

# University of Worcester Teaching Award Scheme 2016/17

## Vignettes of Practice





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**Development and Delivery of  
PSYC3646 Forensic Psychology in Practice  
by Dr Gillian Harrop**

**Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology  
Institute of Health and Society**



The context of this case study is the development and delivery of the PSYC3646 Forensic Psychology in Practice, a third year module on the BSc in Forensic Psychology, which teaches students to critically consider the discipline of forensic psychology as it applies to forensic settings, as well as developing knowledge and understanding of relevant theory and practices.

In this module, students were introduced to the core roles and professional competencies associated with the work of registered forensic psychologists, as identified by the British Psychological Society and the Health and Care Professionals Council, and were given a range of activities to embed their knowledge and understanding in these areas. Students were asked to upload the results of tasks to the virtual learning environment (VLE) discussion board in order to share their knowledge and reflections from the task and generate discussions about how this knowledge could be embedded within a professional, practical context. In addition, students were encouraged to utilise their independent study time to identify cases within current forensic psychology literature and media resources, where a forensic psychologist could play a role. They then identified which element of the professional competencies this role would fall into and uploaded their findings onto the VLE.

Developing students' knowledge and understanding of the core roles and competencies had the added benefit of making the students more employable, and more attractive to universities to whom they were applying to undertake postgraduate study. For example, when writing personal statements to be included in applications to MSc courses in forensic psychology, students were able to link the work that they had done over the last academic year to the professional competencies and core roles, and identify key areas of work that they had undertaken to develop and embed this knowledge, while also developing a strong grounding in ethics, professionalism and reflective practice.

Evidence-informed approaches were consistently used to direct the teaching on this module. For example, Bleakly and Brennan (2011) identified a number of key recommendations for teaching practitioner-based subjects like forensic psychology, such as the use of structured, experiential learning to ensure that professional standards and client interaction are at the heart of the student experience. These strategies were adopted in various ways, such as developing sessions where students role-played as both the practitioner and client, and creating a task where students had to undertake data collection for a psychological autopsy within a simulated investigative environment.

Evidence of the impact of these teaching practices can be found within the extremely positive student feedback for this module from the 2015-16 cohort. For example, 100% of students reported feeling engaged with the module, and all felt that it had challenged them to develop their thinking. In addition, all students felt that the assessments had stimulated their learning and developed their skills and knowledge. These extremely positive results suggest that the innovative teaching practices on this module are helping to create a strong, effective and professionally-centred module, which not only benefits the students but is also a pleasure to deliver.

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### **Developing full time off-site provision by Angela Hodgkins**

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The rationale for the expansion of the BA (Hons) Integrated Working with Children and Families top up course arose from students studying the Foundation Degree in Early Years at a partner college, Halesowen College, who were telling us that they wanted to stay at the College they were familiar with and which was easily accessible to them. This was an attractive proposition for us as part of UW's widening participation and recruitment agenda.

The student group at the College is comprised of practitioners from a range of settings; some are young students in placement but the majority are working practitioners. Opportunities for study at a university are particularly difficult for those working extended hours, such as childminders and managers of nursery settings. The changing climate of learners (Ashton & Elliott, 2007) indicated the need for change and consideration of alternative delivery. This group of students are often juggling family, study and full or part time work and so attending a university some distance away can be problematic. Flexibility in course delivery and management is essential for this diverse student body.

The process of developing a new cohort at the College involved consultation with colleagues at UW and colleagues at the College. Consultation included discussions about practicalities, such as rooming, library access and computer access for staff and students, so it was important to build relationships with staff in each of these departments of the College. By keeping lines of communication open and listening to challenges faced by the College, we were all able to work through any difficulties and come to a conclusion which was satisfactory for everyone.

One of the crucial aspects of developing new provision is that of quality assurance, ensuring parity of provision and student experience across all cohorts. In order to achieve this, it was essential for the whole teaching team to work in partnership. Regular planning meetings with teaching teams from all cohorts helped to ensure that there was equality of provision with appropriate alignment of teaching, learning and assessment practices. Cross-cohort moderation was carried out in all modules and external examination encompassed a range of students' work from all cohorts.

Students' opportunities to be involved in course development through StAR clinics and course management committees (CMCs) are imperative. This has been problematic, as students from the partner College are reluctant or unable to attend meetings at Worcester. Therefore, we are trialling electronic means of virtual attendance.

