ALTS 2014: Learning for All

Over 100 members of staff, along with colleagues from Robert Gordon University, attended the sixth Annual Learning & Teaching Symposium which took place on Wednesday 15th January 2014 with the theme **'Learning for All'**.

The Symposium provided a forum for staff to hear about current practice, and discuss issues around student background, internationalisation, transition to Higher Education, flexible delivery, distance learning and equality and diversity. There was also a display of posters relevant to the topic.

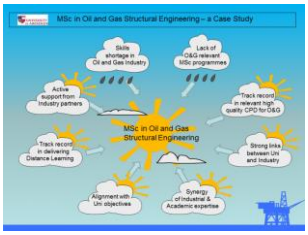
The keynote speaker this year was Professor Frank Coton, Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching at the University of Glasgow. Professor Coton is a member of the Scottish Funding Council's Access & Inclusion Committee and Chair of the West of Scotland Schools for Higher Education Programme Management Committee which coordinates widening participation activities in the West of Scotland.

The Symposium topic complements the current QAA (Scotland) Enhancement Theme, 'Developing and Supporting the Curriculum'.

Programme

Click here to download the programme as a Word Document

Welcome & Introduction Professor Peter McGeorge, Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching, University of Aberdeen	**Click here to listen**
Keynote: Supporting Academic Writing at the University of Glasgow Professor Frank Coton, Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching, University of Glasgow *The University of Glasgow Writing Centre has its roots in staff concerns around writing skills highlighted by Quality Assurance and Enhancement processes in the years leading up to 2006. At the same time, the importance of writing skills in relation to student retention was also being recognised across the institution and, in response, academic staff were beginning to develop interventions to enhance writing skills amongst*	**Click here to listen**

the student body. One of the primary mechanisms used to support bottom-up innovation at Glasgow is the Learning and Teaching Development Fund (LTDF) and this was used by two groups within the University to pilot different approaches to writing skills development between 2006 and 2009. The two approaches could not be more different. The Academic Writing Skills Programme, involved a direct intervention at entry to the University, initially for Arts students, and the Writing for Results project provided scalable online support, initially for Science based students, in their later years. This presentation will explore how these two strategically funded projects evolved and were ultimately supported from core funds through the formation of the University Writing Centre. In doing so, the presentation will also consider the types of intervention being used to support Academic Writing at Glasgow and their effectiveness.	
Poster Display (over lunch)	**Click here to view the posters**
Collaboration with Industry to Develop and Deliver Postgraduate Teaching Dr Paul Davidson, School of Engineering	 **Click here to view the presentation**
Making Learning Accessible using Collaborate Dr Yvonne Bain and Sarah Cornelius, School of Education *Collaborate web conferencing software has become widely used within the School of Education to engage learners at a distance and support new ways of working and learning. This presentation will provide some examples of the use of Collaborate to make learning accessible, support collaborative learning, and provide choice and flexibility. The examples include using Collaborate to provide interactive workshops, for research supervision and to engage distant participants in local events. It will consider the impact of live online learning on tutors and learners and discuss issues that need to be considered before using Collaborate to provide 'learning for all'.*	 **Click here to listen**
Parallel Discussion Sessions **1. Institutional Policies on Widening Access** Professor Peter McGeorge, Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching **2. Open Access and Open Educational Resources** Dr Colin Calder, Centre for Academic Development **3. The Global Curriculum – Widening Access for International Students** Dr Debbi Marais, Applied Health Sciences **4. Providing an Inclusive Learning Experience** Janine Chalmers, Policy, Planning & Governance and Dr Lucy Foley, Head of Student Support	**Click here to view Dr Calder's presentation** **Click here to view Dr Marais' presentation**

Click here to view Dr Foley & Janine Chalmers' presentation

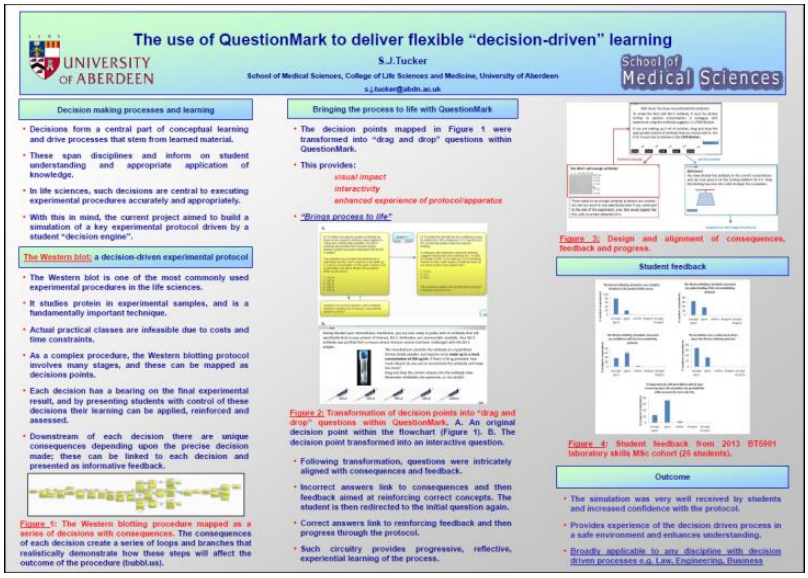
Summary and Panel Discussion

Chaired by Professor Peter McGeorge, Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching

