

Developing and evaluating 'The Defined Model' for students progressing into and on HE courses

Background

At the beginning of 2010, a new model of curriculum delivery was introduced, called 'The Defined Model', with the key features being –

1. Reduction in contact hours of between 15 and 20% per annum.
2. Development of online, interactive learning packages containing learning content, activities and assessment to replace the reduced hours. The default model has these being delivered as discrete courses on the College virtual learning environment Moodle. The packages are called PAL Packs (Personal Accountable Learning Packs).
3. Delivery of PAL Packs in study centres without tutors present but with support of study centre staff.
4. Increased tutorial support.
5. Increased support for learners who may be at risk of dropping off courses or failing through the appointment of two learning coaches.
6. Improved tracking of learner performance through electronic ILPs (Individual Learning Plans).

This model has been put forward as a response to a number of factors –

- increasing access to e-learning across all courses,
- reductions in funding for HE and FE provision,
- the need to improve retention and achievement.

This project follows on from the initial development of PAL Packs for Further Education courses (Full Time BTEC National Diploma and BTEC First Diploma) across the college, with the emphasis now turning to Higher Education.

Certain key features will be focussed on within this report, in particular those that relate to the need to increase access to e-learning across all courses, a move that will hopefully help to address the issues surrounding funding and retention.

Objectives of the Project

The objectives for the project were as follows -

1. **Information and Learning Technology (ILT) team to work with selected course teams on HE courses and courses progressing into HE to pilot application of the 'Defined Model'.**
2. **ILT team to work with course teams to develop online PAL Packs for flexible delivery of parts of identified courses.**
3. **To carry out a training needs analysis¹ on members of selected course teams and provide training in finding and creating online content, creating online learning activities and online assessment activities.**
4. **To evaluate piloted PAL Packs and make recommendations for implementing PAL Packs and the 'Defined Model' on similar courses.**
5. **To share findings and PAL Packs (as zipped up Moodle courses which can be installed onto any other Moodle) with LLN partners.**

¹ It was decided that due to time constraints, a formal training needs analysis would not be included, especially as the PAL Packs, as a whole, are ongoing. Therefore, training needs will be assessed more formally in the New Year.

Project Approach

For the purposes of this project, three courses were identified where appropriate PAL packs could be developed:

- **Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)**
- **Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology**
- **BTEC National Health & Social Care – Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care**

In line with the project brief, each PAL Pack was set up as a discrete Moodle² course, containing

1. **Learning Content** - found after consulting the tutors.
2. **Learning Activities** - were developed with active learning in mind (as referred to in the project brief), and incorporated discussion forums, collaborative research through glossaries, video, links to web resources, etc.
3. **Assessment Activities** - made using Moodle's assessment tools such as quizzes and assignments.

The design of each PAL Pack was tailored to the needs of the students, as identified through discussions with each course tutor.

Report Outline

In the first part of the report, the methodology will be outlined, followed by student and staff feedback evaluation, before moving on to a broad discussion, brief recommendations, and a conclusion.

² **Moodle** (abbreviation for *Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment*) is a free and open-source e-learning software platform, also known as a Course Management System, Learning Management System, or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moodle>)

Methodology

The starting point in any form of research is very often a problem: what we have done in the past to achieve a particular goal does not work on some occasion, so we carry out an investigation until we discover what needs to be done differently.

Another starting point of enquiry is reflection on practice: so, rather than finding a problem in the course of normal activity, instead it is in the process of thinking about our work that we discover an issue that needs addressing, one that we had not previously noticed or recognised as important. In these two ways, enquiry can arise as part of all kinds of educational activity, and may constitute a sustained process of reflection and investigation that is regarded as integral to the proper pursuit of that activity.

It is with this in mind that we will begin the research by looking at Objectives 1 & 2 referred to above –

Information and Learning Technology (ILT) team to work with selected course teams on HE courses and courses progressing into HE to pilot application of the ‘Defined Model’, and

ILT team to work with course teams to develop online PAL Packs for flexible delivery of parts of identified courses.

3 courses were identified and discussions took place on what to focus on in each PAL pack.

Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology

This course is designed for students who wish to develop a high level of expertise in music production, including both recording & live sound.

In Year One there is a unit on **Study Skills**, which aims to reinforce academically other practical units on the course, with a range of research and written skills. It is these skills that were focussed on in a Study Skills PAL Pack, which also provided the students with the module assignment.

A creative industries specific essay accompanied by a record of planning and research.

Essay Titles

My favourite performer

My favourite band

My favourite film producer

My favourite film trilogy or film group

You may select one of any of the above essay titles and write an 800 word essay on the topic giving chronological details of first performance or release and subsequent performances and releases. Any factual assertions you make must be properly referenced and a bibliography given.

Following discussions with Course Tutor Ian Bell, it was decided that the Study Skills PAL Pack would contain the following sections –

Planning an Essay

Researching an Essay

Writing in an Academic Style

How to Reference an Essay

Assignment

Within Moodle these sections could be split into clearly defined elements that would link to one another using hyperlinks, ending with an Assignment.

The researcher found that much of the resources concerned with study skills were very text based, going into great detail about various types of study skill. To try and make things a bit more visual, **Xerte**³ was used, which was particularly useful when including images and video, and accessibility, as certain options such as font, font size, and colour scheme could be changed by the student.

The PAL Pack ended with the module assignment, to be completed by 5 January 2011, meaning that the students were not expected to finish the PAL Pack during one session. It was also decided that the PAL Pack would be available until the assignment handing in date.

It was accepted that this PAL Pack would not adhere strictly to the framework as suggested earlier (Learning Content, Learning Activities, Assessment Activities), a point referred to in more depth below.

BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care (Level 3)

This unit aims to enable learners to understand the learning process and to give them the skills they need to plan for, monitor and reflect on their professional development. Learners will then be able to investigate and gain an understanding of health or social care provision.

This latter point tied in well with the focus of the 3rd Defined Model PAL Pack, as it dealt specifically with Learning Outcome 4 of the BTEC National Health & Social Care Unit Specifications - '**Know service provision in the health or social care sectors.**'

Before beginning this project, I had been working with Course Tutors Carolyn Harrison & Pauline Molloy, where we put together a year-long unit of PAL Packs for their students. They had had difficulty in the past with this unit, so decided that it would be worth trying a new approach.

6 classes now use these Packs (a total of 81 students), with one being a Year 2 (Level 3) group, which enabled me to use them in this project.