The full time programme at Halesowen College has been successfully in operation since 2015-2016. Module evaluations and UWSS data showed that 100% of respondents agreed that "the course is well organised and running smoothly". The full time Halesowen College cohort, in its first year 2015-16 attracted 20 students; for 2016-17, we had 42 students, demonstrating that the delivery is both stable and sustainable. We are currently planning to run the course at Herefordshire and Ludlow College from September 2017.

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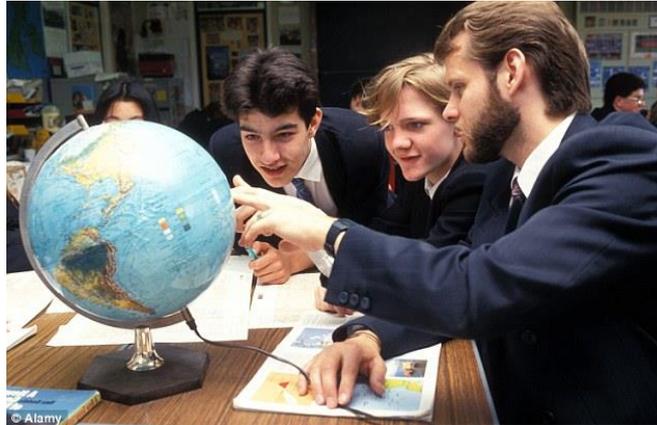


## **Male Student Inclusion**

**by Dr Colin Howard**

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The recruitment and engagement of male students on Qualified Teacher Courses is seen as being important for many university teacher training providers, this includes the University of Worcester. This focus has been driven, in part, by the National Teaching Agency who wished to increase male teacher recruitment levels within the teaching profession. Research such as Warwick et al (2012) confirms male's under-representation on training routes as well their minority status in primary education. With Burns & Pratt Adams (2015) also suggesting there should be targeted support for male students when training to help them overcome the issues they may face as a result of their minority status.

To support the undergraduate course leader's wider initiatives to 'work in partnership' (WiP) with students I established a male working in partnership group (Male WiP) in order to increase male course recruitment as well as helping to promote their engagement in the course. This group, alongside myself, comprised of male undergraduates on our BA (Hons) QTS course to examine and promote strategies to support male student recruitment and engagement. Such work was underpinned by a wish to respect the diverse learning community and to support the UW Strategic Mission to be an 'inclusive university that challenges and overcomes barriers to participation in higher education' (UW Strategic Plan p.4). Our work promoted the following strategies;

- Males sitting in on applicant interviews supporting the tutor's role and the applicants.
- The mentoring of prospective students to choose UW for their training.
- Male trainees attending outreach talks e.g. Sixth Form College to promote being a male teacher.
- School placement support with a peer support group being set up with male trainees being allocated a male School Experience tutor.

- Facebook community initiated to allow males to communicate male initiative effectively.

Prior to this work, the number of males recruited to our course stood at 10% (2014-15), whilst in 2016/17 it stands at 19%. External examiner also recognised this innovative work by saying;

*The commitment that staff have to empowering trainees is admirable and the trainees seize on opportunities to be WiPs...this cannot be praised too highly.*

Whilst male students indicated;

*Male WiP, therefore, works with the other male trainee teachers in order to ensure that we as a group don't feel like we are a minority (Jake Appendix 2 Intuition Edition 3 2016)*

Not only has this project allowed me to consider the student experience and how best to engage with students it has allowed for me to engage in my own professional development via a national platform to disseminate this work (Birmingham HEA Conference 2016). The male WiP, as part of the wider WiP initiative has promoted increases in the National Student Survey to 93% overall satisfaction. Whilst the WiP initiative, of which Male WiP forms part, was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education Award 2015 for 'Outstanding Support for Students'. This project has also been disseminated via the UW Teaching and Learning conference (Howard, C. and Barrell, R. 2015).

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## Our Heads in The Cloud Using Padlet to Enhance Learning & Professional Practice by Dave Hunt

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As a teacher trainer from a secondary school setting, my arrival in the HE sector provided me with some immediate insights into how staff and students could potentially benefit from the use of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL). Schools have historically benefitted from significant investment in this field and perhaps their smaller size makes them more agile in terms of institutional change. I felt the need to raise my trainees' awareness of the range of learning technologies that were available to them whilst on their school based training placements.