Click here to listen

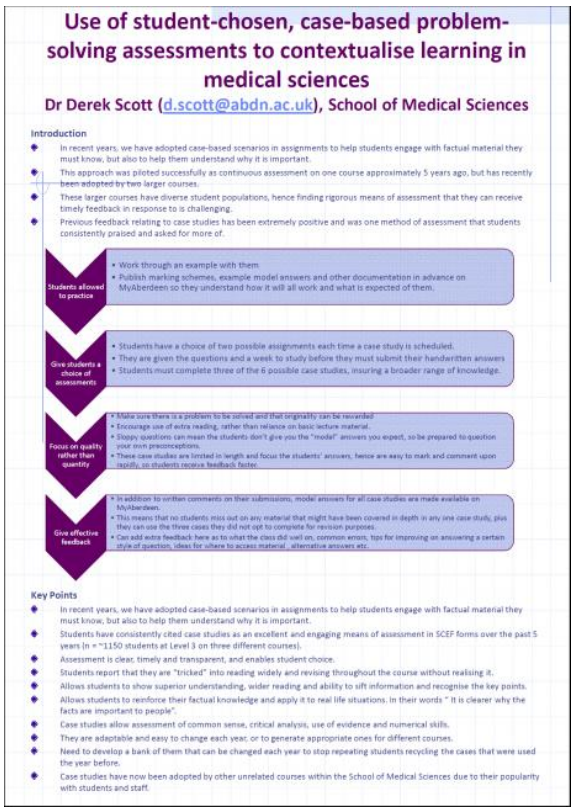
Poster Display

We recieved a good response to our call for posters from colleagues and displayed 15 during the lunchtime session. Please click on the poster title below to view full size.



The use of QuestionMark to deliver flexible 'decision-driven' learning

S Tucker, School of Medical Sciences, CLSM



Use of student-chosen, case-based problem-solving assessments to contextualise learning in medical sciences

Dr Derek Scott (d.scott@abdn.ac.uk), School of Medical Sciences

Introduction

- In recent years, we have adopted case-based scenarios in assignments to help students engage with factual material they must know, but also to help them understand why it is important.
- This approach was piloted successfully as continuous assessment on one course approximately 5 years ago, but has recently been adopted by two larger courses.
- These larger courses have diverse student populations, hence finding rigorous means of assessment that they can receive timely feedback in response to is challenging.
- Previous feedback relating to case studies has been extremely positive and was one method of assessment that students consistently praised and asked for more of.

Students allowed to practice

- Work through an example with them
- Publish marking schemes, example model answers and other documentation in advance on MyAberdeen so they understand how it will all work and what is expected of them.

Give students a choice of assessments

- Students have a choice of two possible assignments each time a case study is scheduled.
- They are given the questions and a week to study before they must submit their handwritten answers
- Students must complete three of the 6 possible case studies, insuring a broader range of knowledge.

Focus on quality rather than quantity

- Make sure there is a problem to be solved and that originality can be rewarded
- Encourage use of extra reading, rather than reliance on basic lecture material.
- Sloppy questions can mean the students don't give you the "model" answers you expect, so be prepared to question your own preconceptions.
- These case studies are limited in length and focus the students' answers, hence are easy to mark and comment upon rapidly, so students receive feedback faster.

