've heard about in a session and try it out. If possible, we suggest signing up to give a talk yourself, so you can invite others to reflect with you on your experience.

You could also try to start your own community. For example, create a reading group with a practical twist within your department or with other educators you know. You could use this report, IATL's Open Space Learning (OSL) website, the *HE Playbox*, or readings on teaching methods and lesson planning you have discovered yourself. After the reading group, everyone should set themselves something to try out before the next meeting and be ready to report back on their experience. Additionally, you could also consider creating situations that cross institutional boundaries, which may foster less predictable feedback, and subsequently, new areas for innovation. For example, you could invite educators from other departments to your reading group or, if you know a teacher in another department, ask if you can observe one of their sessions and they one of yours.

Working with Students

Understanding students

"I think it's a mistake to imagine that the greatest resistance to innovation is going to come from staff. It is more likely to be the case that the first level of resistance will come from students themselves because innovative teaching can be different and challenging for students, especially those who have been successful in a more traditional education system." Jonathan Neelands

One should consider the mindset of a student in order to identify what they find valuable, the skills they will find useful, and the material they will find interesting. This is a desire that underpins good teaching practice in general, but it is also essential to successful innovation.

Understanding students can direct educators towards areas that may require intervention. This was a sentiment expressed by several of the people interviewed. For example, David Wood stated that "innovative teaching should be driven by a desire to cater to the needs of the student"; Cathia Jenainati stressed that "the essence of innovation comes from need and the students will tell you what they need"; and Leanne Williams maintained that "the very basis of innovation is student feedback: what students want, what students need". Try to think of one of your current classes and ask yourself: Why are your students there? What do they want to learn about? How have they learned in the past? How might it be best for them to learn in the future?

As Rachel Dickinson stressed, we often think we know the answers to these questions when we are merely assuming them. She argued that we need to pause and recognise that "what may be familiar and comfortable for you, may be the complete opposite for your students". So take a look at the questions again and ask yourself which of your answers are you certain of and which are assumptions? If they are assumptions, what caused them?

The drive to make sure that student's perceptions of learning and meaningful education are catered for lies at the heart of Warwick Business School's (WBS) first-year compulsory module CORE Practice. For example, in a lecture entitled 'Future Selves', data collected about the student's perceptions and their personal career aspirations was captured, displayed online, reviewed and discussed. This data was not just invaluable to course leaders but to the students as well who were made aware of the diverse perspectives present in the student body they were a part of.

A similar idea underpins Madeleine Findon's story-based seminar for her 'Literacy and Numeracy in the Early Years' module. The seminar begins with Maddy inviting everyone around a makeshift "fire" of twigs and post-it note flames. She explains how her teaching practice is based in Early Childhood educational philosophies of play and in concrete or memorable experience as the core of effective learning. "We are going to share stories," she continues, "and they will centre around personal anecdotes in response to the post-it prompts drawn from the fire." All students have their turn with carefully selected prompts such as: "Tell us about a time when you felt your learning had *no* purpose", "Share a time when you felt that your contribution has been valued" and "Tell us about a time when

work felt like play". Each anecdote must be accompanied by a link to a learning theory from the lecture earlier in the week. Classmates are invited to help with drawing the theoretical links if anyone feels they are struggling.

In designing such a seminar, Maddy manages a very efficient and effective recap of abstract theories of learning, ranging from Vygotsky's Social Learning Theory to Skinner's concept of Extrinsic Motivation. However, she also allows students to create links to them in personal stories, not only giving the theories relevance to the students but helping her learn more about them and their ties to the material she is teaching.

Both of the approaches described above demonstrate not only how you can break the ice with students, but how you can get to know them as learners and gather relevant information for your teaching.

For example, you might try designing a questionnaire for a new seminar group which helps you get a sense of their learning profiles and expectations. Once you have collected the results, look at the makeup of the group: is there anything unexpected that makes you rethink how you were planning to run the module? With their permission, you could share the results with the group and discuss what they think would be the best way to run the sessions in light of them.

Rather than a questionnaire, you might try an activity like Maddy's and use a series of prompts to elicit responses with potential links to abstract concepts from the module. Or, you might consider removing the theoretical link and do a similar task simply to find out more about the class' educational makeup.

You might also want to review your current feedback forms. Do they help students identify their learning needs and express where issues may have arisen during the course, or do they expect that all students will already be able to do this and are comfortable saying so?

Whether getting students to fill in questionnaires, tell stories, or something completely different, remember that it's about getting to know your students in order to understand who they are and what they need (the basis for innovation) as well as how they might respond to the methods you employ and what support you need to provide (the framework in which your innovations must sit).

How do students currently perceive innovative teaching at the university? This project's undergraduate researchers, Dominic and Laura, conducted a focus group with students who had taken some of the modules that were being researched for the report, as well as a HearNow 'snap poll' (a resource provided by Warwick IT services for gathering opinions of registered users through short questionnaires called 'snap polls') over two weeks in March 2016. The poll received 682 responses from students across all years and areas of undergraduate study.

They encountered some issues with the HearNow 'snap poll' format which limited the conclusions that could be inferred.¹⁰ However, they did get a flavour of what the students believed to be innovative teaching. In response to the question, "Could you give an example of a session that you would describe as 'innovative' and what you learned from it?", students across all years consistently highlighted lectures, seminars, and workshops that included: students having to adopt or defend an unfamiliar perspective, the use of unexpected objects to explain concepts, physical activity, "real-world" situations and applications, field trips, high levels of dialogic interaction between students and educators, and the representation of ideas and concepts in unexpected forms. Perhaps most pertinent for students was a fear of obtaining low grades because they chose to engage with an innovative teaching project or had an innovative teaching method trialled in one of their classes. Their concerns about potential low grades were expressed in both the survey and focus groups, and this concern has also featured in previous IATL module feedback evaluations.

"I would say students tend to be more worried about the outcome rather than the process. There have been much more options in innovative courses offered in the university since I first came here, but the tension about choosing to take on an "innovative module" remains the risk of getting a low-grade in it." 4th Year English Literature and Creative Writing

"While I believe interdisciplinary learning and risk-taking is important and should be encouraged amongst students in their academic work, it can also be unrealistic to make students do that when they are concerned about graduating with the best possible grade having invested so much money in the course." 1st Year Politics and International Studies

"We've created such a culture of success that we can no longer fail without feeling inadequate [...] Everyone is so set to follow a mark scheme that they don't dare to try as hard because the higher you fly, the harder you fall. No one wants to take a risk that could lead to an amazing process and work because they don't know that it would end well for them." 3rd Year IATL Student

Thinking about the assessment of innovative teaching projects is explored in a later section but what is addressed next is how students might overcome their initial fear of innovative teaching. Some educators stressed the importance of clarity, in particular of communicating what is going to occur on the module as early and explicitly as possible. They explained the importance of building a sense of trust and allowing room for failure in the process by limiting the impact of the innovation upon the overall objective of the module or by establishing mechanisms to evaluate the intervention.

¹⁰ The survey was designed so the authors could learn about individuals but were unaware the software is not set up to track individual responses throughout the questionnaire but instead to amass responses to particular questions.

Student as Teacher

“We have this massive, untapped resource at our fingertips...and that’s our student cohort.” Leanne Williams

“Taking part in this project has connected me to different departments. I have accessed the university in a way I could not have done as an English Literature undergraduate otherwise. It’s changed my approach to learning as, by understanding more of what makes efficient teaching, I’ve become more aware as a student and a more active learner.” Laura Primiceri

As was noted earlier, many of the educators at Warwick have tried to provide students with the opportunity and support to become active researchers and producers of knowledge. Whilst the idea of Student as Producer is one that has been embedded within the university, others have sought to encourage active and engaged learning through the idea of Student as Teacher.

1. (Re)Engaging Students: Widening Participation

Many departments at Warwick have widening participation [WP] or outreach programmes. Although not their exclusive goal, they often introduce subjects and university learning to the next generation of potential students by placing undergraduate students in schools or having them lead classes and workshops for secondary school students visiting the university. The undergraduate student thus adopts the role of class leader and teacher. This experience normally leads to the student-teacher’s own learning being positively impacted:

“We’re not only giving the undergraduates a chance to experience what teaching is like, but we’re also giving them the opportunity to understand the subject better by teaching it to others. On top of that, they often have the opportunity to explore and explain why they do what they do and why it’s important or valuable.” Michael Scott

Michael identifies how participation in such projects can actively (re)engage students with their own learning and subject in two ways. Firstly, the teaching scenario often requires a different interaction with and understanding of the set material – particularly if the student-teacher wishes to be able to explain it clearly and accessibly, field questions confidently, and offer alternative ways of approaching concepts for struggling students. Indeed, this sort of idea underpins some peer-to-peer revision groups and class presentations. However, the live nature of these teaching encounters not only stimulates further and more focused engagement with the material but prompts a move towards understanding as opposed to rote learning.

Secondly, because of the nature of the project, or because they are asked outright by a student, the student-teacher is prompted to reflect on and clearly articulate their understanding of their discipline’s nature and value: *why do I feel this was a valuable subject to study and why would I*

*encourage others to do so?*¹¹ In responding to this question, they heighten their own sense of why what they are doing is worthwhile, reinforce why they should apply themselves, and are perhaps reminded of what motivated them to choose their discipline in the first place.