I devised a programme to develop their technical skill level, so that they could use modern technologies to engage and inspire their secondary pupils. I emphasized one of my golden rules for TEL which is that it should only be used to enhance learning and not just to entertain the pupils.

A specific technology that I introduced was called *Padlet*. It allows an online notice board to be set up where pupils can contribute by pinning their own ideas. They can do this simply by sharing a website address which is unique for each Padlet. This virtual notice board is analogous to the pupils pinning a *Post-it* note on a classroom noticeboard. As the Padlet and all of the data is stored online, it is known as a 'Cloud Technology'.

I intentionally did not set any ground rules when demonstrating how to use Padlet and although the trainees were adults, they very quickly ascertained that amusing comments could be posted, to the delight of their peers. This indicated a natural curiosity amongst the group and is a value that I would encourage when using technology. However, this does have professional implications when it is being used in a school setting, which the trainee teachers recognised. This experiential learning provided a powerful experience for them as they could immediately see one of the pitfalls of using the technology in a school classroom. I was then able to model that it is possible to moderate the messages before they are visible online enabling the teacher to delete any inappropriate content.

This one aspect of my course delivery helped me to meet the dimensions of the UKPSF framework as it included elements of course design, methods of teaching and learning as well as being underpinned by professional values.

As I was aware of the power of this technology, I was expecting a good response from the trainees, which I received from feedback comments. What I was not expecting, was that



there were some other positive benefits that were supplementary to their pupils' learning. The evaluative comments were overwhelmingly positive and provided me with a good insight into the core value of using the technology in the classroom. There were a lot of comments about the creative aspects that were introduced into their teaching but it was also used by the trainees themselves to capture data for their research projects and assignments. This demonstrates they fundamentally understood how the technology may be harnessed as they had synthesized different methods to use it.

Technology is dynamic and in terms of my own professional practice, I am constantly looking for new teaching and learning opportunities that harness the latest technologies. The positive feedback I received from the trainees has inspired me to continue this quest.

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**Journal Clubs – Level 4 Students Tackle Scientific Literature  
by Dr Jennifer Joyce**

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One of the most notable transitional challenges for students when coming to University to study science is the expectation that they will now need to read primary research and effectively utilise it to support their work. There is sometimes the expectation that students will already possess the necessary skill set to read and critique this research. However, my experience is that this is not the case and that they require guidance to build strong reading habits. My students at level 4 have struggled with the format, writing style and depths of knowledge presented to them in scientific journal articles and have consequently not always engaged in the directed reading tasks required. This lack of participation in reading has stifled class discussion, inhibited deep learning and hindered their ability to gain high grades in their assignments. To alleviate this problem I decided it was essential to implement a supportive “Journal Club” which focused on educating the students on how to read and critique scientific literature and subsequently use it to support their work (McDonough, 2012).

Journal clubs expose students to the world of frontline research and can be an excellent platform from which students can gain experience with analysing, evaluating, dissecting and utilising scientific literature (Biswas, 2011). These clubs have long been recognised as a

means of keeping up to date with the literature; promoting evidence based practice, teaching critical appraisal skills and stimulating debate and improved understanding of topics (Kleinpell, 2002). I decided that these skills were inherently vital for improving our students' scientific ability and progressing well in the module and future University endeavours. Effective science communication is one of the key skills undergraduates must achieve and is one of the threshold learning outcomes for Science (Colthorpe et al., 2014). The ability to communicate effectively is one of the key skills expected of science graduates and the use of Journal club to read and discuss literature enhanced this skill in the students.

Similar to research conducted by Laaksonen and colleagues (2014) and Sandefur and Gordy (2016), my students reported the journal club to be very advantageous suggesting that it helped them to gain new knowledge and improve their ability to search for, utilise and critique primary research ("They forced me to read which I wouldn't have done otherwise" "Journal Club showed me how to read articles and pick out important information" "It was hard but I have to read for lots of modules so it was a big help").

After implementing "Journal Club" for one year (2014/15) I felt it was paying dividends in relation to the standard of work in the assignments and the engagement of students in class discussions. It has been improved and reintroduced for the current academic year with more focused weekly topics to tackle. I feel the future for journal club is bright and I hope it will continue to evolve and continue to help students navigate scientific literature.