Give effective feedback

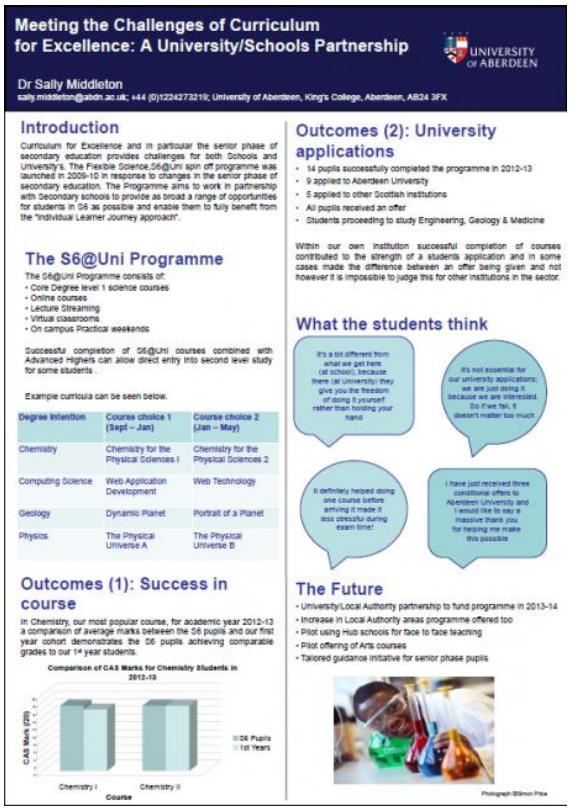
- In addition to written comments on their submissions, model answers for all case studies are made available on MyAberdeen.
- This means that no students miss out on any material that might have been covered in depth in any one case study, plus they can use the three cases they did not opt to complete for revision purposes.
- Can add extra feedback here as to what the class did well on, common errors, tips for improving on answering a certain style of question, ideas for where to access material, alternative answers etc.

Key Points

- In recent years, we have adopted case-based scenarios in assignments to help students engage with factual material they must know, but also to help them understand why it is important.
- Students have consistently cited case studies as an excellent and engaging means of assessment in SCEF forms over the past 5 years (n = ~1150 students at Level 3 on three different courses).
- Assessment is clear, timely and transparent, and enables student choice.
- Students report that they are "tricked" into reading widely and revising throughout the course without realising it.
- Allows students to show superior understanding, wider reading and ability to sift information and recognise the key points.
- Allows students to reinforce their factual knowledge and apply it to real life situations. In their words " It is clearer why the facts are important to people".
- Case studies allow assessment of common sense, critical analysis, use of evidence and numerical skills.
- They are adaptable and easy to change each year, or to generate appropriate ones for different courses.
- Need to develop a bank of them that can be changed each year to stop repeating students recycling the cases that were used the year before.
- Case studies have now been adopted by other unrelated courses within the School of Medical Sciences due to their popularity with students and staff.

[Use of student-chosen, case-based problem-solving assessments to contextualise learning in Medical Sciences]

D Scott, School of Medical Sciences, CLSM



Meeting the Challenges of Curriculum for Excellence: A University/Schools Partnership

Dr Sally Middleton
sally.middleton@abdn.ac.uk; +44 (0)1224273219; University of Aberdeen, King's College, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Introduction

Curriculum for Excellence and in particular the senior phase of secondary education provides challenges for both Schools and University's. The Flexible Science.S6@Uni spin off programme was launched in 2009-10 in response to changes in the senior phase of secondary education. The Programme aims to work in partnership with Secondary schools to provide as broad a range of opportunities for students in S6 as possible and enable them to fully benefit from the "Individual Learner Journey approach".

The S6@Uni Programme

The S6@Uni Programme consists of:

- Core Degree level 1 science courses
- Online courses
- Lecture Streaming
- Virtual classrooms
- On campus Practical weekends

Successful completion of S6@Uni courses combined with Advanced Highers can allow direct entry into second level study for some students.

Example curricula can be seen below.

Degree Intention	Course choice 1 (Sept – Jan)	Course choice 2 (Jan – May)
Chemistry	Chemistry for the Physical Sciences I	Chemistry for the Physical Sciences 2
Computing Science	Web Application Development	Web Technology
Geology	Dynamic Planet	Portrait of a Planet
Physics	The Physical Universe A	The Physical Universe B

Outcomes (1): Success in course

In Chemistry, our most popular course, for academic year 2012-13 a comparison of average marks between the S6 pupils and our first year cohort demonstrates the S6 pupils achieving comparable grades to our 1st year students.

Outcomes (2): University applications

- 14 pupils successfully completed the programme in 2012-13
- 9 applied to Aberdeen University
- 5 applied to other Scottish institutions
- All pupils received an offer
- Students proceeding to study Engineering, Geology & Medicine

Within our own institution successful completion of courses contributed to the strength of a students application and in some cases made the difference between an offer being given and not however it is impossible to judge this for other institutions in the sector.