It was decided that one of the sections that had been included in the complete unit could also form the basis for a **Health & Social Care Provision PAL Pack**, with the students expected to complete the PAL Pack during a 1 hour lesson, where they would complete 2 short activities before moving on to an assessment task.

Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)

This course is being developed by Course Tutor Sue Shaw, and will run from 2011, with one of the areas of study being Work based/work placement learning. Students will be asked to engage in activities that directly relate to the organisation within which they operate. This might be their own business or one within which they were employed or on work placement with.

One unit within work based/work placement learning will involve putting **Theory into Practice**, which formed the basis for a Theory into Practice PAL Pack.

The course tutor wanted me to develop a PAL Pack where students would look at an issue, need or problem at work, and relate it to Learning Theory. The PAL Pack as a whole would

³ Xerte is a suite of tools for the development of interactive learning content.

be used over a number of weeks, with students identifying an issue at work, and working through a series of stages to develop a possible solution.

However, as this course is not starting until 2011, it was felt that a short introductory task should be included that students could do in a 1 hour session, which would eventually become an icebreaker task for the whole PAL pack.

The students taking part in the trial will not be on the course, but will be studying a similar course, so their opinions will be extremely useful.

Feedback* Evaluation & Discussion

This section related to Objective 3 –

To evaluate piloted PAL Packs and make recommendations for implementing PAL Packs and the ‘Defined Model’ on similar courses.

The feedback evaluation looks at how much the students agreed or disagreed with a series of statements, followed by staff feedback evaluation, before moving on to the discussion section that contains issues beyond this initial feedback, that will relate to the experiences and lessons learned by the researcher and teachers involved.

These findings relate to raw data that can be found in the Appendices.

(a) The content is arranged in a clear, orderly manner.

It would appear that on the whole, the content was accessible to students in the 3 groups, although some students in the Theory into Practice session found some of the instructions confusing.

There could be a number of possible reasons for this disparity between students, such as the fact that each course is different, with different types of students, and each PAL Pack used different tools and resources, etc.

Another important reason could be the fact that the sessions were not trialled beforehand, so the content, style, tools, etc., were not tested. However, it is also true that there were only 3 students in the 3rd session, so validity of the findings could be questioned. These students were also using the Moodle Forum and Glossary tools for the first time, which probably needed a bit more clarity.

(b) The content is accurate and up to date.

This statement refers to the development of the PAL Pack with each member of staff, where the researcher tried to put together accurate and up to date tasks, and it would appear that the students were generally happy with the accuracy of the content.

There was a lot of preparation involved in putting each PAL Pack together, which is perhaps one reason why this point scored quite highly, although one should bear in mind the fact that it is the teaching staff that would be more likely to know if the content was accurate and up to date.

(c) The content explains the concepts well.

Here we find a big discrepancy amongst the three sessions. In the Study Skills PAL Pack, many of the resources were very specific, in that they related to key considerations when putting together an assignment. The students were not asked to search too much for their own data, which was a conscious consideration, as each of the resources related to the end of module assignment.

The Health & Social Care Provision PAL pack was actually developed from a section within the BTEC National Health & Social Care (Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care) series of PAL Packs that the researcher developed earlier in the year.

* Detailed results are contained in the Appendices.

The section that it came from is near the end of the unit (something the students haven't begun working on yet), and ties in with other sections around it, which may explain the slightly lower score, as the subject matter was new to the students.

The Theory into Practice PAL Pack was developed for a course that does not start until 2011, so the students (who have obviously not started the course), had some difficulty understanding what they were being expected to do.

Please also see the Discussion for further evaluation of this point.

(d) The layout design of the PAL Pack is attractive.

This statement is very similar to (a) above ('the content is arranged in a clear, orderly manner'), but the ratings are a bit lower. During the Study Skills PAL Pack sessions, a few students commented on the Xerte objects that were used, saying that the default layout colours were a bit bland. They were able to change this using the accessibility options present in Xerte, that one student commented favourably about, but nevertheless this probably contributed to the few negative responses that were given, as not enough reference was given to this beforehand.

The Health & Social Care students who worked on the Health & Social Care Provision PAL Pack generally seemed to feel that the layout design was attractive.

However, the students who worked on the Theory into Practice PAL Pack were not very impressed (see *Supplementary Questions – Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies below*), which may have been the fault of the researcher.

The PAL Pack was put together with all good intentions, but it may have been possible to 'jazz' up the layout a bit more, making it more colourful, etc. However, an important factor against too much 'titivation' is that it can get in the way of what the students are meant to be doing, and ultimately these are tools for learning rather than entertainment.

The Forum & Glossary tools used in this 3rd PAL Pack, are not by default bold or brash, with lots of images or colour, etc, but at the end of the day, students are meant to be learning, not distracted with gimmicky layouts.

That being said, it may have been possible to make the PALs 'more attractive', and there are alternative applications that could have been used. However, another factor to bear in mind is the fact that there were only 3 students in the group, so a better evaluation would be carried out with more student groups' trialling the pack, or a wider evidence base of feedback representing a wider cross-section of students.

(e) The navigation design is user friendly &

(f) The instructions for using the PAL Pack are clear.

These two statements are quite similar in scope, which was reflected in the scores for each group.

In the Study Skills PAL Pack session, it was thought that a more minimalist approach should be taken, with the instructions 'hidden' behind large buttons.

For the Health & Social Care Provision PAL session there were a few instructions on the home page, telling the students which learning outcome the PAL Pack referred to, guiding the students to the Suggested Reading and then on to the tasks (using images as links).

In the Theory into Practice PAL Pack session, students were given general instructions guiding the students to click an image that took them to the start of the PAL Pack, where navigation through the Pack was similar to that for session 2.

However, despite adopting a similar approach to the Health and Social Care Provision PAL Pack, the students in the Theory into Practice PAL pack group seemed a little bit confused.

This disparity highlights the difficulties when designing any type of learning activity. The ability to navigate easily was considered one of the most important factors, when designing the Packs. At the end of the day, the excellent content and activities, etc., need to be found, otherwise the students will disengage quite quickly. It was felt that how material was accessed needed to involve as few steps as possible.

Links to other sections were used, so that students would not have to keep going back to the home page to find the next activity. It was hoped that the PAL Packs would have a sort of website feel to them (which is evident in the homepages for each PAL Pack, where content could be accessed by clicking buttons, rather than having it all presented in one go, thus avoiding what some have termed 'the scroll of death!').