Even without engaging with WP, you could capitalise on the above benefits by getting your students to write down their answers to the following questions: Why is studying this discipline valuable? What do you think the goals of studying it should be?

You may decide to do this as a brief activity at the start of class and gather in the responses or you might use them for a group discussion. If the former, we would suggest articulating why you wanted them to do this and mentioning these reasons in future sessions, so there is no perception of this being a redundant task. If the latter, make sure you note down further ideas which come up in discussion.

Try to find some time to look at their answers, your notes, and perhaps also your own answers to the questions. Do you think you teach or pitch your sessions in a way that addresses their answers? Is there a gap between your values and goals and theirs? Does this need to be addressed, if there is?

As a more playful activity, you might pick a value/goal at random from their answers and re-write a lesson or, briefly, your module as if this were the key learning outcome. Do any interesting or valuable ideas arise from this process?

2. *Students creating content*

The Student as Teacher model does not only have the potential to (re)engage students with the course and their learning but offers the opportunity for each year's cohort to contribute to the process of teaching innovation at the university.

For example, Leanne Williams discussed the Life Sciences 'Digichamps' project. IATL funding allowed Life Sciences to employ students with specific skills and abilities in the digital area to help the department develop teaching and learning resources. Leanne wanted to create instructional videos on lab techniques to inform, upskill, and inspire new undergraduates before they arrived and to supplement the dense and somewhat inaccessible lab manual they were given previously. However, whilst the creation of new and more user-friendly resources was a huge upside to the project, Leanne identified its real innovation as being the use of students to create them. Not only is the quality of the student's work outstanding, but, as Leanne put it, whilst the academic kept ownership over the content that needed to be taught, the students informed their understanding of how to improve teaching.

Another example of students creating teaching material can be found in The Centre for Modern Languages' 'Adopt a Class' project. This project seeks to connect undergraduate language students

¹¹ On a practical note, if you run a WP programme and don't do this with your students then the authors strongly suggest it; there's nothing worse than being caught flat-footed if a student challenges you on the value of what you're doing with them.

on their Year Abroad with trainee PGCE Modern Foreign Languages educators, in order to enhance the latter's access to cultural objects and insights for their teaching. Students are tasked with identifying and collecting "culturally significant artefacts in their host countries that could be used to enhance language teaching and learning [...] and develop them into learning resources."¹² One student from the project commented: "It's given me ideas for lesson plans for students here and it's really rewarding to see how my work and other's work towards the project is helping other students and educators in both England and in France." Although not fully-trained educators, these students have gathered a variety of useful teaching artefacts and created numerous lesson plans.

Warwick's Centre for Professional Education has also created accredited modules for a variety of subjects as part of the Warwick in Schools [WinS] programme.¹³ Students on these modules engage with several key themes in contemporary education through readings and seminars alongside learning from current educators in practical-based workshops before teaching in schools. Will Haywood, who currently runs WinS, told us that it was the "authentic experience" of the module that engages the students and helps make the programme so successful: "It's real, the students aren't just talking about going into schools, they're doing it. They're learning about something and then applying it directly as a practitioner [...] And there's a professional element to the whole thing. When the students are in school they're treated as professionals by their school mentors and colleagues [...] what is expected of them is the same as any other member of staff."

Lifting the veil on teaching practices and involving students in them in the above ways can also allow students to offer direct insights on our teaching practice. Cathia Jenainati explained how she employs a GROWTH and coaching model to undergraduate dissertation supervision: "Self-reflection is a powerful tool for educators but it can only reveal to us a limited amount of information. For the past couple of years, I have invited students to coach me, using the GROWTH model, with a specific goal of understanding my own praxis and improving it. Although I have only been coached by two students so far, I have found the process invaluable, enabling, and deeply moving."¹⁴

Finally, in creating this report, the author asked Dominic and Laura to observe him teaching two of his modules, which not only scaffolded their research but was an invaluable exercise for him. They offered insights from the student perspective that he had not thought of and spoke to their peers after the sessions in a way that it is difficult for a tutor to replicate.

With so many students engaged in the teaching process in such an active and professional fashion, how can we capitalise on this and use these students' experiences to help us innovate in university teaching?

¹² Hampton, C. 2016. 'Cultural discovery as a post-year abroad agent of change for UK modern language students', *Comparative and International Education*, 45 (2), article 3, <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/87794>

¹³ Currently, the module offers biology, chemistry, mathematics, drama and theatre studies, languages, and primary school placements, but demand for the programme to be expanded to other departments is growing.

¹⁴ Jenainati, C. 2015. 'Framework for Practitioners 1: Coaching for Research Supervision', *Coaching in Professional Contexts*, C. van Nieuwerburgh (ed.), London, SAGE, pp.166.

Taking a lead from 'Adopt a Class', you could try asking students to identify objects which they feel offer an insight into the topic of the module or their discipline and dedicate a seminar to discussing these objects: Why did they pick that object? What insight or piece of information does it represent or give to them? What does that say about how they feel or view the topic and discipline? At some point during the seminar you could ask whether they feel any of their objects would help others gain an insight into the topic at hand or would make for good discussion pieces and why. You may want to stop there but you could also try to incorporate some of their objects into a different seminar, your future teaching, or develop an extra seminar where the students devise presentations and activities based upon their objects for other students or staff.

You might also consider proposing a department-level festival of student-led sessions. These could be based on sessions run as part of WP or other programmes that have involved students going into schools. For example, students could run a one-day event or short courses of three to five weekly sessions based upon their own studies and interests. To keep innovation at the core, we suggest that these shouldn't take the form of a conference or lecture series but should involve the students taking the lead on formulating and facilitating seminars or other workshops and could even include some sort of assessment. Additionally, team-teaching with educators in the sessions could help support the students but also lead to dynamic, unique and exciting collaborations.

To highlight student experience and to solidify what students have gained from these experiences, we suggest rounding off such events with reflection from students on how the experience has changed them and their perceptions of teaching and learning.

Part Two: Case Studies

Bringing Learning to Life (Classics and Ancient History)

“In a subject like Classics the core material will often remain fairly static so it is crucial to think about new approaches, technologies, and techniques for getting students to engage with that material and to challenge their understanding of the ancient world and how it applies to them.” Michael Scott

Warwick’s Department of Classics and Ancient History is conspicuous in its commitment to experimenting with technology and practical workshops to enhance learning. Some of the teaching projects have been used by the department to: (a) increase active and embodied student engagement as an aid to subject understanding, (b) develop a sense of collegiality between staff and students and have the latter identify themselves as empowered researchers, and (c) address any perception students may have that theirs is a purely text-based degree, detached from professional development and only alive insofar as it is historically reported.

It is the researchers’ belief that part of the department’s success in innovating stems from the feeling of community amongst the teaching staff. Although only a few observations and interviews took place, going into the Classics department was always a motivating experience. Those spoken to were not only passionate about their own teaching projects but were clearly knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and supportive of the projects being conducted by their colleagues. Indeed, Alison Cooley highlighted that innovation in teaching is regularly discussed during staff meetings in the Classics department, with postgraduate and undergraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) representatives, and part of their departmental webpage is dedicated to the IATL projects they are engaged in. As such, not only do the staff receive crucial practical and emotional support when innovating but, as this report has previously discussed as imperative, they are exposed to a variety of ideas and approaches which they can draw upon in the future.

Do you know what innovative teaching projects others in your department are involved in or who is experimenting in the classroom? If not, try to find out by searching Insite, IATL and Warwick International Higher Education Academy (WIHEA) webpages. You could also ask your students, as they see a broad spectrum of teaching in the department and, increasingly, across the university.

“Studying classical literature should not be perceived as a literary critical exercise executed by the student and assessed by the teacher, but as a holistic activity which uses the body as well as mind and which fosters communication, imagination and team working skills.” Zahra Newby

Zahra Newby’s Academic Fellowship ‘Seeing, experiencing, doing: Learning the methods of ancient art through performance and participation’ and Pedagogic Intervention ‘Performative learning of the techniques of ancient Roman mosaic’ brought specialists into the department to run practical and active sessions. In the former, students engaged with activities such as stone carving, fresco painting, bronze casting, and building. In the latter, students created ancient Roman mosaics. Not only did students gain a practical understanding of the constraints involved in these activities and the factors that influenced the choices of themes and images, but Zahra felt that by getting involved and placing herself alongside the students during the workshops she created a space “in which the

traditional barrier between learner and lecturer is broken down and all become equal and active participants in a collaborative learning experience [...] [I] challenged and broadened my own understanding of ancient art as well as that of my students.”

Alison Cooley also engaged her students practically through field trips and reflective presentations. In 2013, staff and students on the ‘Roman Culture and Society’ module visited the British Museum’s ‘Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum’ display. Students then created posters to express their ideas and these were displayed and judged by staff and other students. Whilst taking a field trip or having students create posters may not be innovative teaching activities in some departments, going on such a trip or having to express themselves in this way is not something Classics students expect to do as part of their degree and they were actively and creatively engaged in an unfamiliar way. Additionally, as Alison expressed in her project report, the trip and process “produced a spirit of collegiality and collaboration amongst staff and students alike”.

