

Welcome to our ninth issue of *Compass*. In the ten rich case studies and articles published, a number of themes emerge that reflect ways in which innovative teachers are finding solutions to the many challenges they face. This issue also provides a platform for presenters at the Academic Practice and Technology (APT) 2013 conference to further develop their ideas through reflection and scholarship. It is no surprise, therefore, that the digital features strongly. Our learning and teaching landscape continues to transform from one in which students are primarily harvesters of information to one where students employ diverse social networks and media to create content and knowledge. Some of the authors featured in this issue explore the efficacy of using technologies and methods such as blogs, flipped classroom, personal learning spaces, games and learning videos. As practitioners they are identifying those important gaps in our knowledge and research, so that readers who search for evidence and logic for changing their practice might be convinced and inspired. Researchers working in the field of learning technology may also benefit as these studies provide evidence for theoretical underpinning.

The composition of this issue is significantly different from earlier volumes – here case studies make up the majority of submissions. While some authors focus on the technology that can bring about changes in practice, others respond to policy directives and the wider issues of how best to manage students. Their main concern is how to best teach and design a curriculum that addresses student expectations of an excellent student experience, and how to maximise employment outcomes.

Ray Stoneham and Aliyah Essop look at how the management of projects and dissertations can be better supported through the use and integration of a bespoke e-tutorial, supervision tracking and an online enquiry system. They argue that this simple but effective customer relationship management system not only enhances both the student and staff experience, but ultimately, could integrate these analytics with other data to produce a ‘big picture’ of student engagement, with the aim of improving student retention and achievement.

In their case study of employability within the fashion curriculum, Lesley Peacock and Elaine McNeill report on their use of live projects, placements, guest lectures and CV support in a module to transform professional development in the fashion industry.

Tatiana Simmonds, Darren Lloyd Gent, and Ray Stoneham consider the effective use of screencasting that is increasingly employed in alternative delivery methods such as the inverted classroom. Their case study examines the trade-off between effective use of staff time and student satisfaction, and how some of the technological and cost obstacles may be overcome.

Sancha de Burca’s survey of design students who use blogging is further evidence of how learners today are using the convenience of technology to record their learning journey and contribute to the development of professional identities.

Geoff Rebbeck's case study describes how he retrospectively transformed the content of his degree using an e-portfolio. His aim was to show how this form and way of working can capture a greater richness than is possible in more traditional summative assessment. He argues that the technology is widely available, and can support the growth of an individual through their learning journey, adding value to skills development in digital management and reputation.

The case study by Gabriela Daniels aimed to evaluate instructional videos. In her paper, she identifies contexts for their use and ways in which this information helps the design process.

Mary Kiernan, Cagin Kazimoglu, Liz Bacon and Lachlan MacKinnon outline how educational games can be used for teaching Computer Science programming on first-year introductory programming courses, and how some basic concepts can be generalized across disciplines.

A narrative approach to considering the role of the lecturer in developing autonomy in final year undergraduates is adopted by Jesmond Lewis. Her writing is informed by a literary style that is unusual in an academic journal, but the reader is rewarded by an open and honest account of some of the dilemmas experienced by academics on a regular basis.

Ken Fee reflects, five years later, on the key design considerations and lessons learned from developing and delivering a Master of Professional Practice in Computer Games Development. He identifies the features of the successful pedagogical model that has produced highly employable graduates fit for immediate employment.

Karen Shackleford-Cesare's article considers the reasons why academics use, or don't use a virtual learning environment, in this study, specifically Moodle. She critically identifies the factors that influence uptake, and her conclusions about the role of technology to enhance learning should make happy reading for all those whose job it is to persuade staff to use such virtual learning institutional platforms.

These articles show how practitioners from a wide range of disciplines are trying out new ideas, innovating and reflecting upon their practice. They provide some valuable insights into ways of meeting the many challenges confronting teachers in higher and further education today, and hopefully, encourage others to undertake further research, or develop the ideas presented in this issue. There is much to be learned from one another.

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