However, one thing that became apparent in each of the sessions, to varying degrees, were the amount of students who, despite the inclusion of quite explicit instructions, didn't know what to do and in some cases, didn't even seem to read the instructions.

Does this confusion mean that instructions should be added that take into account every single step in the process of working through the PAL Pack?

This was a concern, as the researcher had hoped that the students, especially these higher level students, would understand that instructions were included to enable them to move through the PAL Packs. It is of course possible that the way the PAL Packs were designed was at fault, and we must also be aware that students should, on the whole, be supported by Study Centre Assistants, who would be able to guide the students through the PAL Packs.

Please also see the Discussion for further evaluation of this point.

(g) The materials present were relevant to my course needs.

This statement relates to (c) above ('the content explains the concepts well'), an issue of great importance when putting together any type of learning resource or activity, as the worst thing that could happen is for the material that has been included to not be relevant. Fortunately the students in each of the PAL Pack sessions seemed to find the content relevant.

It had the best results in the Study Skills and Health and Social Care Provision PAL Pack sessions, possibly because students found that the resources that were included linked well to the course, whilst students in the Theory into Practice session generally supported the notion (although it would be more difficult for them to comment as the course has not been set up yet).

Note

The feedback questionnaire that students were asked to fill gave a valuable insight into the way the PAL Pack was presented, the content, the validity of the content, accessibility, etc. However, for a proper evaluation to take place, the way the students use the resources, in relation to the assignment, has to be assessed, along with the standard of work that the students produce.

Supplementary Feedback Questions

To conclude the feedback, students were asked to state positive and/or negative points from the PAL Pack sessions (see Appendices). We will look at a selection of responses, and briefly discuss certain common issues as identified by the researcher –

- a. **Clarity of design, attractiveness & accessibility**
- b. **Clarity of instructions**
- c. **Appropriateness of content**
- d. **Personalisation and ownership**
- e. **Independent learning**
- f. **Technology**

a. Clarity of design, attractiveness & accessibility

Positive

1. **“It was a very good way of explaining the topics it covered and was enjoyable to complete due to the layout and general feel to it.”**
2. **“It is easy to put our work together and also easy to use.”**
3. **“The fact that you can change font’s size, colour, window size and font type really helped as I have dyslexia and also need reading glasses.”**

These responses relate to the way the PAL Pack was presented to the students. When designing the PAL Packs, the researcher had free reign to present the tasks as he saw fit, as it is still a very new concept within the college.

Draft layouts and structures for each PAL Pack laid the content out in lists, so that the students could see all of the web pages, resources, etc., that they would work through in the PAL Pack.

However, as the PAL Packs developed, it was felt that these activities and resources could be kept ‘behind the scenes’, so that generally speaking the first thing the students saw would be an uncluttered block of image links, taking them directly to the first task, and then in turn to all the other tasks, before finishing with an assessment.

The feedback above, along with anecdotal feedback during the Study Skills & Health & Social Care Provision sessions, supports the view that this style of layout was effective, (although the students taking part in the Theory into Practice trial felt differently; see Negative below).

Another issue raised, was the importance of accessibility within the Study Skills PAL Pack. Two of the resources were created using Xerte, which contains a number of accessibility options that students can use when working through the resource. These enable the student change the colour scheme, font, font size, etc. (as referred to in point 3 above), and are an excellent way of making resources accessible and personalised for all.

Negative

1. **“The only thing I think is a disadvantage is that there are a lot of things to download or open which can sometimes get a bit confusing.”**
2. **“It is not laid out well and looks very unattractive.”**

The general consensus amongst students' trialling the Theory into Practice PAL Pack was that the design of the task was boring and unattractive, hence the negative comments above.

When designing PAL Packs, it is necessary to strike a balance between layout and content. At the end of the day, it is the content that is more important, but one must remember the need to be inviting to all students (if that is indeed possible!), and intuitive without a great deal of technological effort.

Within each PAL Pack, images were included to 'brighten' it up a bit, and students used colourful arrows to navigate through the Packs. However, one student in the Theory into Practice PAL Pack trial mentioned that the forum they used could have been a bit more colourful, perhaps containing separate colours for each student taking part in the discussion.

b. Clarity of instructions (please also see Individual Learning below)

Negative

1. **“Some of the Instructions were a little hard to follow.**
2. **“Did not keep my interest and had to ask a lot of questions before beginning the activity as found it quite confusing and unclear.”**

There are a number of possible reasons why the students trialling the Theory into Practice PAL Pack commented in this way. In designing the PAL Packs, great care was taken to make sure that each one contained clear instructions, that referred to each section in turn, and although it seems possible that this was achieved in the Study Skills and Health & Social Care Provision PAL Pack sessions, care must be taken at all times when putting such sessions together.

As with any trial, you will not get everything right first time. When putting the PAL Packs together in the future, these concerns will need to be identified, to improve the learning experience for all involved.

c. Appropriateness of content

Positive

1. **“Allowed me to understand the terminology used in essay questions better and opened my eyes for ways to find more research.”**
2. **“It is aimed at the work which I am doing on my course.”**

These statements reflect support for the appropriateness of the content, something that the researcher worked long and hard to hopefully achieve! When the Study Skills PAL Pack was first being designed, the researcher felt that it should only focus on a couple of facets within study skills, namely the words that make up an essay question, and plagiarism & copyright.

After consulting Study Centre Assistants from the Music Factory Study Centre, it was felt that this should be expanded to look at the whole process of putting together an essay - planning, researching, writing and referencing, ending with the assignment question itself.

The material used to expand the PAL Pack was found by the researcher, using suggestions from the tutor and the study centre staff.

The comments support the inclusion of the various resources and activities, although the real test will be to see if the students feel they are useful enough when it comes to writing their assignment (as the preset deadline falls beyond the end of the trial session).

This was also apparent with students who trialled the Health & Social Care Provision PAL Pack, although the nature of this PAL Pack differed in that it originally formed part of a year-long unit of PAL Packs, that these students had already been working on.

d. Independent learning

Positive

- 1. “It allows you to get information outside of lessons in a quick easy manner.”**

Included in each Study Skills PAL Pack were a number of online resources that contained a lot of information about different study skills. As these resources could not be looked at in depth during the 2 hour time slot for each session, students were told that the PAL Pack could be used outside of lesson time, up until the assignment deadline (January 5th 2011).