On any of the courses you teach do you theorise about and explore any teaching practices, experiences, or locations that students could engage with practically?

If there are but you don’t think it would be possible to run a practical session, why not? What are the barriers to you creating workshops or getting the students practically engaged with the activity?

Could these be surmounted by applying for funding from your department, IATL, WIHEA, or elsewhere? Could you contact staff in your department, from this collection, the IATL funding pages, or WIT database and find the support you need to plan and run such a session from them?

As Zahra did, could you bring in experts or craftspeople to run the workshops? Or, like Alison, organise field trips or site visits?

Abigail Graham capitalised on a similar field trip and presentation structure in her 2016 ‘Exploring Didactic Approaches: The Role of Context and Display in Recording Cultural Heritage’ project. This included a day visit to Chedworth Roman Villa and Corinium museum for students and staff from a variety of modules, as well as the creation of student presentations. However, in this instance, the students focused their reflections on a particular aspect of the display or the pedagogic value of the objects. Thus, as Abigail writes in her report, not only did this project continue the theme of hands-on experience and develop the student’s “sense of importance and confidence as scholars, whose feedback and ideas are valued by a broader community”, but students also “learned to interact with objects not only as artefacts but as tools for teaching and explaining and presenting history to a broader audience. They learned to think not only of what an object can tell us, but how we might use this object to illustrate, inspire, and initiate discussion.”

Cultivating a sense of the potential of objects and artefacts is also at the heart of Michael Scott’s 2014 project ‘Handling Greek Vases’. This Pedagogic Intervention, supported by IATL, funded the creation of a series of Greek vases and drinking cups for students to handle and interact with during their seminars on Greek symposia. Additionally, the experience of using these artefacts was made more efficient and collectively accessible for the classroom, through the use of technology. Most notably, when one person was drinking from a vessel, what was being revealed to them as the level

of the liquid shifted and receded was filmed over their shoulder by the tutor and projected onto a screen for group discussion. As Michael wrote, this session means “the students are able to understand how form, function and image work together” in a very similar way to Zahra’s and Abigail’s projects.

If you didn’t consider the role of objects in response to the last set of questions, consider them now. Even if you can’t engage with an activity practically or organise a field trip, can you incorporate interaction with objects into your sessions?

As with Michael’s project, you may choose to do so because a specific artefact plays a central role in a module/theme and physically interacting with that object grants the students access to a crucial or different dimension of understanding.

Or, like Abigail’s session, you may also incorporate objects to help the students explore the role of objects in the overarching context of the subject or classroom. Could you allow students access to a deeper or critical understanding of this by introducing objects or props into your classroom?

There is a sense in which Michael’s ‘Greek Vases’ project is necessary for student learning on symposia. The session is embedded in a part of the module that looks at the “performance of self” and social roles in Ancient Greece. As such, student understanding of the social interactions and personal performances at the heart of a symposium would be incomplete without experiencing at least some of the practical aspects of the situation. Thus, his sessions not only include the use of objects but also involve students reclining in positions frequently adopted at a symposium. Michael expressed that he felt this was an important experience to build into the early stages of a first-year module to help students understand that theirs is not just a degree that focuses on literature and abstract theory, but one that practically incorporates the performative aspects of the classical world as well: “You’re not just asking them to put themselves in the shoes of the Ancients but you’re actually getting them, through playing out the scenario, to realise a number of important things about how such situations unravelled and how its objects were used and understood.” The resultant session thus neatly matches the form it takes to the content it is attempting to explore.

The marriage of form and content – along with active learning and other ideas covered above – is clearly also at the heart of Emmanuela Bakola’s Pedagogic Intervention ‘Ancient Greek Theatre in Action: Exploring the performance of Greek plays’. It involved inviting students on the ‘Ancient Greek Theatre’ module to participate in two immersive workshops led by professional directors, as well as a session with Fiona Macintosh, the director of *Archive Performances of Greek and Roman Drama*, on modern performances of Euripides’ *Medea*. The students worked with the directors to come to a practical understanding of a variety of important concepts at the heart of the module. As Emmanuela commented: “It is one of the paradoxes of the Classics discipline that ancient Greek theatre, a *par excellence* performative genre, is rarely taught with a focus on performance [...] the Classics department at Warwick is the first Classics department to address this gap and integrate study of theatricality with the traditional methods of literary criticism and contextualisation used in Classics.”

In some respect, all of these projects have addressed the gap between the form of learning the students are engaging in and the content of what they are learning: if we are learning about mosaics, we should make them; if I want my students to understand symposia and the performances involved, we should use the objects and adopt the positions needed to use them; if my students are learning about Greek theatre, we should practically engage with the performance of it.

In your teaching, is there anywhere you feel you might have left a gap between the content you are teaching and the form of your teaching and how students engage with it? How might you close this gap?

This notion of form and content does not cease in the classroom. How can the form of what the students create in their assessments best reflect and help them capture their ideas on the content? Is there value in student work that takes unexpected and different forms? These questions will be considered again in the 'Alternative Assessment' section of this report, but having students explore alternative ways of presenting their ideas is something which the Classics department has also engaged with.

Michael's 'Approaching the Study of Greek Religion' Pedagogic Intervention included workshops with TV documentary director David Wilson, after which students produced their own short scripts or films on a research topic, and Clare Rowan's 'Communicating the Classics via Digital Storytelling' sought to give her *Hellenistic World* students an insight into the different ways they might interpret and present the ancient world by having them develop their own digital stories, which were judged by a panel of staff and students at a screening event (*The Hellies*).

Michael commented about his project that "students found the process very challenging and difficult but also very rewarding because it is a totally different way of thinking about how you tell a story [...] How you explain an idea when you're having to do it visually and orally at the same time with concentrated, short pieces to camera really focuses the mind on what the crucial points are that you need to get across." Indeed, when observing a session on Clare's module and judging on the panel of this year's *Hellies*, it was very interesting to see students engage, struggle with, and then overcome considerations about outreach, impact, and engagement, how to balance this with academic rigour and insight, and then, as Clare put it in one session, try and create "something that could be used in a museum to draw people in." Watching the students wrestle with these issues made it clear that this part of the module was not just about the creative output but was developing a valuable and transferable set of skills, including the ability to condense material and make it accessible and stimulating for an audience.

- What forms do you get students to present their ideas in?
- What other ways could they do so?
- Why might you choose to have students present their ideas in this form? What might they gain from the attempt?

Translating Innovation: A case study from Warwick Medical School

“Innovation in general often takes an existing idea or approach and transforms it into something new. For this reason, innovation always builds on what came before.”¹⁵

“Sometimes people adopt a new practice or adapt what’s there and assemble it in a different way – and that’s innovation.” Robert O’Toole

Warwick Medical School (WMS) Research Fellow and WATE nominee Rebecca Johnson focuses on several goals during her week-long ‘Mixed Methods for Health Research’ module.¹⁶ These include:

- helping students understand and practice synthesising data within a mixed methods approach;
- introducing them to the idea that the process of mixed methods data analysis is a creative one and is often accompanied with a preliminary sense of uncertainty as to how it will work;
- developing the collaborative skills necessary for success in such an interdisciplinary field as public health and the health sciences;
- developing and broadening their reflective abilities – past experience of the way students have approached the reflective parts of assessments has demonstrated a narrow approach that largely focuses upon their own contributions.

One activity Becky has adopted to help address these goals is OSU’s ‘Theory Building’ – an activity which involves participants arranging a pre-prepared set of cards containing text, images, and other sources and forms of information, to create a theory or respond to a specific question.¹⁷

Whilst writing her teaching portfolio and philosophy, Becky found herself increasingly reflecting on how to cater for and engage students in a variety of learning styles within her classes. It was at this point that she attended a theory building session on climate change run by Paul Taylor, who was Director of IATL at the time. After participating in another theory build on the death penalty with Nick Monk, the subsequent Director of IATL, Becky applied for an IATL Pedagogic Intervention Grant. She used the money to fund a student assistant and together they developed a theory build for her module, created the cards, and documented the process.¹⁸

Becky felt that having students create theories and make meaning from what might initially appear to be a thematised but disparate set of images and text could:

¹⁵ Hewitt, D. & Tarrant, S. 2015. *Innovative Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools*, London, SAGE, p.19

¹⁶ Other collaborators on the original IATL Pedagogic Intervention were PhD student Marie Murphy and Head of Division Frances Griffiths, and the session I observed was co-taught with Senior Research Fellow Felicity Boardman.