What the students think

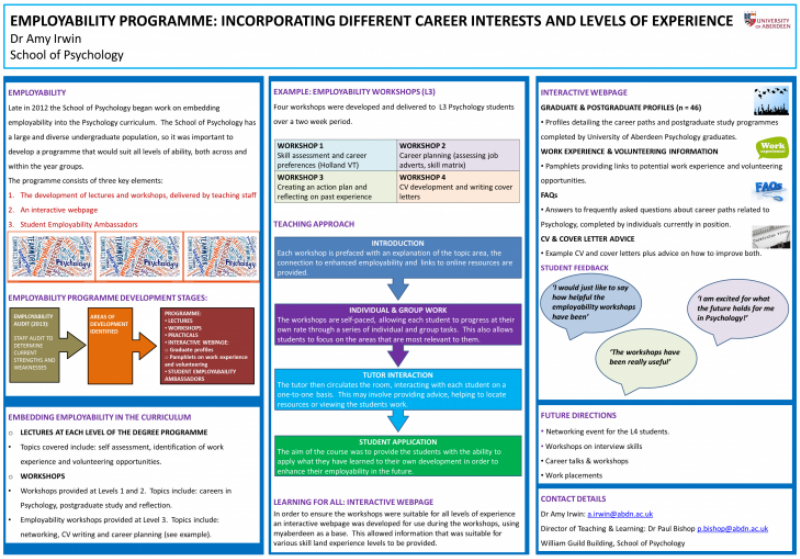
The Future

- University/Local Authority partnership to fund programme in 2013-14
- Increase in Local Authority areas programme offered too
- Pilot using Hub schools for face to face teaching
- Pilot offering of Arts courses
- Tailored guidance initiative for senior phase pupils

Photograph: Ellimon Price

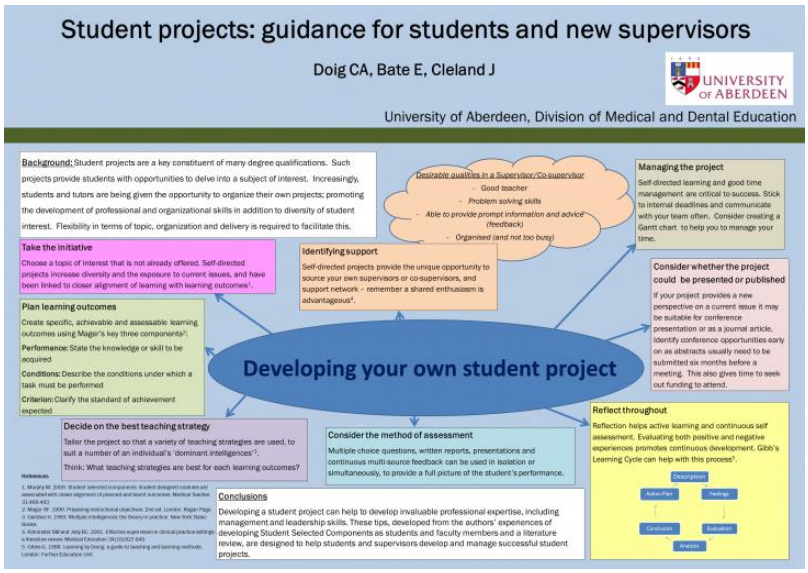
[Meeting the Challenges of Curriculum for Excellence]

S Middleton, College of Physical Sciences



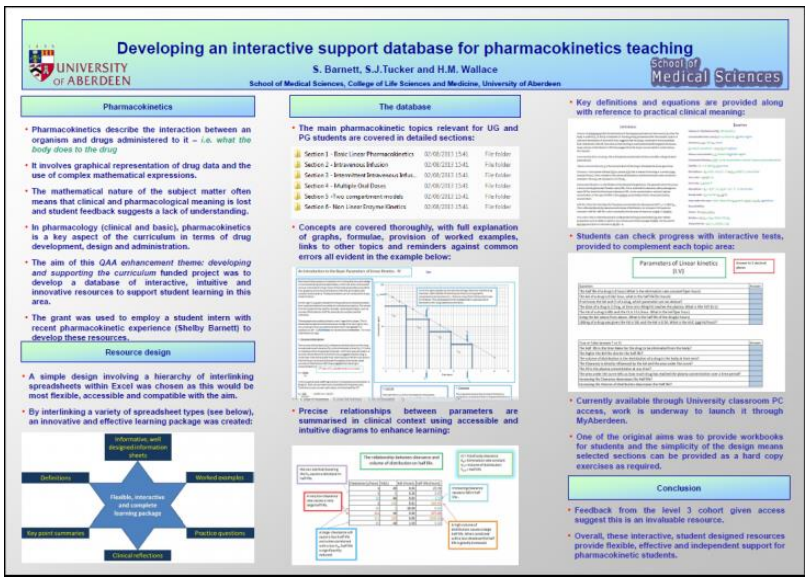
[Employability programme: incorporating different career interests and levels of experience]