This means that PAL packs could be developed as a way to give students homework, which would help to promote independent learning (*referred to further in the Discussion below*).

However, on the flip side is the following negative view, from another student trialling the Study Skills PAL Pack.

Negative

- 1. “I would prefer using a teacher as they are a specialist in the subject and can answer my question directly in a format that I can ask about more in depth.”**

This is a very important point. One key factor in the implementation of PAL Packs within FE or HE courses is that they facilitate independent learning with support (if any), provided by Study Centre Assistants.

However, Study Centre Assistants will not, on the whole, have the same knowledge as the tutor, so certain types of support cannot be given effectively.

For example, explicit instructions were given to students in the Theory into Practice PAL Pack session, yet they still found it confusing (*please also see Clarity of instructions above*). In this context, if a Study Centre Assistant was present, s/he would have directed the students through the tools used in the pack, but would not have been able to give specific subject advice, an issue that will be dealt with in the Discussion section below.

e. Personalisation and ownership

Positive

- 1. “Being able to interact with others in a messenger type to view others opinions. Better than a talking discussion as not talking over one another and ideas more clearly understood.”**

This supports the notion of ‘ownership’, as the students could discuss with other students the concepts involved, apply it to the real world, and use their own experiences to help formulate their responses (although they probably didn’t realise they were doing it!).

f. Technology

Negative

- 1. “Within a lesson, because it is computer work, the laptops take a while to load so you can’t do as much work.”**

Another very important issue in the implementation of PAL Packs relates to the need for technology to be reliable. Reliability and availability of PCs is crucial to the success of PAL Packs (a point that is dealt with in more detail in the discussion below).

Staff Feedback

There now follows a brief evaluation of staff feedback, in line with the issues referred to above.

The main bulk of the feedback came from Carolyn Harrison, with more anecdotal feedback supplied by Ian Bell & Sue Shaw.

Carolyn Harrison – BTEC National Health & Social Care – Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care (*Health & Social Care Provision PAL Pack*)

Clarity of design, attractiveness & accessibility

1. **“The section is attractively laid out and designed and students seemed to like this.”**

This supported the student's average score for (d) “The layout design of the PAL Pack is attractive” (3.9 out of 5).

Clarity of instructions (see also Independent Learning below)

1. **“Few of them read the suggested preliminary test and went straight into the activity which meant that they then had to ask the tutor more questions while completing the section which meant that their ability to learn independently was reduced.”**

This relates to the instructions that were given to the students within the PAL Pack, which need to be as explicit as possible, so there is no confusion.

Appropriateness of content

1. **“The work was at an appropriate level and gave student an opportunity to achieve credit towards one of the pass criteria which helped to give them an incentive to complete.”**

The design and structure of the PAL Packs directly relates to specific Learning Outcomes, as defined in the BTEC course handbook, and in other PAL Packs that the researcher has worked on with Carolyn, where activities have been based around these learning outcomes.

Personalisation and ownership

1. **“Two students completed the work within 30 minutes and had to ask only one question concerning a definition.”**

This statement ties in with the previous issue, as one way that time concerns could have been addressed would have been to include differentiated PASS & MERIT elements within the PAL pack (linked to the Learning Outcomes), in order to allow for students working at different paces, and having different needs – even if on the same course level.

It also relates to ownership, as some students need to have enough to do or else they will disengage. However, there is nothing to stop students using all of the time available to get the best answers they can. In other words, we could be encouraging students to have autonomy over what they are learning.

Independent learning

1. **“Few of them read the suggested preliminary test and went straight into the activity which meant that they then had to ask the tutor more questions while**

completing the section which meant that their ability to learn independently was reduced.”

The second part of this statement relates to the Independent Learning issue (referred to earlier in this report), that will be commented on in more detail in the Discussion below.

- 2. “Most of the students did not complete the whole section in the allotted time. This was mainly because they were late for the lesson and didn’t have time to do all the work.”**

These points emphasise the importance of differentiation when trying to pace a PAL pack. For some in the group, 30 minutes was enough, whilst others didn’t finish it within the hour slot.

However, we can also see that outside factors could present barriers to effective learning, whether using traditional methods, or more alternative approaches, such as PAL Packs.

There is also the importance of the students being on time, if the sessions are to be thought of in an Independent Learning sense, although there is a case for creating the PAL Packs with homework in mind, for example, for students who are late would be expected to complete the PAL Pack in their own time.

Technology

- 1. “The students got on with the work and were mainly (other than one student) able to upload work completed for the second activity. It would probably be useful if the students could complete this section straight onto the PAL pack without having to do a separate ‘upload procedure.’”**

This relates to the importance of reliable IT access, a point that will be dealt with in the discussion below.

Ian Bell - Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology (*Study Skills PAL Pack*)

Sue Shaw - FD Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies) (*Theory into Practice PAL Pack*)

Due to illness and lack of time, feedback from Ian & Sue was more anecdotal in nature.

Ian referred to the issue of Independent learning, as he had concerns over how students would cope if they were doing the PAL Pack sessions on their own, without tutor support.

Sue shared these concerns, and also referred to design issues within the Theory into Practice PAL Pack.

Note

There is one interesting point concerning this lack of staff feedback, in that the whole point of PAL Packs, in line with the Defined Model document, is that tutors are not present during the sessions, and that in fact much more valuable feedback can be gained from evaluated student feedback, as well as the researchers own anecdotal observations.

Discussion and Recommendations

In order to discuss issues raised in line with the objectives outlined earlier, the researcher felt it necessary to refer directly to the **A New Curriculum Delivery Approach for Further Education Courses - The 'Defined Model'** document that underpins this particular project.

Within this document were a number of themes, some of which were specifically referred to, whilst others were less obvious, but no less important.

Themes specifically referred to -

- 1. Learner taking ownership⁴**
- 2. Personalisation**
- 3. Peer Support Teaching**

Themes identified by the researcher -

- 4. Redefining Personally Accountable Learning (PAL)**
- 5. Defined Blended Learning Initiative**

This discussion will now look at each of these themes as they relate to the feedback evaluation in the previous section.

1. Learner taking ownership (*relates to issues a, d, e & f in the previous feedback section*)

According to the preliminary Defined Model document, the 'learner taking ownership' (as implied in 'Learning to Learn', Higgins, 2009), refers to the

'repositioning of the learner in relation to what is learned in terms of responsibility, choice and interest', where 'the learner becomes central in regulating their learning and in determining the development of their own learning history and identity.'