¹⁷ ‘Theory Building’ can be found on the OSU website, in IATL’s *Playbox*, and part of BLASTER’s ‘Teacher Toolkit’: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/schoolforcross-facultystudies/liberalarts/erasmus/transdisciplinarity/>

¹⁸ Notes and a video from the first iteration can be found here:

https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/funding/fundedprojects/pedagogic/johnson/

- increase student creativity as well as legitimise a creative interpretation of what they were doing;
- allow for a variety of learning styles due to the task's tactile, spatial, cognitive, and visual nature;
- immediately and practically engage students in synthesising different types of data, along with an underpinning mixed method's epistemology that multiple modes matter for making sense of a phenomenon;
- allow for a student group from varied backgrounds to collaborate and engage in discussion and debate over meaning without the need to seek a right answer;
- facilitate a broadened scope of reflection due to the novel process and collaborative nature of the activity, leading students to reflect in that direction as well as on their own contributions.

There have been some adjustments made to the session, such as the addition of a brief introduction to relevant epistemological and philosophical frameworks and a non-health-related scaffolding task that makes sure students are prepared for the main task. Becky has also had to adjust to doing an OSL task in a confined, rigid classroom. These adjustments led to the observed session receiving immensely positive feedback and it is clearly succeeding in its intended goals.

The question posed here is: is what Becky did innovative teaching?

"Theory building isn't really my innovation. It's Paul and Nick's. The valuable part of the process for me was being exposed to their creative teaching practices. I was just using their innovation and creativity in a different setting. I just translated their idea into the health research context. If I came up with an original idea and tried to put it into practice, then I would be being innovative." Becky

"There's the innovative idea, the "what am I doing differently?", but there's also the overarching ethos of innovation. This is more about addressing your general practice, recognising that it needs to be flexible and always setting yourself and the learners new challenges. In doing so you create a space in which a variety of learners have the opportunity to do well." Kate Mawson

"Individual creators tap into expertise and specialist knowledge within a particular intellectual or cultural "domain"; "breakthrough" thinking always has an unacknowledged precedent in the individual's accumulated memories, experience and knowledge of their own and others' ideas within that domain. Weisberg's model of "incremental creativity" re-emphasises that creativity is only possible in the context of a deliberate intellectual process and a collective intellectual system."¹⁹

Theory building may not be Becky's innovation but it could be maintained that her translation is an innovation. Translating a session run by another teacher into your own context involves adapting it to address different challenges, shaping it to suit a new language and environment, and changing it in the face of an entirely different set of students. Although it may bear a family resemblance to its predecessor, the adaptation will also produce distinct features and these are innovative in their own

¹⁹Bilton, C. & Leary, R. 2002. 'What can managers do for creativity?' International Journal of Cultural Policy, 8:1, pp. 49-64 [54]

right. As Ruth, Chris and Rob point out, it is also important to see innovative and creative processes both as a whole and as ongoing and incrementally changing. The researchers suggest that translations such as Becky's are a driving force in this change. They involve the creator increasing their knowledge of and exposure to teaching practices in the relevant 'domain' and they allow ideas to be tested against multiple environments and adapted where needed to make them more relevant to a variety of contexts.

There are lots of suggestions in this report as to where to go to develop your teaching toolkit and to be exposed to new and innovative teaching practices. While there, we suggest always keeping in mind the question: "what would this look like if I ran it with my students or on my course?"

What would you change for your context? What does that say about you as a teacher or the group of students you have? If you do run it, could any of the new ideas be translated back to improve the session in the context you observed it in?

'Sport, Philosophy and Practice': A case study from IATL's Interdisciplinary Modules

As this report has drawn out, innovation is often an incremental process. Communities thus gain from the documentation of ideas and processes, and then from reflecting on these documents. This can be done through general reports but it can also be valuable to analyse fuller transcripts or lesson videos as these provide a less selective or biased version of what has happened and, as such, have the potential for more unexpected insights.

As an example for this report, Philip Gaydon and Jonathan Heron recorded and transcribed conversations which took place during their design of the module 'Sport, Philosophy and Practice', which also involved a transdisciplinary gymnasium event and the creation of an online resources page.²⁰

The below are extracts taken from recorded conversations between Philip Gaydon (PG), Jonathan Heron (JH), and Tatjana Seitz (TS) in June and July 2016 and PG and JH in May 2017. It is suggested the reader takes notes, bearing in mind the other sections of this report, tasks that have already been completed, and their own developing theories and thoughts on innovative teaching and its processes.

It may help to have a list of keywords nearby whilst you read, so that you can jot ideas down next to these. Or maybe think about the following questions:

- Can you spot any barriers or hurdles to learning that are being addressed? How do you think they are being approached and is there any indication that the speakers are trying things that are new to them? What ideas could you potentially translate into your own context? What questions would you ask of the speakers to help you with this?
- Are there any ideas here that you find exciting or intriguing that may not be relevant now but that you can put in your teaching toolkit for later use?

June, 2016

PG: Can you say a bit about why we started the 'Sport, Philosophy and Practice' [SPP] process?

JH: Yes. While you were considering how to go about investigating innovation within teaching and learning, we were having several conversations about how to innovate within interdisciplinary teaching and learning. From my recollection, and as part of our ongoing investigations into play studies, we'd arrived on the idea of sport as a philosophically interesting category that would mobilise the arts and humanities, science and medicine, as well as the social sciences because within the concept of human sport, you have play and games, issues around politics and conflict, material associated with the body and human embodiment; also the difference between sport, exercise, and physical activity, as well as a possible tension between sport as competitive and sport -as healthy. So

²⁰ http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/activities/projects/sportphilosophyandpractice

it seemed to me that sport was something that was culturally relevant and academically interesting for an interdisciplinary group.

So far, it would seem that sport is a good choice and our enquiry may be based around a question like: “why does such an apparently frivolous or meaningless activity such as sport still hold so much value for the human species?”²¹ If people from the sciences and arts, and different social backgrounds, can come together and feel confident enough to try and answer that question then I think we’ve started to create the material conditions that could enable not only an interdisciplinary but a transdisciplinary classroom.

PG: One of the things that we’ve both commented on is that we wanted to move away from the idea that a transdisciplinary module needs a disciplinary expert in the room [at all times] for the right kinds of interaction to take place, which has been quite a dominant model in interdisciplinary modules so far – at least as I’ve seen them done.

JH: There are a few things that are really important here. One is that having a disciplinary expert in the room [at all times] actually maintains disciplinarity because it acknowledges that the discipline they represent is important and has some form of authority within the space. I think that is quite a good way into multi- and/or interdisciplinary teaching and learning but it’s not necessarily a good strategy for transdisciplinarity; as we have discovered, and other colleagues have found, our role then becomes about the importance of facilitating the engagement between the so-called expert and the participants. As long as the learners know where to go to find evidence, data, and/or theory that they feel they need to support their work, then I think it’s possible to sustain quality without [the constant presence of] that disciplinary expert.

PG: From my recollections of the process I think I would add two things. The first is that when we were first introduced in 2011 you immediately spotted a link between my role as a sports coach and the developing practice of OSL [open-space learning] as they both involve the moving of bodies around a space in relation to learning.²²

JH: Now that’s a very good point. We were still in the midst of the OSL project and I was running an event which explored philosophy, science and performance [via Nietzsche and Darwin]. Within that event there was an opportunity to participate practically and through the body.²³ That event, which you attended, laid some of the groundwork for our SPP project because it was asking, ‘how can philosophy engage through and with performance?’ and it’s not a huge leap to say that if philosophy can engage with performance then philosophy should be able to engage with sport.

²¹ A question that has been highly influenced by our reading of Steven Connor’s work on sport, especially his *A Philosophy of Sport* (2011, Reaktion, London).

²² See Monk, et al. (2011) *Open Space Learning: A Study in Transdisciplinary Pedagogy*, London, Bloomsbury Academic

²³ https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/funding/fundedprojects/pedagogic/john_final_report.pdf

PG: Something that really stood out for me as particularly valuable during the process was the fact that we held our discussions and planning meetings *in situ*; having our meetings whilst walking the campus or at the gym, for example. This really stimulated us because we responded to the objects and situations around us.

JH: Yes, an engagement with the material environment is highly valuable for all teaching and learning. I think our gymnasium event is a really good example of that work. I don't think we could have delivered that event if we hadn't planned it in that way. We always challenged ourselves to not sit in a room – as we're unfortunately doing at the moment – and have a conversation about something in the abstract. We always pushed ourselves to go somewhere, to do something, to use a relevant space; the fact that we chose to run the event as a *gymnasium* rather than a *symposium* is an excellent example and extension of that.

PG: Another key theme to add, is that we were really motivated by the idea of exploring how curricular and extra-curricular activities combine within a learning space. Alongside the SPP process was the sense of sport or exercise being a big part of our own lives and, more importantly, student and campus life. Yet there is very little, if anything, that reflects that in Warwick's academic spaces.

JH: There is a significant parallel here to extra-curricular student arts and cultural activities and how they impact upon the university's formal curriculum.

PG: One of the big discussions we've had in creating the module is about assessment. How were we ever going to assess the module with all of this in mind? It raised difficult questions for us about student devised assessment right through from 'what does it need to be called?' to 'how can we possibly do it?'