A Irwin, School of Psychology, CLSM



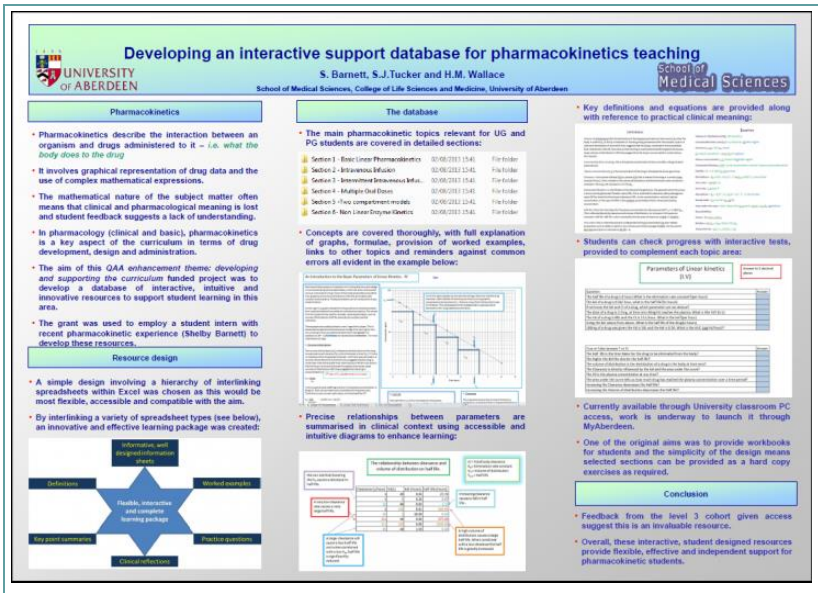
[Student projects: guidance for students and new supervisors]

E Bate, C Doig, J Cleland, Medical & Dental Education, CLSM



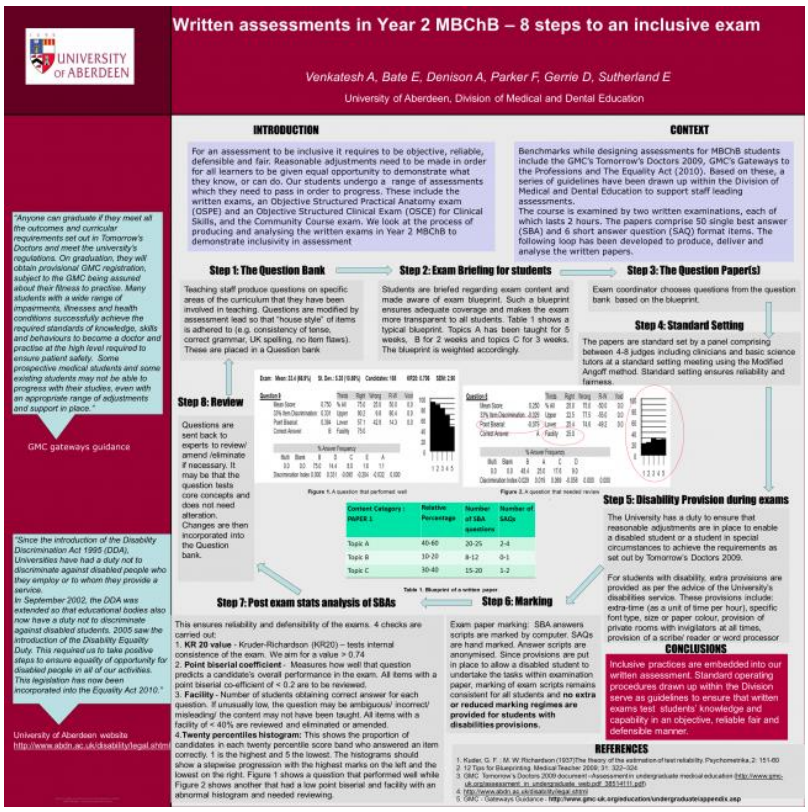
Developing an interactive support database for pharmacokinetics teaching

S Tucker, H Wallace, S Barnett, School of Medical Sciences, CLSM



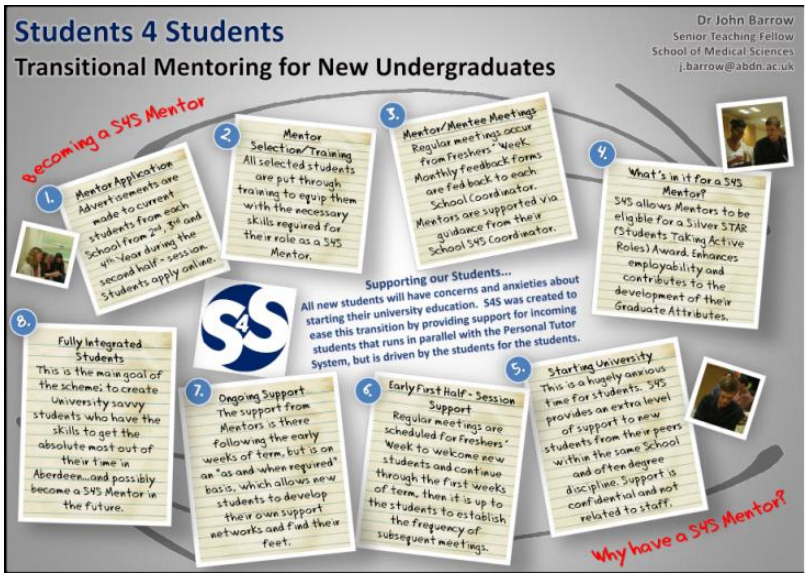
Development of interactive online resources to support and enhance numerical skills among Medical Science students