In other words, the learner could be said to be shaping or owning their own learning experience, but how does the implementation of PAL Packs contribute to this notion?

In the three PAL Packs that were developed, this notion of ownership was apparent to varying degrees!

Within the Study Skills PAL Pack, there was very little ownership, as the students were provided with the resources that directly related to each section. However, as the PAL Pack was more of a repository than anything else, learners could regulate their learning, as they could use any of the resources present. There were also accessibility options present, that allowed the students to take ownership of particular resources.

During the Health & Social Care Provision PAL Pack, learners took more ownership in that students were asked to research certain terms and provide their own meanings. However, this doesn't really constitute ownership, as the learner is being steered towards appropriate answers by the activities they have done before.

It is only when we get to the 3rd Theory into Practice PAL Pack that we find students properly taking ownership of their learning. Here the researcher incorporated an online Moodle Forum tool that enabled students to take part in a group discussion, without the teacher being present. Although there were only 3 students in the group, the feedback (as evaluated

⁴ The 'Learner taking ownership' concept is something that is implied, but not specifically mentioned, within the 'Learning to Learn' document. Therefore, the researcher believes that this gives him the green light to introduce his own inferences further on in the report.

before), was very positive for this kind of activity, a point that not only supports the use of online forums in a learning environment, but also the following statement.

'The socialisation of collaboration or interacting with others in a group, as opposed to working alone, can significantly increase motivation. (Jaques, 1991, and Benbunan-Fich and Hiltz, 1997)'. (Brady, H, 2009)

This was evident when one of the students during the Theory into Practice PAL Pack session, commented that the online forum was better because there was no talking across each other and everyone could make their point.

It was also noticeable during the session that some of the students didn't always answer straight away, perhaps meaning that they were reflecting on their answer. As cited in Brady (2009), Benbunan-Fich and Hiltz (1997) claim that 'reflection and considered responses help learners reach a much deeper and more rounded level of analysis and promotes higher responses.'

We can see that there may be much value in using online learning tools, although more in depth research into this notion is certainly needed (see Recommendations below). However, is there more to the use of technological methods within the learning environment, than just being an alternative way of bringing traditional teaching methods into the digital age? With regards to ownership, it would appear that the answer is 'Yes'.

Jewitt (2009) infers that technology could be affecting the ownership of knowledge -

'Authorship and ownership of knowledge are being remade by new technologies, indeed in some scenarios knowledge is seen as diffuse and networked and 'in the hands of the people' in a range of activities.'

This point supports the issues raised above, although Higgins (2009) warns against the development of a learning resource

'because it is technologically possible rather than pedagogically desirable'.

In other words, we must not use technology for the sake of it, a point perhaps supporting the view that a more 'blended' approach be adopted (see *Inference of Blended Learning* below).

It can certainly be said that there were good elements found within each of the PAL Packs, that when combined could have resulted in a much better, tighter, more pedagogically sound, more blended PAL Pack than the 3 that were produced. However, there is another factor that could be said to underpin the notion of ownership – Personalisation – that we will turn to now.

2. Personalisation (*relates to issues a, d, e & f in the previous feedback section*)

When the learner takes ownership of their learning, the learning experience can be said to be personalised, with this personalisation being seen as 'a factor underpinning the design of digital environments.' (Jewitt, 2009)

As this personalisation develops, learning environments will turn into 'problem-orientated spaces' (Horst, as cited in Jewitt (2009), p7), which could be said to match 'the ways in which adolescents engage with digital technologies outside the classroom' (Carrington and Marsh, as cited in Jewitt (2009), p6).

This positive point shows the importance of personalisation, but was it apparent during the PAL Pack trials?

In both the Study Skills and Health and Social Provision PAL Packs, examples of personalisation was generally lacking, although there was more sign of this in the Theory into Practice PAL Pack, which supports the notion that personalisation and ownership should be considered in tandem.

Indeed the use of a forum and a glossary directly relates to personalisation. We discussed the forum above, but the glossary also lends itself to this concept, as it allows students to create their own meanings, then share them with other students.

This adaptive personalised eLearning,

'offers the potential to uniquely address the specific learning goals (Kaplan et al, 1993, prior knowledge (Milosavljevic, 1997), and context of a learner so as to improve that learner's satisfaction with the course and motivation to complete that course.' (Dagger, Wade & Conlan (2005), p 9)

Therefore, the use of tools such as the Moodle Forum and Glossary, may have contributed to the learner's satisfaction in the Theory into Practice PAL Pack, as students liked the use of an online forum for group discussion, supporting the notion that '... eLearning gives learners a self-controlled learning experience via a computer terminal.' (Dagger, Wade & Conlan (2005)

However, another aspect that needs to be discussed offers an alternative view on the importance of personalisation.

Within the feedback from the Study Skills PAL Pack, one student commented

'I would prefer using a teacher as they are a specialist in the subject and can answer my question directly in a format that I can ask about more in depth.'

This comment goes against the notion of personalised support in PAL Packs. However, on the very first page of the Defined Model document is a possible solution – **Increased tutorial support.**

This point hasn't been discussed before, but its importance should not be underestimated, as an increase in **personalised** tutorial support would allow tutors to prepare students for PAL Pack sessions, meaning that there would be less need for tutor support during these sessions, plus students could learn at their own pace, to their own guided and personalised needs, as directed and discussed in their personalised tutorial.

As was referred to earlier in the feedback evaluation, Study Centre Assistants are not tutors, so would not be able to offer subject specific support. However, extra support for students, during personalised tutorials before PAL Pack sessions, would enable the students to personalise their own learning experience, and thus take ownership of the learning process.

3. Peer support and teaching (*relates to issues d in the previous feedback section*)

In the previous section, we discussed the support that tutors and Study Centre Assistants can give before and during PAL pack sessions, but another type of support network, beyond teacher and Study Centre Assistant input, that allows students to personalise their own learning experience, is to give and receive peer support and teaching.

Within the Defined Model document there is reference to 'kinaesthetic peer teaching' (Petty, 2009), which in a broad sense would involve 'students in bodily movement', but for the purposes of this project, will relate to what is called 'sedate kinaesthetic methods'!

Within the Defined Model document, a few of these sedate kinaesthetic methods are referred to, although we believe that it is appropriate to mention a few more, some of which were evident during the PAL Pack sessions.