JH: Yes, I think we wanted to avoid the sense that it would be an easy option, that you could turn up, do something sporty, and get credit. What we want participants to do, is to think about their own [professional and/or amateur] sporting practice as well as the representation of that practice within film, media, and literature, whilst also keeping an eye on ethical, aesthetic, and phenomenological questions. So, what we're asking the students to do each week is quite complex and detailed. Eventually we settled on the idea of regular blog entries responding to the module and concurrent sporting experiences which they can then select themselves and decide how they want to put them forward for assessment. They will also do an assessed piece of writing – an essay or a review – focused on sporting practice but also a considered piece of academic writing. Then they have to generate some practice which they're assessed on. The way in which this practice is articulated in relation to their writing [and vice versa] is a really important part of how the assessment functions and they'll need to be able to evaluate that.

July, 2016

TS: I was already interested in visualising data differently so I was intrinsically motivated to answer a question like, “how can we capture the physicality of an academic event that’s also a gymnasium?” I’ve done video analysis before and always found it thought-provoking to have the abstract data that doesn’t show the people because, in my experience, you will always look at it differently with the people removed. I truly believe that abstracted data can tell you something else, something different from what you’re used to, so in the video I’ve removed the human body and represented the abstracted data in an alternative way.²⁴

PG: Coming to that video, what was your process in creating it?

TS: It was a long process and a bit of pain to find something usable. I showed you the material from *Synchronous Objects* which was highly impressive, but they used a whole team of professionals and their tools require your video to fit their definitions.²⁵ Also, they were doing dancing visualisation and while there’s quite a lot of that around there is not so much for visually tracking people doing small-movement sports outside. The materials for tracking that are more commercial and for runners or cyclists over long distances. They don’t really look at the smaller detail. But then, in a moment of desperate need I found some software that physicians use to track objects and then apply formulas and mathematical functions.²⁶ The interesting thing was that it already had the tracking script in the software. Unfortunately, the auto-tracking didn’t work as our event was in a darkened room and feet and hands are just too small and moving too quickly, so I ended up manually tracking them. But I was so happy to find some software that I could use, and I actually use it in my own work outside the project now as well.

PG: What about your perception of what should go on or be studied in a university? Has that changed in any way by doing the project?

TS: Being at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies I’ve come to expect that university or academia somehow broadens, opens or softens the edges of study and there’s no sense of “this is academia and nothing else is”. This project was in that same vein. We need to open up a variety of areas and this can be found in even the oldest or most overlooked of concepts. I mean, come on, sport is one of the oldest concepts there is but there is still more to be understood, new research and studies to be done, and new techniques and software to be applied.

²⁴ http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/activities/projects/sportphilosophyandpractice/gymnasium/

²⁵ <http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/>

²⁶ *Tracker*; <http://physlets.org/tracker/>

May, 2017 (after the completion of the SPP module)

PG: One of the main points in our initial interview was our move away from a module structure based on individual experts coming in each week to discuss the module topic in relation to their discipline. Do you feel we successfully moved away from that and towards an inter- or transdisciplinary classroom?

JH: Yes. Our reorientation of the module [to a structure where we led almost all the sessions, even when we were covering areas outside of our disciplines] created a collaborative and transdisciplinary space because we were thinking through the problems with and in front of the students. We performed a collaborative enquiry that brought together the arts and philosophy but also engaged scientific methodologies and tackled issues around evidence and quantitative methods. Just as we had done when researching the module topics, one week we could say “here is a body of social theory that we might use to solve this problem” and the next “here is an evidence-based STEM approach that might be relevant”. In that way, we kept the space enquiry-led and, as educators, while we still performed some expertise we also spent a lot of time facilitating questions and enquiries on topics which we were genuinely still exploring ourselves.

All of this meant that when we did bring in guests from other departments, they could be brought in to help provide insights about certain themes or topics without being a disciplinary identity first and foremost. I think that it’s important that we didn’t foreground disciplinary identity throughout the module and instead focused on collaborative learning.

PG: I think the sense of being in a transdisciplinary space was also heightened by allowing for the blending of and movement between the extra-curricular and curricular [something we also brought up in our initial interview]. This meant we were exploring areas of personal experience alongside their disciplinary knowledge and students were bringing things to the room that weren’t part of their disciplinary identities and so removing those disciplinary boundaries.

JH: Absolutely. And that’s another good example of the module being practice and problem based as well as person centred. We were saying: “Here are some ethical problems and aesthetic questions about sporting practice. How are we going to address these problems using the combined intelligences and experiences in the room?”

PG: I’m sure us starting the module with a reflection and exercises on the nature of teamwork helped with this as well.

PG: One of the other questions from our first interview was: “how do you assess this kind of module?” Did we manage to capture the experience of the module in its assessments and what and why are we changing for next time?

JH: The students were encouraged to reflect on personal experience and their spectatorship of and participation in sporting activities and events in their written assessed work, and the practical nature of the teaching methods and the final exam was another way of foregrounding the significance of embodiment and lived experience in relation to the module. The final practical exam, whilst being very labour intensive, had a tremendous value in rounding off the module and allowing the students to perform their knowledge through their ludic practice.

PG: And I would add that the after reading the blogs we were satisfied that they clearly indicated and reflected what we were talking about before: a sense of the students working through questions and issues from a variety of perspectives and offering holistic reflections on their own sporting experiences. So, as a way of capturing the student journey through an interdisciplinary module I think the blogs also worked very well.

However, they were also highly labour intensive. Those kinds of reflections clearly took a lot of time and energy as we were covering such a variety of topics and the students were reflecting on experiences they cared deeply about. Writing one every week was perhaps a bit too much.

JH: Yes, so we've streamlined and focused the assessment process based on our experience of running it for the first time, and I think the new model will be more student friendly, but we didn't want to lose the blogs as a way of capturing their experience or the practical exam as a way of finishing the module with a return to lived and embodied experience.

If you are currently working on a project or changing something in your teaching, you could try something similar by recording a conversation between your project team or ask a colleague to have a conversation with you about your ideas.

Have some questions or keywords ready if there is anything you would particularly like to reflect on, but otherwise let the conversation carry on naturally.

Look back at the conversations above and note down any particularly interesting ideas and quotes. You might also want to reflect on questions like the following:

- Did anyone not say much or were any ideas overlooked because of the flow of the conversation? Could you benefit from another conversation that allows these people to speak more or focuses on the overlooked ideas?
- Were there any patterns in what was said and by whom? Does this say anything about how your team works when it comes to innovating? For example, who brings a particular expertise to the table? Do certain members have specific interests? Can you do more to capitalise on this during the project?
- Are there any ideas that could have been taken further or questions that could have been answered had someone with a different expertise been present? Can you locate someone with this expertise and put the ideas to them?

Part Three: Practical Considerations

Barriers to innovative teaching

This report is driven by the question, “what is required if innovation is to happen and be successful?” It addresses an issue raised by David Beck: “Some staff can perceive innovation as a bit dangerous, rather than a part of the normal teaching repertoire.” The dangers of innovation most often mentioned were the lack of time to dedicate to innovation, and how new ideas would be sustained at an institutional level. Within the context of the Teaching Excellence Framework and the increasingly data-led approach to higher education more broadly, there could be a reluctance to take unnecessary risks in relation to teaching methods. However, many Warwick innovators have reported that these pedagogic risks are an essential component of driving more student-centred innovations to teaching within the university.

1. *Time and money*

It is important not to downplay the input that is often required by those driving innovative projects; there are funding opportunities available for staff and postgraduates who teach at the university which, in some cases, do not just cover material or workshop costs but also the time spent on the project.²⁷ Additionally, the load can be reduced by researching existing projects and by sharing the work with others, particularly early on in the process. As Miriam Gifford, Associate Professor of the School of Life Sciences, said in response to the issue of being overwhelmed by innovative projects: “You don’t have to reinvent everything. See what already runs and think how to improve it. Keep to small things and get lots of people engaged, which can mean you manage to make a big difference without having any one person do too much.” Indeed, as discussed in the ‘Structuring for Innovation’ section below, existing within a community does not just help educators find the time, space, energy and funds to bring their idea to fruition, but its diversity may also help them heighten the novelty of the project and place it in a broader context.

2. *Pitching and sustaining*

“There is an uncrowning of power in innovative practices” (Nick Monk) and this subversion can sometimes be perceived as a direct challenge to established structures, rules and beliefs.²⁸ As such, it can be a tense moment when one discusses an innovative idea or works on bringing such an idea into practice. However, whilst the marketability and palatability of novelty should be considered, throughout the interviews the researchers heard how Warwick is an institution that is forward looking and always keen to improve and develop its teaching practice. It has the foresight to acknowledge that innovation must be allowed to question the status quo if improvement is to happen: “One of the things that immediately struck me when I came to Warwick was that if you had an idea about how to teach something a little bit differently the answer wasn’t “no” it was, “why not?”” (Michael Scott)

²⁷ See the ‘Funding and Proposals’ section of this report

²⁸ Hewitt, D. & Tarrant, S. 2015. *Innovative Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools*, London, SAGE, p.8

On the other hand, whether existing structures can allow for the embedding and scaling of innovative projects is another matter. Warwick is not alone in facing such issues given formal education's status as a system with rigid conventions that resist change.²⁹

Gavin Bell, for example, reflected on the fact that whether or not Warwick's Physics department can award a Physics degree is dependent upon the fulfilment of several criteria, which leaves little room for innovation. Jo Trowsdale also discussed how there appeared to be a tension between assessment and teaching timetables being governed by factors beyond the student's individual learning journey, and innovation was often responding to issues the researchers noticed in those journeys. The two cycles are out of sync, but for innovation to flourish and achieve its aims in the best fashion they need to be as complimentary as possible.

