

Editor's Introduction

Welcome to the Winter 2026 edition. We are grateful to all our authors and reviewers and hope you enjoy this new edition. Here we provide brief summaries of the papers.

TikTok videos, for teaching public health education students, are the choice of Nicole Holt of Canterbury Christ Church University: they have in their favour brevity and no advertising; the author creates them for providing assessment guidance, clarifying complex concepts, drawing on the knowledge of experts and encouraging the students to adopt the method for their own practice. Learners' familiarity with and liking for the medium and the fact that they can watch a video repeatedly and pursue a topic further in related videos encourages their participative and socially-connected learning. The author accepts that there are limitations – attention span may shorten; easy access for all may be difficult; staff skills are variable; institutions are not all well-disposed to TikTok – but is clearly convinced by observations and outcomes (including very positive student feedback) that here is a teaching method that serves diverse learning needs. Its creativity and innovatory capability seem well worth others' exploration.

John Foster, of the University of Greenwich, argues that students of forensic science should have learning engagement with relevant international contexts – legal, cultural and scientific – to enrich their subject grasp with the acquisition of perspectives that either chime with or differ from their own backgrounds. This author brings to bear personal experience from Nepal, Pakistan and Thailand, both to acknowledge the criticism that study with breadth may be limited in depth and to address that criticism with a rationale advocating a manageable balance of 1) content to develop crucial critical analysis skills and 2) the evidenced-based dimensions provided by global cases, guest speakers, network contacts and the lived experience of academic researchers. Students thus have opportunities for self-directed learning, group collaborations and reflections on how different countries use forensic science, enhancing their understanding of legal frameworks, cultural contexts and scientific adaptability. The author reports on positive student satisfaction as a result of this carefully managed and resourced approach.

Students of forensic science at the University of Greenwich are finding fulfilled their wish for opportunities to access authentic workplace application of this discipline (in order to improve their employability prospects as practitioners), because their teachers have personal in-the-field experience each year of recovering the remains of United States airmen missing in action in World War II Europe. This not only guarantees the currency of their expertise, but gives them access to a network of professionals and enriches their lectures and laboratory work with data, photographs, three-dimensional imagery and excavation records and techniques, not to mention live teaching from active field sites and actual evidential material for lab analysis. Students sometimes also hear from significant guest speakers, who bring their own real perspectives into the institution. Though authors Samantha Taylor and Luke Taylor still provide a strong theoretical element, they have integrated as much authentic activity into as many modules of the programme as possible. Levels of student satisfaction and graduate employment confirm the true value of their approach.

At the University of Greenwich, Sebastian Blair's succinct review of GitHub Classroom – this in the context of higher education computing and digital engineering programmes – is a reasoned recommendation of the platform's efficacy in facilitating authentic assessment, bringing teaching into line with the practices of industry and enabling monitoring and contextualised feedback. With it, instructors can distribute assignments, manage repositories and review student submissions; they are able to track engagement and intervene as

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necessary, providing precise and targeted commentary and guidance. Students can work with the same tools and techniques used in the workplace; they can also collaborate on group activities, in which their individual contributions are evident for assessment. Learning may be scaffolded to develop competences in a supportive environment. The author recognises that some students' lack of prior technical experience, weaker digital skills and access limitations may make GitHub Classroom inequitable and challenging. Furthermore, because it typically operates outside institutional virtual learning environments, it is hard to integrate into HE and, for it to be effective, educators' time must be devoted to configuring it and providing continuing technical support with a strong focus on inclusivity.

A team of researchers at Kingston University, an institution with a very diverse student body, conducted a small-scale project into undergraduate perceptions of this university's support provision and of how far they used it. The fact that many students undertake family care roles (often culturally expected of them), both study and do paid work and are distance commuters to campus gives some idea of the conflicting pressures they may face. This paper provides the results of a questionnaire, revealing a lack of take-up of Kingston's established formal support services. The authors conclude that action to make these more visible, accessible and relevant would be beneficial. Also significant is the finding that the human face of lecturers and course leaders makes them more likely to be providers of support; there are implications for the training of academic staff to respond to and refer students, drawing personal and institutional support more closely together, as well as for the acquisition of real knowledge and understanding of each student as an individual with discrete needs. Staff are also crucial to making learning and learning environments much more helpfully flexible and to teaching learning strategies explicitly. It is thus very clear from this important research that institutions can still do much more to recognise the work-life balance priority for both staff and students; by aiming for more holistic and responsive student support that is well-used and manageable, universities will themselves benefit from more refined practice.

With best wishes from the Compass team