Sedate Kinaesthetic Method	Example	PAL Pack Activity
Manipulate or manage information	Underline or highlight key points in a piece of text.	Moodle Glossary Upload a single file
	Research and collect materials to create an exhibition	Moodle Glossary Moodle Wiki MS PowerPoint
	A student manages a group of students while they complete a task	Students complete a task, perhaps using Moodle, students give feedback.
Peer Teaching	Doing a demonstration	Videos
	Giving an explanation or a presentation using OHPs, etc.	Videos MS PowerPoint Xerte
	Writing on the board, flip chart or OHP, etc, for the class	Moodle Glossaries Moodle Wikis

Despite differences in the styles of the PAL Packs, sedate kinaesthetic methods were in evidence.

Study Skills PAL Pack

There was no specific example as listed above, although anecdotally students did help each other to move through the different sections.

Health & Social Care Provision PAL Pack

Here students were asked to upload a MS Word document, where they inserted evidence that was found during the session.

Again, anecdotally, peer support was evident.

Theory into Practice

Despite the lack of students within this session, there were good examples of both manipulating or managing information and peer teaching (Moodle Glossary & Forum).

Another anecdotal example was when one student didn't know what to do, and her fellow students helped her get started.

Although there were differences in the amount of kinaesthetic learning that was apparent in the sessions, future designs of PAL Packs could definitely benefit from this approach, along with another strand within peer support and teaching (as referred to in the Defined Model document), peer education, which is an 'emerging approach to affective education, where small groups of students prepare and deliver a whole lesson...'

Whilst not specifically apparent in the PAL Pack sessions, it could be said that the use of glossaries, forums and wikis during a session may support this approach, but more important at this time, is the notion that students will defend a new opinion with their own high values, as referred to by Petty (2009)

'When students start asserting their own high values in defence of a new opinion, this can be very powerful. Such statements must come from the students themselves.'

This is certainly true of Forums, Glossaries, Wikis, etc, where students are able to personalise their learning experience.

4. Redefining Personal Accountable Learning (PAL) (relates to all issues in the previous feedback section)

This report has looked at Personally Accountable Learning Packs within Higher Education courses* at Worcester College of Technology. It contains methodology, results, and detailed feedback evaluation from each session. However, one thing it has not included is an evaluation of the term 'Personally Accountable Learning', something that we aim to rectify now.

To effectively evaluate the term, we must first look at how it is described in the Defined Model document. A Personally Accountable Learning Pack is

'...a learning package with assessment. It has to have 'currency' with the students if it is to be of value. It must address learning outcomes within a module and support the student in the learning process.' (Flint, 2010)

The acronym 'PAL' is now widely used throughout college, but the researcher argues that it is time to perhaps alter this acronym very slightly, so as to make it more accessible to both staff and students alike; not alter letters of the acronym, but the words the letters refer to. This is because there is a feeling (albeit only gleaned from anecdotal evidence during the trials, and at other times within college), that this term is confusing and vague.

What does being 'Personally Accountable' mean? Nowhere in the Defined Model is it 'defined'! Perhaps now would be a good time to develop a new, more accessible, focused, relevant, and more easily definable term, rather than continuing with an undefined term that has been in use for best part of 12 months?

Why not use another similar term (referred to within the Defined Model document), that hopefully students, and certainly staff, will be more familiar with, and consequently may be more likely to embrace, a term already referred to within the Defined Model document -

'It is intended the study centre and ILT team work with course teams to identify the modules within the First and Diploma programmes where personal active learning packs can be further developed.' (Flint, 2010)

Personal Active Learning

It is possible that this term was not intended to be focussed on by the researcher, but sometimes something like this can bring about a slight change in emphasis that makes all the difference.

However, what is so special about adopting a 'Personal Active Learning' approach?

The main reason is that its two elements of the phrase can be clearly defined, namely '**Personal**' and '**Active Learning**'.

As we have already referred to personalisation, we will devote our attention to the second part of the phrase – Active Learning – before looking at the merits of Personal Active Learning in light of the findings within this study.

Active Learning

An important feature of PAL Packs is the 'Learning Activity' which, according to the project brief, should be an 'active learning activity', but what is '**active learning**'?

* Also courses leading to HE.

According to Petty (2004) –

‘We learn by doing. Research shows that active learning is much better recalled, enjoyed and understood.’

Petty (2004) goes on to say that ‘active methods require us to ‘make our own meaning’, that is, develop our own conceptualisations of what we are learning. Active methods:

- *Give the learner feedback on their incomplete understandings and encourage them to fix this, for example by helping each other.*
- *Give the teacher feedback on which learners understand, and who needs help.*
- *Develop thinking skills such as analysis, problem solving, and evaluation.*
- *Help learners to use their learning in realistic and useful ways, and see its importance and relevance.’*

As we found earlier, students who were able to ‘develop thinking skills such as analysis, problem solving, and evaluation’ (i.e., students taking part in an online Forum discussion; Theory into Practice PAL Pack), engaged or participated in the activity much more than those who were presented with (in essence) a list of online hand outs (students in the Study Skills PAL Pack sessions).

Although it was felt at the time that the use of more than a few text based resources was justified, as we were preparing students for an assignment, in hindsight the activities could have involved much more analysis, problem solving and evaluation.

As one of the students in the Study Skills PAL pack session commented -

*‘I would have liked to have seen some real example essay answers produced by students **to assess for myself** the sort of style degree students should be writing to.’*

If the researcher had thought of PAL Packs as personalised active learning activities, better PAL Packs could have been produced, that would have promoted ownership as well as personalisation, important issues highlighted in the Defined Model document.

However, now that the suggestion has been put forward that PAL Packs should be more accessible, more focused, and more relevant, perhaps it is also now appropriate to introduce one more concept change that ties all of the above together, under a much more user friendly banner!

5. Defined Blended Learning Initiative (*relates to all issues in the previous feedback section*)

In the previous section we included part of a definition (as found in the Defined Model document) for Personally Accountable Learning Packs. We will now look at the rest of this definition.

‘Assessment can take on many forms, from electronically derived questions to formal group presentations. It can be paper-based, electronic such as through MOODLE or a combination of the two. The package can be bought in or internally developed or again a combination.’ (Flint, 2010)

When the researcher first read the complete definition of Personally Accountable Learning Packs, he was struck by the way it appeared to resemble a type of blended learning approach. For example, one can define blended learning as ‘traditional instructor-led arrangements...supplemented (as opposed to being replaced) with other electronic formats’ (Martin, 2009), which in this context is what is being put forward in the Defined Model.