Joy Lidstone added the perspective of an administrator working within a department such as IATL which is heavily focused on innovation. Her experience was not dissimilar to the teaching staff with respect to the difficulty of negotiating between formal systems and innovation, but, she argued, whilst the university may be innovating within modules, the administrative systems can't cope with that and "if there is any innovation needed it's definitely there." To help the administration of innovative projects catch up with the ideas educators are having is no mean feat, and Adam Cartwright reflected on its difficulties: "There's an interesting question around having space to fail being more applicable to the academic staff. They could deliver a session and it can fail and that's OK, it's just one session. If you think 'I'm going to administrate the exams and marks *this* way this year...oh, wait, it didn't work' then you end up with a whole different type of fallout. There is still room for innovation within the support roles but you have to pick your time much more carefully as the stakes are so high. But that makes the innovations within teaching much harder to administer and then embed."

However, whilst this is a difficult fact of innovating within a university it does not mean that, if ideas carry merit, they *cannot* be achieved and embedded within the institution. All of the individuals mentioned within this report are potential allies and can be reached out to for help and advice, and, as many of those that were interviewed pointed out, university administration staff and services such as Academic Technologies, IT Services (ITS) and Audio Visual Services (AVS) are more than willing to help support and find ways to develop educators' ideas, if they have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. Similarly, as Martin Mik pointed out, departments and other areas of the university are not unavailable and completely anti-innovation, and there is almost always someone to talk to about ideas at an institutional level. Martin stressed that an awareness of macro-level university strategies will be looked for in any such meetings or larger projects, and they must be considered in project perspectives.

²⁹ Sharples, M., McAndrew, P., Weller, M., Ferguson, R., FitzGerald, E., Hirst, T., & Gaved, M. 2013. *Innovating Pedagogy 2013*: Open University Innovation Report 2. Milton Keynes: The Open University

Funding and proposals

If an educator has an innovative teaching idea which requires funding there is no harm in approaching their department, particularly if it only requires a small amount of money. However, the two main sources of funding for teaching projects at the University are the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) and the Warwick International Higher Education Academy (WIHEA). The former offers Pedagogic Interventions (up to £1,000) for smaller projects, Academic Fellowships (up to £7,500) for projects which will result in the creation or re-design of cross-curricular or interdisciplinary modules, and Strategic Project funding for larger projects which support the University's Education Strategy. The latter offers project funding to support cross-faculty projects which recognise, develop and embed outstanding teaching practice.

Both WIHEA and IATL have web pages dedicated to explaining their funding tracks and with numerous examples of previously funded projects for you to look at. Staff from both institutes, as well as from elsewhere in the university, stressed that the main things are to simply get started with an idea, open a dialogue with the funding bodies, and research what projects have already been funded and carried out at the university.

“Talk to a lot of members of staff before getting started on a project and find out what’s going on and what has gone well and what hasn’t. You wouldn’t want to be put off trying something new because of [a] lack of understanding – talking to people, as with most things, made all the difference.” Miriam Gifford

As has been stressed throughout this report, this is a process, so build time and money into applications for testing ideas or use the funding to create test spaces, reflect on these afterwards and embrace any failures and issues.

*“You can choose to run a non-assessed and optional session first, if you're not sure if an idea will work. This gives you the freedom to investigate and play with an idea and learn from any failures.”
Elena Riva*

“Pilot what you can – just running a session so you can get a sense of whether what’s great in your head is going to translate and where it needs tweaking and adapting [...] And after the pilot session, be exceptionally open to feedback but don’t be sensitive and really listen. One of my students starts every session with “you know I don’t like creativity” but she’s one of my greatest allies because she’s so honest. Find that student!” Juliet Raynsford

*“What should always be remembered is that it’s an emotional process to translate an idea into practice and the practical translation will always be a little bit different to that grand, powerful imagination – that idea will have to migrate into the everyday practices where things happen. Look at the process as a constant labour of translation and keep it adaptable and flexible.”
Erzsebet Strausz*

It is suggested that interdisciplinarity is something you embrace fully due to its potential for unexpected meetings and the triggering of unexpected ideas. Indeed, if you identify an opportunity to lead a session with or teach an interdisciplinary group, it is highly recommended to build this in to your proposal.

“Interdisciplinarity seems to force innovative teaching as you’re having to come at a particular subject from lots of different points of view and fitting in lots of ways of teaching in doing that and [it] forces you to think outside of the box.” Amy Clarke

Finally, don’t forget that “untapped resource” that is the student body. Not only are they almost always willing and helpful but they can be a wellspring of new ideas. Build student participation and feedback in from the get-go and make their involvement an integral part of the project.

*“Trust the students. In all the years that I’ve worked here the students have always been exceptional on our projects; they add so much [...] Student involvement should be meaningful and not just tokenistic. Make sure that students don’t just enact your project with you, they should be there in the guts of the project with you, helping you decide what it’s going to be and designing it.”
Caroline Gibson*

If you have worked through some of the exercises in this report and identified an issue, thoroughly thought about a new way to respond, and looked at what else is going on around the university then you are off to a good start. You will have plenty to discuss with either institute, so get whatever idea you have written down and get talking.

“Just do it. It’s never going to be a complete disaster. New things lead to either success or failures, and failures simply then prompt development and future success.” Jose Arroyo

Alternative Assessment

"[Students] are capable of thinking more deeply about content than our evaluations are capable of measuring." Thomas Hills

"Assessment should not be a limit to innovation. As a reflection on what has been done on the course, it makes sense to innovate as much here as elsewhere." Elena Riva

Before continuing, you might want to reflect on your own understanding of assessment. What is it for? What do you think its aims should be? Who benefits from assessment and how? You may want to return to your teaching philosophy at this point. Is there a continuity of ideas between your understanding of what teaching and the university are for, with your answers here?

Different and creative forms of assessment are increasing around the university. However, when it comes to innovation, it is important to reflect on why this is the case and to make sure that providing alternative assessments are not made for the sake of it but in response to specific issues.

1. Alternative modes of expression

Karen Simecek from the Philosophy department, responded to the growing student and institutional call for diverse assessment methods by including a creative project in her 'Philosophy through Film' module. However, in a discipline steeped in rigorous analysis and almost exclusively tested by essay-based assignments and exams, how could alternative methods be explored without them seeming gratuitous or forced?

Karen's work on poetry has often challenged pre-conceptions about how philosophical understanding can be expressed and explored, focusing on the question of whether our imaginative and emotional engagement with works of literature can promote philosophical thinking. It was in a similar vein of thought that she found an answer: allow the students to directly engage and explore the questions around how philosophy is experienced and expressed, as well as what it means to be a philosopher and engage in philosophical reflection. The film form of the creative assessment could then be used as an invitation for students to directly express or demonstrate their thoughts on these questions as well as the other philosophical theories studied in the module.

Karen also used WIHEA funding to involve philosophy undergraduates in the process of shaping the assessment before the module's first iteration. She recruited three students and asked them to create a film responding to the question: "Can philosophy be done through film?" During the process, they reflected upon the limits of the traditional essay, engaged with key texts selected by Karen, considered how word and image can come together to potentially create something philosophically greater than the sum of its parts, and then attempted to express their thoughts in the medium of film. The student's feedback helped Karen identify potential stumbling points for the module's first cohort as well as decide on the scope and constraints the assessment needed to work well. The three resultant videos had different strengths and issues, but this spread will serve Karen well when she utilises them during the module as materials to discuss with students who are unsure about what the alternative assessment method is asking of them.

Here Karen's project is the result of one of the major themes that emerge from our interviews with both staff and students: the widespread belief that knowledge and ideas are not only expressible in linguistic, essay-based form, and that rich and interesting arguments or explorations can be formulated in a variety of engaging ways and can even be enhanced by doing so. Indeed, translating an idea into and exploring a subject through a new format can demonstrate a high-level of critical ability and understanding as well as problem-solving, creativity, and technical skills.

How does your discipline and department traditionally embody and express itself or ask its students to express themselves? Why is this?

Can you think of examples in your discipline or department where someone has broken away from the traditional forms? What was gained and what was lost? Could students try to express themselves and their ideas in this different way as part of your assessment?

Pick a medium completely alien to your department: presentations, blogs, films, painting, sculpture, dance, anything. How might you express disciplinary ideas through this medium? Is anything gained?

2. *Reflecting on oneself*

Many of the staff interviewed also stated that one of the underpinning goals of their teaching was to develop student's autonomy as thinkers and researchers. They wanted to open students up to new avenues and ways of thinking, not only to increase their success in academic ventures but to help them, in some sense, find and (re)define themselves as learners and as individuals.

