**CCTL Teaching Forum speaker abstracts.**

**SESSION 1:**

Dr Sonia Ilie, Defining learning gain in higher education – exploring the student perspective

Preliminarily defined as the progress students make in developing their abilities, skills, attitudes and competencies, *learning gain* remains a contested concept in the field of higher education. We introduce a conceptual framework setting out the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of *learning gain* and present an empirical analysis of university students' perspectives on what they expected to learn in higher education. Given the potential emphasis on students’ views as part of the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework, it is important to understand students’ own views and expectations of their *learning gain*. We report preliminary results from semi-structured interviews with around 30 undergraduate and postgraduate students in three Russell Group universities. We find that students view their learning, in terms of subject knowledge and abilities and skills, as inextricably linked and equally valuable, and report clear and substantial progress on both. We observe from students’ responses that much of their skill and competence development in higher education is implicit. We find that the elements of learning most relevant to students are consistent with both our conceptual framework and universities’ espoused aims. We discuss the implications of students’ views in relation to the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework and within our wider remit of measuring learning gain in higher education.

**OR**

Dr Michael Ramage, Enhancing and extending the classroom with digital content: teaching structural design to students with diverse subject knowledge

Dr Michael Ramage describes his approach to teaching structural design in a way that helps students to understand principles and which also enables students with different knowledge bases and a wide range of mathematical abilities to engage with content according to their individual needs. Michael has developed a series of videos and interactive digital content to augment lecture content. He has also redesigned 'class time' to focus on material that is best suited to interpersonal interactions.

Structural design is an essential component of an architecture education, integrating maths, geometry, materials and creativity. Yet many building technology courses focus only on analytical methods; these methods do not correspond well with the education architects need, where informed design is a necessary precursor to analysis. Michael uses videos to bring material that could not otherwise be part of the class, such as structural testing and research. They are also useful for content that may not be relevant for all students, as the course draws together students with a wide range of mathematical abilities. Some videos may be assigned prior to a lecture, and some as follow up. All are available for revision and to augment supervisions. Michael will argue that enhancing and extending the classroom with digital content allows the students to understand the role and contribution of structures and materials to architectural design. Augmenting the classroom lectures with new video content should provide an additional route to developing our students’ knowledge.

**SESSION 2:**

Ant Bagshaw, What’s *right* about the Teaching Excellence Framework?

There’s plenty of commentary about the problems with TEF and its failure to measure teaching or excellence, though all are agreed that it *is* a framework. But could the exercise do some good? Ant Bagshaw will put his rose-tinted specs on for a glass-more-than-half-full reading of the policy in the hope of sparking interesting debate about TEF’s merits. This will include looking ahead to the prospects of subject-level evaluation and the taught postgraduate experience.

Ant was a Cambridge undergraduate and was CUSU Education Officer 2008-09. He then worked at the National Union of Students and for various universities before joining Wonkhe (<http://wonkhe.com/>) in 2016. Wonkhe is an online platform for analysis and commentary of HE policy and it provides a free weekly email digest of the goings on in the sector; Ant is now Deputy Director.

**OR**

Giovanna Biscontin: Using Moodle to support learning and assessment

Virtual learning environments, such as Moodle, are offering an ever growing variety of content delivery and communication tools, as well as assignment submission resources, which can help in supporting learning and assessment. Dr Giovanna Biscontin will present her experience of using tools in Moodle to help both students and instructors reach their goals for the course.

In its simplest form a course web site can be seen as a way to store course materials in the form of a directory of files, such as lecture notes. The talk explores ways of making an initial, limited investment of time and building on this incrementally to provide students with a much more satisfying learning environment, which also encourages independent study and takes advantage of the many resources on the web.

Moodle provides a wide range of tools for assessment, which can be tailored to a variety of goals. Quizzes can be particularly effective in ensuring students read and understand their laboratory handouts, arriving prepared on the day of their session. Report or essay submission can be streamlined and paired with anti-plagiarism tools. Marking rubrics can be set up to aid assessment or to ensure an even handling of the process. The use of these, and other, tools will be demonstrated with a discussion of advantages and disadvantages of the various options.

**SESSION 3:**

Professor Dilly Fung: Excellent education in research-rich universities: new directions?

What is distinctive about student education in research-intensive universities? Within and across our disciplines, how are students on taught degree programmes benefiting from our research expertise, and how might ‘excellence’ be defined in this context? In this session we will discuss these questions, drawing on a new position paper (Fung, Besters-Dilger and van der Vaart 2017). Published by the League of European Research Universities (LERU), a body comprising twenty-three of the most research-intensive universities in Europe including Cambridge, the paper draws on a range of European perspectives and presents examples of evolving practice.

Themes include developing degree programmes to maximise students’ engagement with researchers and research; the possible contribution undergraduate students can make to research itself; and the importance of valuing and rewarding those who commit to leading and enhancing taught programmes of study. We will conclude by considering the relevance of the paper’s recommendations to the UK in general, and to the University of Cambridge in particular.

**OR**

Dr Karen Ottewell: Helping (international) graduate students write…

Bourdieu noted that academic language is ‘no-one’s mother tongue’, and this is particularly true when it comes to academic writing, irrespective as to which is your first language. Cambridge has one of the (if not actually *the*)  highest entrance requirements for English language proficiency, and the difficulties that students for whom English as a second (or third, or fourth) language face, in my experience, are less likely to do with grammar or vocabulary than with the conventions of how (academic) English is used.

We are all aware that when we are grappling with new ideas that we do not yet fully understand, there is an apparent lack of clarity in our writing. But as we revise and rework, our thoughts become clearer and so too does our written expression of them. The same is true for students whose first language is not English – but this process may be compromised if students are unsure of the argumentative paradigm that is expected of them, especially if their paradigm in their first language is very different. In these circumstances, ‘transfer’ effects may appear and these may be interpreted as linguistic deficiencies, rather than as culturally defined differences in approach, both in terms of argumentation as well as rhetoric. Basically, all that is required to avoid this are clearly articulated expectations and guidelines.

The aims of this session are therefore, firstly, to raise awareness of the difficulties that students whose first language is not English may face and the potential reasons for these, exploring the commonly held misconceptions that they are simply ‘language’ problems; and secondly, to reflect on how best to support the development of written academic articulacy for *all* students, including native speakers.

**SESSION 4:**

Nick Daymond: What’s coming your way? Perspectives from a secondary head teacher

New specifications at GCSE and A level, new grading system at GCSE, new accountability measures, the move away from modular to linear assessment, increased popularity of the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), sixth-form funding levels and their impact on subject choices and pedagogy; these are just some of the issues that schools are dealing with – and all will have an impact on students’ experience of secondary education. This session will highlight some of the implications for higher education of the deluge of change hitting schools currently.

Nick Daymond was a Cambridge undergraduate and also completed his PGCE at Homerton College. He has taught in secondary schools in Hertfordshire since 1985. He has been a headteacher for fourteen years, currently at Parmiter’s School, Watford.

**OR**

Ange Fitzpatrick: Sunny Side Up: How Bloomberg Breakfasts refreshed our financial education programme.

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