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## Using Social Media for Assessment Support by Rachel Kyte

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The logo for VALUESexchange, featuring a stylized 'Vx' icon in a square followed by the text 'VALUESexchange' in a teal box.

PTHY2001 Assignment Discussion Group

In order to improve the quality of assignment support for undergraduate Physiotherapy students, innovative methods using the social media platforms Facebook and Values Exchange have been explored. These innovations were designed to tackle a variety of issues including; students feeling unsure of what was expected, staff responding to the same questions multiple times and students receiving conflicting advice from different staff. Previously students had been directed to an online discussion board on their VLE (virtual learning environment), Blackboard, however engagement with this was poor.

Both the University of Worcester and HEFCE encourage staff to use e-learning in creative ways to enhance the student experience, and provide opportunities for collaborative learning (University of Worcester 2015; HEFCE 2009). Online discussion boards have been found to promote collaboration, improve engagement and satisfaction (Brenton 2009; JISC 2008; Mayes and de Freitas 2004). However, literature suggests that using student centered platforms such as Facebook may be more engaging than traditional virtual learning environments such as Blackboard and can help develop learning communities (Donlan 2012).

In light of this literature students were invited to join a private, on-line assignment discussion group on Facebook. Here students could post assignment questions and questions were also posed for them, alongside links to online resources. Students' privacy was respected by giving guidance on security settings.

The impact of this innovation was assessed via a questionnaire and focus group. 94% of students engaged with the group and unanimously reported it helpful. Modular evaluations showed 100% of students felt the assignment has been clearly explained, up from 56% the previous year. Students preferred the functionality of Facebook to Blackboard. Focus group data showed the Facebook group met the needs of students, who valued the sense of

community it created. There was little collaboration between students however, largely due to fears of plagiarism. A small minority had concerns over privacy and self-image, expressing anxiety over what peers may think if they posted questions.

Taking into consideration students' concerns over privacy, the discussion board has since been transferred to the Values Exchange, a social networking site with an academic focus. In addition to a discussion board, the site also has an electronic notice board feature (much like Pinterest) where links to resources are posted, alongside frequently asked questions and top tips. Resources are tailored to the needs of individual cohorts. Students can also post anonymously by changing their usernames. The site continues to be evaluated well by students.

Social media can be a valuable tool for engaging and supporting students through the creation of learning communities. Discussion boards, however, regardless of the platform, do not automatically lead to collaboration, particularly where individual summative assessment is involved. They cannot replace the collaborative learning, which happens during face-to-face activities. Staff wishing to use social media for supporting students should ensure such innovations are research informed and adapted to the needs to students. Not all individuals will feel comfortable engaging with such platforms, and students should still have access to direct tutor support where required.

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## **Are Learning Sets Effective in Operational Contexts? by Mandy Newbold**

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(Photo: One learning sets response to collaborative group presentation)

The adoption of learning sets to support the learning, focus and submission of a development plan assignment for Level 5 Sport Development and Coaching students was introduced in 2014. It was hoped that using learning sets, where students' collaborative work is set within a real-world context, would motivate and help them to see the relevance of their University work to the outside world.

The term 'learning set' was used to describe a small group of students who worked collaboratively to solve a problem and then reflected on their actions in order to inform future learning. McGill and Beaty (2013), in providing the underpinning for this approach, note that "the trend toward student-centred learning, transferable skills and closer links with industry and services has required higher education institutions to look to ways of linking with the 'outside' world and introducing more effective methods of student learning".

Students worked in learning sets (three students) to prepare for their first assessment, a group presentation. Located in real-world scenarios, students were required to act as Sport Development Officers for Worcester City Council, and work collaboratively and respectfully with their fellow team members, to jointly develop a localised 8 week Sportivate development plan for a specified target group within the city. The assessment included a 10-minute presentation by the learning set to the whole module group, together with accompanying written work including an action plan.

Sportivate is a national sport development programme which gives 14-25 year-olds, who are not particularly sporty, access to six-to-eight weeks' of free or subsidised coaching in a range of sports, with a view to retaining their participation level thereafter (Sport England, 2016).