One may agree that this *should* be a central part of the university experience, whether for its own sake or for the successful formation of a professional identity. However, given that a degree must also provide its students with relevant disciplinary knowledge, understanding and skills, and as it is this on which students are generally assessed, as opposed to their personal development, the latter is often neglected within the curriculum and by students.

A number of educators have challenged this by re-orientating the structure of assessment so that focus and credit is given to critical engagement with the necessary information but also to the learning process and self-exploration.

Rachel Dickinson, for example, feels it is crucial to develop self-knowledge and self-understanding in students and, to this end, the WBS first-year CORE module's assessment methods actively encourage students to reflect on how best they learn, their beliefs and interactions with others. The CORE Audit which requires students to reflect on three dimensions of self (The Creative Self; The Social Self; The Independent Self) explicitly supports students in thinking about their new experiences in university to gain a better insight into themselves and provide them with a helpful foundation to grow as reflective learners.

The Mediated Self project and module [TMS], run by Jo Garde-Hansen and David Wright, also has a study of the variety of ‘selves’ which are produced online, at its core.³⁰ However, TMS was not just about reviewing this in an abstract, academic, or purely cerebral fashion, but was also about identifying one’s own mediated self and, in doing so, taking control of the act of mediation: “the module was all about making it clear to [the students] that they were engaged in an active construction of themselves and about taking control of and not being controlled by that: if you don’t produce you will be produced” (Joanna). Not only did the module reflect this by having students create videos about themselves in the first week of the class, but part of its assessment consisted of creating a portfolio of a curated selection of self-media artefacts.

Multiple IATL modules, such as Applied Imagination and Ethical Beings, have also adopted the reflective journal as a form of assessment, where students are encouraged to reflect upon what they learned but also how they have learned, what shape their learning journey took, where its key moments were, how and why their learning journey was influenced by others, and how they feel they have changed in the process.

If you agree that self-exploration as a learner and person is a core component of higher education, how could you build it into your modules/sessions? What part of your course has the potential to impact upon the way your students think about themselves and how can you draw attention to this? Can you put aside time for students to reflect upon the learning process? For example, what has worked for them, what hasn’t, why this is the case, and so on. Could such reflections become part of your assessment method?

3. Tackling fear of alternative assessment

Here is considered the student “fear factor” discussed earlier in the report. Assessment can be the epitome of that fear in that the moment they discover whether their boldness in taking a risk with an innovative module has also resulted in improved academic performance or a more challenging experience of assessment.

Will Curtis advocates the inclusion of multiple assessments of different types, not only to allow for students to capitalise on their strengths but so educators can include something familiar alongside the new: “you need variety, range, and choice”. This is an approach adopted by IATL modules, such as Ethical Beings and Sport, Philosophy and Practice, which include the option of an essay alongside a creative project.

Joanna also explained how they dealt with this issue on TMS: “I think one of the ways we got around the anxiety was to separate the *practical* and the *critical reflection on the practical* in assessment – rather than wrap it all together.” If students feel as though their success doesn’t completely depend on the success of a creative or different piece and that they have the chance to explain and be marked on their process of creation as well as the final result – if they get to tidy up and show “the sandbox” work, as David and Joanna called it – they are much more comfortable with the process.

³⁰ See their IATL [funding page](#) for more information

Another approach was taken by Jose Arroyo and Justin Greaves in their modules. The former taking the student's final grade from the best three out of four marks (of which one was their unfamiliar, digital assessment), the latter taking only two from three essay marks (of which one was encouraged to be a creative or risky piece). As Jose told us, "this alleviated the perceived danger of the innovative work".

Educators who have previous examples of work are encouraged to use these with students. For example, in the second year of his Ethical Beings module, Phil Gaydon anonymised some of the previous year's assessments and organised an extra seminar where students could look at and discuss them, before marking them alongside the marking rubric, which Phil had given and discussed with them previously. In this way, not only did the students get an insight into how Phil would be assessing them, but Phil came to understand what they felt was important and should be focused on during marking. He could even adapt the rubric with them if suitable. Indeed, this sense of negotiated marking came up elsewhere in interviews. David Beck was a particular advocate and suggested that students should be allowed to look critically at the assessment methods and criteria you have offered them: "It is possible to retain the final say as the professional in the room, with the knowledge of how to teach and assess work, but the process of negotiation gives them clarity of your expectations which is particularly important when innovating." Elena Riva also commented: "I find it useful to involve the students in this process; so they don't simply feel judged, but can consider themselves the architects of their assessment." Her sentiment not only speaks to the issue of clarity around assessment but also that marking, perhaps more than any other aspect of teaching, brings into a harsh light the power relationship involved.

Consider the following quotation:

"Academics often talk about treating students as equals, but then adopt a teacher-pupil dynamic to assess the degree to which the academic (the expert) feels the student (the novice) has learnt what they should have. Maybe a better approach would involve a discussion with the academic and the student...both occupying the same level in the discussions."³¹

Do you feel that Phil, David and Elena treat their students as equals or that they occupy the "same level" in their negotiations? Should academics and students occupy the same level? Why/why not?

The most important things, emphasised by all interviewed educators, were communication and teaching practice: "With creative assessment make sure to be absolutely clear as to what's required and integrate it into the course. Make sure that people are encouraged to prepare for every seminar and often in ways which reflect what is going to be expected of them in the assessment." (Jim Davis) If students are going to be giving presentations, make sure they get to give presentations at some point in the course and get feedback not just on content but on relevant parts of their style. If they are going to be doing something creative, make sure that they get to create at some point during the course and there is opportunity to reflect on this and discuss it with you. And if they do something

³¹ Cotterill, S. T. 2015. 'Tearing up the page: re-thinking the development of effective learning environments in higher education', *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Oxon, Routledge, p.404

like a reflective journal, make sure that part of their homework is to do some journaling and that their assessor has a chance to feed back to them on some entries.

4. *Peer marking*

As Juliet Raynsford emphasised, it is difficult to ever give a full sense of closure to students on innovative projects as one is often in uncharted territory. Even more fundamentally, the marking process will remain a subjective one no matter how objective they try to make it, and it can seem alien and obtuse to students leading them to misunderstand its very nature. Perhaps then it is this that educators should be directly addressing. Gavin Bell certainly seemed to think this was an upside to the peer marking model he used for part of his 'Science of Music' module. As part of the Academic Fellowship which led to the creation of the module, and then on the module itself, students assessed the work of other students. "It was very reassuring that in both cases they were all plus/minus 1 point on the university's 17-point-mark [from the tutor's marks]. Although, interestingly, during the Academic Fellowship the students were slightly more generous and on the module they were slightly harsher." Gavin commented that communication was key. They let students know early on what was coming up ahead, as well as involving them in discussion about what the core ingredients of the assessment should be: "essentially the idea was to [move] towards an assessment scheme everyone was happy with and having discussions around what they expected from presentations." Indeed, he noted that they took the business very seriously, to the point that they were reluctant to just give out marks to other students – "they requested independent discussion and a second marker without us bringing it up". Perhaps the most notable thing is that Gavin's experience almost directly responds to Juliet's point: "I think the students appreciated the peer-marking in that they get a feeling for what we have to do as academics when we go through the process. They see we don't just slap a mark down and they can see it's a non-trivial exercise giving a fair grade."

- How does peer-assessment impact upon the power relationship mentioned above?
- Beyond peer assessment, how else could you involve students in the assessment process so they could come to an understanding of it?

Innovating with spaces

“Don’t think: “how is the space limiting me?” Ask: “what is the space giving me?” Then go somewhere else, somewhere completely different, and ask the same question.” Question asked of participants on Warwick Space Walk³²

1. Indoor spaces

“Innovation can’t happen if you’re passive, if people are hiding in the room and feel as if they don’t want to get involved. It’s so important that the space invites them to get involved.” Caroline Gibson

Indoor spaces recommended:

- IATL Humanities Studio
- CAPITAL Rehearsal Room
- Teaching Grid (Library)
- Writers’ Room at Millburn
- International Portal at Ramphal
- Warwick Nest Project (under development)
- Whiteboard Room

Each of the above spaces are flexible enough to allow for a variety of classroom activities and ideas and are useful for prompting reflection on the use of space in teaching. The WBS Creative Space is rich in embedded technology and the space’s ‘no shoes rule’ can be something of a cultural shock to staff and students. The ‘Whiteboard Room’, where every bit of the walls is available for writing on, is small and windowless and is accessed by walking past rows of staff cubicles, yet generated a huge buzz – both positive and negative – on WIHEA’s second Space Walk, despite its seeming simplicity.