What we now propose is that we go one step further, to incorporate blended learning into the Defined Model. To do this, we must first discuss the term 'Blended Learning'.

Blended Learning

Before we can get to a point where more suggestions for change are made, we must look at blended learning, and relate it to the research carried out earlier.

Let us first compare definitions and views about blended learning within Further & Higher Education settings.

Further Education

'Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) stated that a truly blended solution "involves the strengths of each type of learning environment and none of the weaknesses".'

(Martin, 2009, p 8)

This point lends itself so well to this project, and the feedback discussed earlier, as it could quite easily be said that if the PAL Packs were to be redesigned, they would include elements from each; from the repository style used in the Study Skills PAL Pack, to the more 'personalised' approach of the Theory into Practice PAL Pack, a more 'blended' approach would be used.

Hinterberger et al, (2004, as cited in Martin (2009), p 9) state this far more eloquently -

'An instructor supports blended learning if he or she includes in the curriculum socially supported interaction (e.g. classroom instruction), self controlled instruction (e.g. e-Learning material), assessment as feedback to students and instructor, and applies to all of them the same instructional strategy to define the targeted competence level. p 6'

In this context, one could say that an effective PAL Pack structure would be as follows

- Personalised tutorial support (substituting 'Classroom instruction')
- Self-controlled instruction (from within the PAL Pack itself)
- Assessment as feedback (either by the tutor within Moodle, or via online Moodle Forums, Glossaries, Wikis, etc.)

As Martin (2009) summarises –

'Rather than replacing existing tutor-led structures, blended learning models are meant to increase independent learning skills and introduce students to methods of erudition that are becoming fundamental components to lifelong learning.'

Higher Education

Salmon (2005, as cited in Sharpe, et al, (2006), p 18) however offers an alternative view, relating to Higher Education -

'To date, the differences and similarities between online, traditional distance and physical-based teaching have been little understood, leading to confused notions of the panacea of "blend". p 202'

It is these seeds of doubt that have influenced the researcher's views regarding a redefining of the term Defined Model.

As we have discussed earlier, there has been some confusion regarding certain terms used within the Defined Model document. One of these concerns the term 'Defined Model' itself,

as it would appear that no actual model has been defined for this 'New Curriculum Delivery Approach'.

Therefore, perhaps the time is right for another change, so that a more accessible, more focused, and more relevant title can be devised, in line with the PAL name change suggested earlier?

Defined Blended Learning Initiative

As we have seen, it is possible to suggest that the aim of PAL Packs is to enable the delivery of a more blended approach to learning, although as we have also seen, there is confusion over what blended learning is. However, as Driscoll (2002) concludes

'it is this lack of definition, meaning different things to different people, which gives the term potential' and that 'allowing staff to debate their interpretation of the term, helps them develop ownership of how it is used within the institution.'

(Sharpe, et al, 2006, p 19)

Can you see what we have done there? By creating our own definition of blended learning, we can develop a sense of *ownership* that is most certainly not present at the moment.

By adopting this approach, we will be able to create a **Defined Blended Learning Initiative** that can help to spread this new curriculum delivery approach across college, and beyond, with increased clarity, transforming existing strategies already in place into clear effective strategies.

Indeed, if we may make one further suggestion, it would be that a Defined Blended Learning Initiative should be based on the blending of pedagogical approaches, rather than focussing on technological advances, as referred to above in the 'Learner taking ownership' section, where the warning against the development of a learning resource, '**because it is technologically possible rather than pedagogically desirable**' (Higgins, 2009), becomes even more important!

Further emphasis of this comes from Sharpe (2006), who reasons that the blending of pedagogical approaches 'is likely to be most productive in making the best use of blended learning.'

Perhaps this is the point where we can start to create a new, clear, coherent, pedagogically (and technologically) sound Defined Blended Learning Initiative? After all, as Brady (2009) summarises

'the underlying principle here is about the quality of learning and the implications of using tools effectively in this process. Beetham and Sharpe (2007) explain 'like previous innovations they can be assimilated to pedagogical practice without altering the fundamental truths about how people learn.'

Perhaps more crucially though, as Brady (2007) notes

*'they [Beetham and Sharpe] also advise practitioners to **continuously evaluate the impact of their own pedagogical approaches and choices on their learners.**'*

We will now move on to our recommendations.

Recommendations

The main purpose of this section is to outline a number of issues that the researcher believes are worthy of further consideration.

- 1.** The Defined Model & PAL Packs continue to be developed and evaluated within Worcester College of Technology, blending pedagogical approaches (for both Further and Higher Education), with technological advances.
- 2.** That the focus is primarily on the pedagogy rather than the technology within any new blended approach that may be developed.

Throughout this process it became apparent that there is much promise on the affordances interactive technologies can offer, rather than their 'pedagogical' effectiveness. Ultimately any tool used is there to support and assist 'learning processes' and just as teachers plan lessons and learning curriculum, the focus on using these tools needs to be fundamentally placed in pedagogical effectiveness and process, rather than novelty or technological determinism.

- 3.** The term 'Defined Model' is changed to the 'Defined Blended Learning Initiative'.
- 4.** The term 'Personally Accountable Learning' Packs is changed to 'Personal Active Learning' Packs.
- 5.** Teachers are made more aware that personalised tutorial sessions can be used to help prepare students for independent learning during PAL Pack sessions.
- 6.** That whichever way the 'New Curriculum Delivery Approach' is developed (whether here at Worcester College of Technology, or further afield), it is done so gradually, coherently, with extensive planning, and after consultation students, and teaching/support staff, so that it has longevity to adapt and adopt as technology moves forward, not just abandoned and replaced in a few years time with another 'new approach'.

Conclusion

The aim of this project was to look at the development of the 'The Defined Model', for students progressing into and on Higher Education courses at Worcester College of Technology, and it follows on from the initial development of Personally Accountable Learning (PAL) Packs for Further Education courses across the college.

Three courses were identified, to develop, trial, and evaluate PAL Packs. This has been through feedback from both staff and students from each course. These findings were then discussed, with recommendations being made.

In one sense this very short overview could be seen as a way of concluding this report, although the researcher is not quite ready to say 'The End' just yet!