S Tucker, V Psalmon, A Jenkinson, M Richard, D Shewan, School of Medical Sciences, CLSM



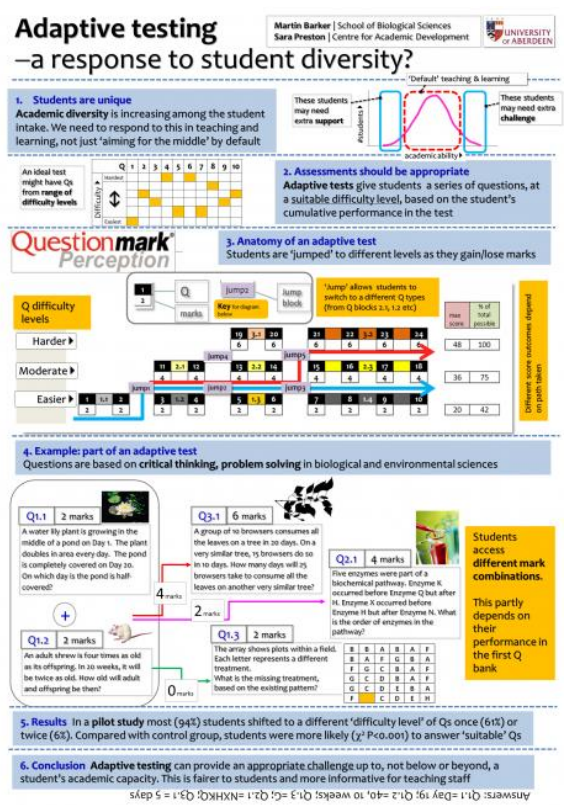
[Written assessments in Year 2 MBChB – 8 steps to an inclusive exam]

A Venkatesh, E Bate, A Denison, F Parker, D Gerrie, E Sutherland, Medical & Dental Education, CLSM



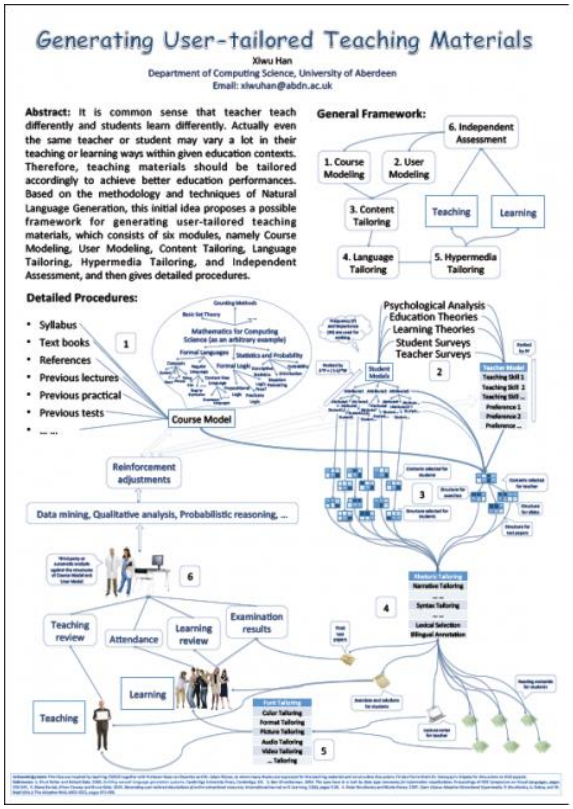
[Students 4 Students: Transitional Mentoring for New Undergraduates]