The approach worked well during the first year of delivery with students identifying that they 'really enjoyed working in groups' (student 1, 2016), and liked the 'well-structured and informative sessions' (student 2, 2016). All students who submitted an assessment passed (n=26) with grades ranging from C+ to A-; a much higher achievement rate than for other similar module assessments. As such a learning and teaching project was undertaken into the efficacy of learning sets as a pedagogical frame, and through consideration of data gained from ASSIST questionnaires (Entwistle, 2000) and focus group interviews, identification that the use of learning sets promoted a deeper and more strategic approach to learning (and was appreciated by students as an effective way of promoting group processes and learning) was found.

This case study is linked to the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (2011) as it focuses on three of the main areas of activity including:

- developing effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance (A4),
- designing and planning learning activities and programmes of study (A1), and
- engaging in continuing professional development in subjects and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices (A5).

The core knowledge areas outlined include:

- identifying appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme (K2),
- considering how students learn, both generally and within the subject discipline (K3), and
- the use and value of appropriate learning technologies (K4).

The Module Leader will continue to test these findings with a different cohort of students, and having reflected on the outcome is now inspired to extend the approach into other modules, and also to develop further collaborative teaching and learning research approaches.

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At the end of the project trainees reflected on the advantages of working collaboratively.

### ***Benefits of working collaboratively***

- Sharing ideas
- Supporting each other
- Benefitting from secondary trainees' high level of subject knowledge
- Finding out how pupils are taught in primary schools

(Secondary trainee) (UKPSF D3i, D3iv).

### ***Challenges of working collaboratively***

- Planning a lesson collaboratively
- Reconciling different points of view.

### ***Impact***

Primary students and secondary trainees overwhelmingly agreed that teachers need to understand how languages are taught in different age phases (UKPSF D3i).

“This experience was enriching [...] essential in order to understand how best to manage the transition between primary and secondary school.” (Secondary trainee).

Trainees acknowledge that collaboration is essential to developing their practice and understanding of transition and would welcome the space that they need to collaborate with colleagues, who work in different age phases, once they are qualified. The next step would involve researching how cross-phase work is currently set up in primary and secondary settings and whether newly qualified teachers (NQTs), recently qualified teachers (RQTs) and school mentors would be interested in collaborating with each other to create a continuum of teaching and learning at the point of transition.

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### **Foundation Degree Early Years: Making Practice Visible**

**Team Teaching Award**

**Lead Award Author:**

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This impact on learning and teaching as a result of students undertaking a Foundation Degree in Early Years was examined through collaborative research from six partner Further Education Colleges across 9 campuses who offer a Foundation Degree in Early Years (FdA). The programme runs over three years part-time, two years full-time offering evening and day attendance as well as an online blended learning route.

The aim of the research was to gain student perception of the programme to inform teaching and learning. Students were actively involved in the research process which operated within ethical parameters approved by the University Ethics Committee. An interpretive methodology examined data drawn from focus groups, survey/questionnaire, and content analysis. This allowed for a diverse range of students to participate by choosing methods which suited them. Student perception of programme effect was seen in terms of personal and professional capability and the way higher order learning was aligned with reflection on practice, in practice and for practice. The findings extend knowledge about aligning the pace of teaching and learning with professional capability in practice. The programme was perceived as inclusive and tutors were seen to work collaboratively and strive to reveal as well as promote independent capability of students. For example, via an approach designed to bring together students and tutors from each of the partner colleges is a twice yearly 'Student Partnership Conference' held at the University. The programme effect appears to be considerable especially in terms of personal and professional confidence and effect on practice.

On reflection of our learning, the findings have allowed the teaching team to take a deeper, more authoritative review of the modules. It has asked the partnership as educators to examine their practice in order to make connections between theory and practice as the findings revealed that this alignment is essential because one informs the other. This necessitates teaching playing an integral part in establishing and making this relationship visible, highlighting and modelling good leadership practice and enabling students to develop an environment which goes beyond an application of regulatory frameworks and policy, to critical thinking about why these are in place. In terms of course design this means presenting clear examples of the principles which are aligned to practice within a collaborative team.

The research has led the team to formulate a wider view of student engagement and ensure that 'leading practice' is incorporated into the programme. For example:

- Understanding what quality practice looks like when people work together;
- Able to recognise what works in practice to lead practice including distributing leadership to others and active professional collaboration with others;
- Monitoring collective professional practice;
- Encouraging the sharing of professional development activities.

The research process and subsequent improvements have also facilitated collaborative engagement between partner colleges and driven the formation of a research base and allowed a paper to be written and accepted by a peer reviewed journal.

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