However, the researchers still believe the Teaching Grid to be the most flexible space on campus. With two spaces which can be altered in a variety of ways using dividers, curtains, movable glass screens, and easily-adjusted furniture, a huge amount of technology and technological capability, as well as a mini-library of books on teaching in higher education, it celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2019. If you browse the Warwick Innovative Teaching database you will see that sessions have included the use of four projectors at once, multiple (and theatrical) workshops taking place at the same time, hidden behind different curtains, and the removal of all furniture and glass walls to create a large open space.³³

Perhaps on its way to challenging the Teaching Grid for the title of most flexible space on campus however is the Warwick Nest. The Nest is the proposed outcome of an ongoing student-led project and is certainly one to watch as their speculative key themes and goals include:

- an exploration of innovative teaching and collaborative space;

³² <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/staff/window-on-teaching/window-on-teaching-database/201703151638>

³³For more about the Teaching Grid, its conception, and its underpinning teaching philosophy see: King, E., Joy, M., Foss, J., Sinclair, J. & Sitthiworachart, J. 2015. 'Exploring the impact of a flexible, technology-enhanced teaching space on pedagogy', *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, Vol. 52, No. 5, pp.522-535

- the implementation of best teaching practice in creating student-orientated space;
- evoking and supporting collaboration and playfulness;
- raising user awareness of how they work and what spaces and actions facilitate certain characteristics in themselves.

Of course, standard classrooms also contain the potential for innovation and achieving surprising results, particularly given the fact that these are the spaces in which staff and students least expect something different to be happening. To illustrate how one might think about this, the researchers have provided one of their failed endeavours at the 2015 Social Science's Teaching and Learning Showcase and invite the reader to reflect on it.³⁴

S0.19 (Social Sciences Building) is a standard small, tiered lecture theatre. It has a whiteboard, computer and projection technology at the front, its walls adorned with 'no food', 'no smoking', and 'lecture capture' signs, and the rows of desks perfectly fulfil their dual purpose of aiding note-taking and creating a buffer between student and lecturer. The desks are also slanted towards the student, presumably in an attempt to dissuade them from bringing in banned food and drink by forcing them to hold their paper or laptop in place in order to take notes (thus leaving no free hand for contraband). For the 2015 Social Science's Teaching and Learning Showcase, however, the creators of this report decided they would attempt to disrupt the all-too-familiar space. They wanted attendees to engage with a series of reflections from staff and students that would be pertinent to a later talk and wanted to bring the room into sharp focus ready for examination rather than having to be part of a hazy and familiar background as it is every day to so many staff and students.

If you can take a trip to S0.19 before reading on, then do so, or find it via a room search on Warwick Insite and have a look at the room virtually.

What would you do to the space to try to achieve the aims we had set ourselves?

The authors hung a mobile containing teaching stories from the ceiling, covered the first rows of desks in more stories and student reflections, and used waist-high masking tape in an attempt to shepherd participants past the material before they could find the safety of their seats. They had thought the group would then have to acknowledge the pedagogically relevant material that lay around them and, because they would not be able to navigate the room in the usual way, they would have to give their full attention to the room.

However, having an event in the Social Sciences Building almost necessitates breaking the rules and bringing food into the room unless one wants to block a busy corridor bustling with students. As such, participants grabbed some food and hurried into the room. Because they were awkwardly balancing a full plate alongside bags and coats, many of them quickly ducked under the tape to find a seat. Gone was the illusion of a pathway and new space; remaining was S0.19 with some

³⁴ Slightly adapted from Phil Gaydon's IATL Blog Post: https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/about/blog/2016-02a/

inconvenient bits of tape and paper in odd places. Perhaps more people would have gone back to read the stimuli had the slanted desks not required them to remain seated to stop their food from ending up on the floor and had the tape not made the return journey look arduous.

While they had attempted to subvert the traditional rules of the space to facilitate a different style of interaction and prompt innovative thought, they were thwarted by the very things that were supposed to aid focused learning in the first place: slanted desks and guiding tape. The irony of this was not lost by the tutor, upon reflection.

Before reading our reflections, what do you think?
What lessons about space and innovating can be taken from this failure?

What struck the authors when they re-read what they had written in their planning and reflections, was the word 'shepherd'. Although they felt they were guiding people in an interesting and stimulating direction and inviting them to engage freely, what they ended up doing was attempting to control the room and the participants in quite a heavy-handed fashion. Some control may well be needed in teaching contexts - an anarchic classroom is not often a place of learning - but in this instance they perhaps retained too much control and, like the desks, attempted to force engagement and learning where they should have, instead, invited it.

* * *

2. Outdoor spaces

"Moments where you get outside of the traditional lecture theatre and seminar room are exciting. Just breaking out of the room and doing something around the campus and going outside. It doesn't sound that innovative but you immediately start to get different working relationships." Juliet Raynsford

Outdoor spaces recommended:

- Warwick's Sculpture Trail
- The Oculus outdoor spaces
- The Students' Union Piazza
- The outdoor exercise stations and running trails
- The Warwick Grow patch
- Gibbet Hill Woods

Much of the literature on teaching outdoors focuses on primary and secondary education. It hinges on team and character building, letting 'children be children', the opportunity for free play and learning about nature, and so on. Some of this does translate to the higher education context insofar as the outdoors may be where what is being learned about takes place, nature has the ability to inspire and provoke feelings of wonder and interest, the novelty of the situation can provide excitement and interest, and moving around outdoors can engage students in a different mode of learning. Gary Watt, for example, begins his module Law and Literature with a walk. He does so to not only encourage his students to think outside the box but to try and escape a modern education

system “designed to control and contain [...] it’s all about challenging the sort of institutional demand that formal education makes on us, even from high school and A-levels, and challenging those habits by stretching our legs and therefore stretching our minds.” The act of walking, as Gary sees it, brings together “a sort of cross, trans-hemispherical communication between the logical and creative side of the brain” and this is also at the heart of how he wants his students to engage with his module.³⁵

Perhaps most importantly for the staff and student experience, however, is that teaching outdoors can also turn the campus space – the unnoticed but frequently and hurriedly walked trails between point A and B – into a recognised, familiar, and meaningful place. For example, Jonathan Heron and Philip Gaydon capitalised on a space walk in their planning of the module ‘Sport, Philosophy and Practice’³⁶ but also included a similar walk in their phenomenology part of the module. After giving students a brief introduction to the phenomenology of sport, they took the students to various spots of sporting activity around campus and asked them to consider each space in relation to their own memories, accounts given by others, or sporting activity in general. As such, these relevant and meaningful sites, as well as the experiences and stories attached to them, became legitimate artefacts for reflection and learning on the course and anchor points between the abstract theories under discussion and the students’ everyday lives.

As part of this report and when designing a tour of Warwick’s teaching spaces, we engaged in the following exercise which we recommend to you.

Take a walk around campus that includes both indoor and outdoor spaces. Take a pen and something to take notes on. Try to go into as many rooms as you can and occasionally stop and survey the details of your surroundings. On your note paper, write down anything that you see or think about that relates to the words: space, teaching and learning.

You may want to plan your walk first and this section contains lists of indoor and outdoor spaces that we would highly recommend you visit (some may require booking or university card access).

When you get back, look at your notes and ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the relationship between space, teaching and learning on Warwick campus?
- What should it be?
- Was there anything notably absent or that you wish you’d seen on your walk?

Try thinking of a module or course you are teaching. With that in mind, re-visualise your walk and the places you went and imagine teaching the module at different points on the walk. What would be gained from teaching there? How would you have to adapt your teaching?

Why are outdoor spaces, ones so demonstrably brimming with potential not just for innovative teaching but also reinvigorating learning, not used more frequently? Indeed, it seems sadly ironic

³⁵ <https://estream.warwick.ac.uk/View.aspx?id=6833~4u~vC7hUKNO>

³⁶ See ‘Reflecting on Innovation’ in this report

that the university's sculpture trail, something meant to "create a place saturated with ideas"³⁷ and make room for interpretation and autonomous thinking, is used as such by local schools rather than by the university's regular inhabitants.

It is suggested that outdoor spaces are underused because teaching outdoors is often seen as difficult. It might be muddy, it might be wet, it might be too hot, too cold, or too noisy, the usual resources might be difficult to bring, and the whole thing certainly has an air of unpredictability. Yet many of these are only an issue if you are expecting to use the outdoors for a session in a similar way to your normal classroom. Outdoors sessions must be planned for differently, but so must any change in teaching.³⁸

Imagine you have been told that your module or course must start with a walk around campus. What would you include and why?

If it were noisy and wet and you could not stop to explain each station, what word or idea would you give to your students before you set off for them to reflect on?

This section has taken practical considerations as an important contextual theme when initiating innovative teaching practice within the university. The next page is for the reader to reflect upon the whole document and consider ways in which they can approach experimental or innovative teaching in their future practice.

³⁷ 'Mead Gallery Sculpture Trail: Teacher's Resource Pack', p.2:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/art/resources/sculpture/sculpturetrail-new.pdf>

³⁸ It is an old adage in child education, and a few other areas of life, that: "there's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing."

Next Steps

What is the central message that you will take away from reading this report?

How will that message inform your teaching practice generally?

What changes could you make to your current teaching practice?

How might change your relationship with learners as co-creators?

What risks are you prepared to take within your teaching?

What resources will you need and how will you start the process?

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Further Information

Academic Development Centre:

https://warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/teaching_learning/

BLASTER Toolkit:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/schoolforcross-facultystudies/liberalarts/erasmus/transdisciplinarity/>

IATL Staff Funding:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/funding/staff/

HE Playbox:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/sharing-practice/formative/playfulnessinhighereducation

WIHEA Funding:

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academy/funding/

Window on Teaching:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/staff/window-on-teaching/>