J Barrow, Medical Sciences, CLSM



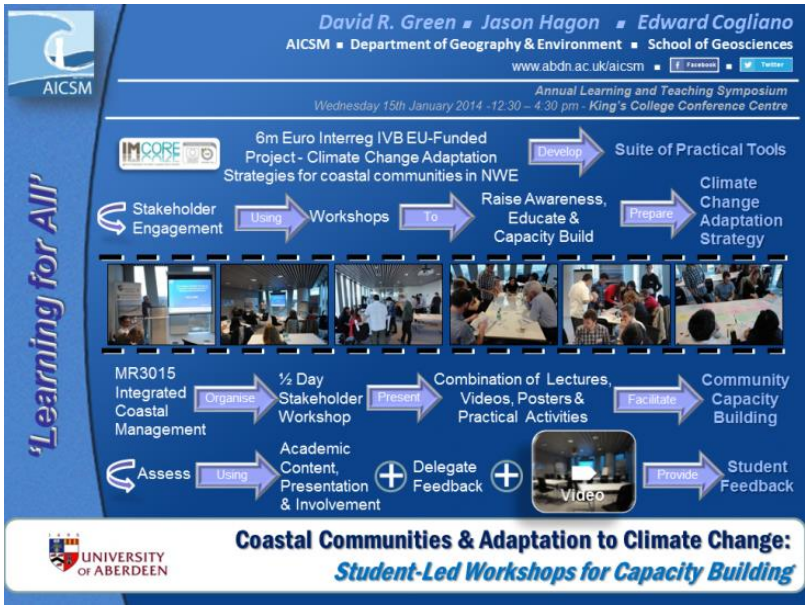
[Adaptive testing: a response to student diversity?]

M Barker, Biological Sciences, CLSM



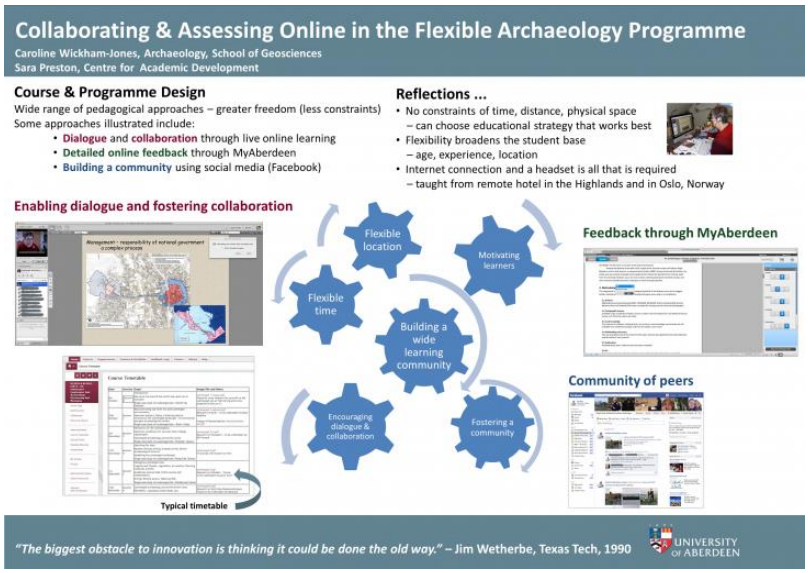
[Generating user tailored teaching materials]

X Han, Computing Science, CoPS



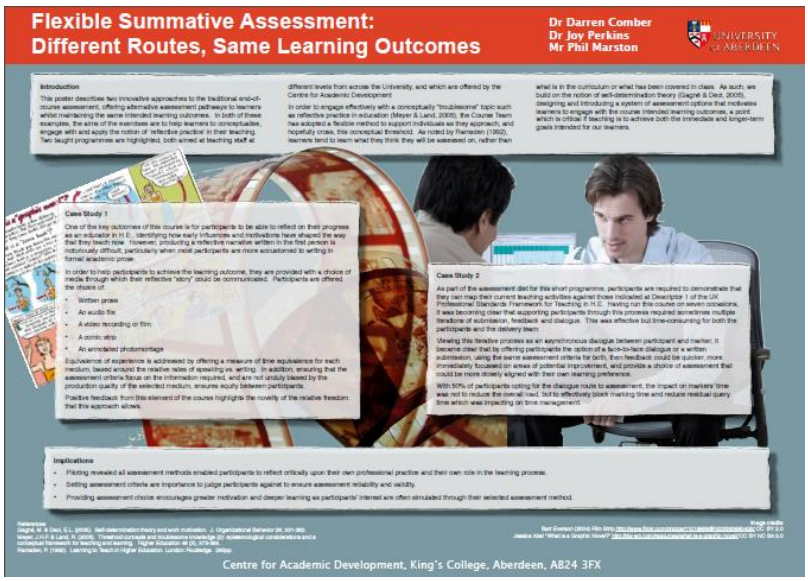
[Coastal Communities & Adaptation to Climate Change: Student-led workshops for capacity building]

D Green, J Hagon, E Cogliano, Geography & Environment, CoPS



[Archaeology online? How MyAberdeen and Collaborate were used to provide engaging online courses]

C Wickham-Jones, S Preston, Archaeology & Centre for Academic Development, CoPS



Flexible Summative Assessment: Different Routes, Same Learning Outcomes

P Marston, D Comber, J Perkins, Centre for Academic Development

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Speaker Biographies

Professor Frank Coton, Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching, University of Glasgow

Frank Coton is currently Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) and Professor of Low Speed Aerodynamics at the University of Glasgow where, until December 2009, he was Dean of the Faculty of Engineering. He is a past Chair of both the Scottish Deans of Science and Engineering and the Applied Aerodynamics Committee of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. He is also currently a member of the West Regional Advisory Board of Scottish Enterprise.

He is a member of the University of Glasgow Senior Management Group and has responsibility for the development of educational policy and strategy and all teaching quality processes. He has direct line-management responsibility for the Director of the Learning and Teaching Centre which supports academic development, technology enhanced learning and teaching and student learning. He is also a member of the SFC Access and Inclusion Committee and is Chair of the West of Scotland Schools for Higher Education Programme

Management Committee which coordinates widening participation activities in the West of Scotland.

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Professor Peter McGeorge, Vice-Principal for Learning & Teaching, University of Aberdeen

Professor Peter McGeorge is Vice Principal for Learning & Teaching, with responsibility for leading the University's commitment to continually improving the quality of academic experience for our students, achieving the benefits of our curriculum reform project, and widening access and participation.

Professor McGeorge studied Behavioural Sciences (Psychology/Zoology) at the University of Nottingham before completing his PhD in Experimental Psychology. He moved to the University of Aberdeen in 1990 to become a post-doctoral research fellow and subsequently a lecturer in the School of Psychology. In 2004 he became the Head of School of Psychology within the College of Life Sciences and Medicine and in 2010 was appointed Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching.

Peter McGeorge has a broad range of research interests and publications covering the area of visual attention in both healthy and clinical populations.

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Dr Paul Davidson, School of Engineering

Dr Paul Davidson is the Director of Undergraduate Teaching of the School of Engineering, and the Programme Coordinator for the Distance Learning MSc in Oil and Gas Structural Engineering. His presentation will be about this MSc programme, which has been developed out of his extensive contacts with Industry, through delivering CPD courses, carrying out Engineering Consultancy, and acting as an Expert Witness.

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Dr Yvonne Bain, School of Education

Yvonne is a Lecturer in education, with responsibilities as Depute Head of School (Strategic Planning) and Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) Programme management. Her professional teaching career started as a teacher of Physics and Computing in Secondary schools and now focuses on professional development and learning of teachers and lecturers in FE and HE settings. Her research interests draw from her long held interest in the use of ICT for learning and teaching, and online learning in particular. Yvonne has facilitated online learning for many years within online and blended learning courses for both distance learning and campus-based student groups.

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Sarah Cornelius, School of Education

Sarah is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education. She uses Collaborate to engage learners undertaking teaching qualifications for Further and Higher Education, and to support researchers, including those undertaking Masters level work based projects/dissertations and PhDs. Sarah's research interests are in distance and online learning and the outputs of several research projects into teaching and learning with web conferencing have informed a co-authored book 'Live online learning: strategies for the web conferencing classroom' which will be published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2014.

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Dr Colin Calder, Centre for Academic Development

Colin is a Senior Adviser in the Centre for Academic Development. He has over twenty years of experience supporting learning and teaching in Higher Education, with a longstanding interest in digital resources and their impact on student experience. He is a fellow of the Higher Education Academy and course co-ordinator for the University of Aberdeen PgCert eLearning in Higher Education.

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Dr Debbi Marais, Applied Health Sciences

Dr Debbi Marais is a qualified Dietitian with extensive academic experience at Stellenbosch University in South Africa and the University of Aberdeen. She is a Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy with expertise in teaching and assessment at under- and postgraduate levels; programme and course coordination; quality assurance, curriculum development and reform; student recruitment & selection and pastoral care. Debbi is committed to supporting and promoting innovative teaching, reflective practice and enhancing the student experience and was awarded the Stellenbosch University Rector's award for Teaching Excellence in 2007. She is the Division of Applied Health Sciences Postgraduate Coordinator and a member of the University Postgraduate committee, MyAberdeen Steering Group, Online course delivery working group and College Graduate School postgraduate advisory groups. She is a post-doctoral researcher with a focus on Public Health Nutrition (food security, infant and young child feeding, nutrition education, international nutrition especially developing countries, nutritional status assessment) and Educational (employability, teaching international students, e-learning and distance education) research.

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Dr Lucy Foley, Head of Student Support

Lucy Foley has been Head of Student Support at the University since January 2010. Prior to that, she had been the University's Senior Disability Adviser and Student Support Adviser for a number of years and had a secondment as Assistant Director of the Scottish Disability Team from 2002-2006. She sits on the Disabled Student Advisory Group at the Scottish Government, where she represents the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (Scotland)

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