This is because it is felt that the development of PAL Packs (however you want to describe them; see discussion above) is a work in progress, with the potential to offer an exciting, new focus to learning the like of which has not really been seen anywhere else before. This last comment is quite subjective, and not based on evidence, accept for the fact that we are primarily trying to develop something new for this college, and it is this that needs to be considered properly. We need to develop a model, an initiative, a focus, that works across college. From students, to teaching and support staff, a scheme that brings all parties together in a united, focussed, clear, coherent way, something that will have longevity, and not be phased out should it not be seen to be working straight away.

This is also true for the wider audience, who may be looking on this paper as a way to inform future developments and initiatives within their own Further or Higher Education establishments.

For another institution who wants to adopt such a model, it needs to be noted that this project cannot offer all the answers, but can offer lessons in the infancy of such an initiative. This project is based on a very small sample of courses and was completed with relatively small learner numbers for evaluation, but it does highlight the need for more study to offer a much broader understanding of this type of learning and the impact it can have.

Each institution has its own structures, politics and resources. For example many institutions do not have study centres as their hub for learning, therefore would need to adopt and study different strategies as to 'what works' and 'what doesn't' in their own context. What is clear, to be able to understand such learning processes, is that all institutions would need to adopt a generous lead in time to evaluate and acclimatise both teachers and learners to embed such a new culture of learning.

Lessons learned in each institution may vary but the importance of a strong pedagogical infrastructure to support such an initiative should not be underestimated. Tutorial support and teacher input to feed into Personal Active Learning, is crucial to scaffold such independent processes. It needs to be looked upon as the crux of success behind any blended learning or as a means to foster independent learning. Clearly the student feedback in this project highlights the perceived continued need for teacher input and support - this is not just about technology!

In the context of WCT, the most important lesson learned was that PAL learning using computers needs to have a seamless link to classroom sessions and tutorial linked support to ensure a good scaffold of guidance, as Minton (2000, P.131) puts it "Students need to know where they are supposed to be going and why they are doing it, before they begin." (This is also highlighted by Jaques (1991, p.90) who explains that clarity of aims is essential to progress.)

Essentially learning is a process, and whichever tools or methods are applied, there needs to be clarity for all involved, that includes students for their learning direction, teacher

understanding for the application of such blended learning methods, and college management to be able to write a cohesive, coherent, comprehensive model for structured and timely blended learning adoption that has longevity, goals and clear ongoing objectives.

It is also essential for all to trust that the IT infrastructure, is reliable, accessible. This type of learning cannot be disrupted or devalued because of intermittent IT resources and infrastructure. It is crucial that this infrastructure also has investment.

That is why, if we offer any sort of concluding thought, it is that we do not hastily finish the work that has already been started, rather continue to develop a framework that could be the making of this college. As this report has been produced with Christmas just around the corner, let us work together to develop a pedagogically and technologically sound Defined Blended Learning Initiative, where Personal Active Learning forms the basis for learning in Worcester College of Technology; in other words, let us all aim in the future to be 'pedagogically singing from the same hymn sheet'!

Appendices

Learning to Learn

By Professor Steven Higgins, Durham University (May 2009)

The key advantages for the development of knowledge production, creativity and communication in education is in the repositioning of the learner in relation to what is learned in terms of responsibility, choice and interest. This repositioning is most apparent in re-balancing the goals and longer term aims of education, in thinking about how the process of education influences the development of learning dispositions in the longer term. The learner becomes central in regulating their learning and in determining the development of their own learning history and identity. The educational research which has attempted to understand the beginnings of these evolutionary changes has also shared some common features. One key characteristic has been to see the teacher as a learner and to base the development of learning to learn on active professional inquiry, to balance short term targets and curricular goals with broader aims of education in developing dispositions for lifelong learning. There are, however, significant challenges. There is no consensus about what learning to learn entails or involves in formal or informal settings. Exactly how it relates to the assessment of dispositions towards learning is a key question which will determine its evolution. It threatens to be derailed by formal comparative assessments or by the persuasions of science and technology in determining what can be done because it is technologically possible rather than pedagogically desirable. Learning to learn reminds us, however, that education is a moral and political enterprise, as well as a scientific and technical one.

A future based on learning to learn does imply a qualitative difference in education. It suggests a change of emphasis from an absolute to a relative measure of performance or from simple to compound measures. Today's learners are measured by the distance that they have travelled or by their speed through the curriculum. Perhaps tomorrow's learners will be assessed by the *acceleration* they show or the increase in their progress through a curriculum of skills, knowledge and active learning experiences, coupled with the development of their beliefs and confidence about themselves as learners.

The full article can be found at <http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/learning-to-learn/>

Knowledge, creativity and communication

by Dr Carey Jewitt, London Knowledge Lab (April 2009)

Creativity is positioned as a key aspect of a personalised interest driven activity (Craft). Sawyer argues that the goals of standard models of school and work, that is to ensure standardization, are becoming less relevant and that what is now required for effective learning is a move toward personalisation. A significant issue here is the need for new forms of assessment if learning is to be customized to the individual student. For example in the form of portfolios, flexible formative assessment and project based work.

Personalisation is seen as a factor underpinning the design of digital environments. There is an increasing focus on learning environments as problem-orientated spaces that are flexible enough to accommodate different interests and to cultivate learning across a range of needs (Horst). Ito et al's recent work on informal learning with digital media with young people found that personal, or individualized, interests were one of the primary motivators for using digital media for learning. Further, Price et al, suggest that giving young people opportunities to express themselves through the representations they create and the use of constructive kits that allow children to build their own, personalized models, stimulating their creativity and imagination, can support deeper learning. The use of digital technologies are recognised for their potential to promote learning that is 'increasingly more personalized, informal and emergent – rather than the outcome of highly structured institutional practices' (Ravenscroft

and Cook, 2007, cited in Wolf and Alexander). This has prompted researchers to investigate how development of effective argumentation might be supported and enhanced with appropriately designed 'digital tools' that enable personalisation.

Significant changes in the representational and communicational landscape over the next 30 years is a theme across many of the reviews (Carrington and Marsh; Saljo et al; Price et al; Kress and Bezemer; Horst). Changing social demands and technological innovation will continue to shape and reconfigure existing representational resources and practices of communication.

The continued development of audio, sensory, and embodied communicational modes and technologies will alter the place of written, print mode in the communicational landscape. The use of representational and communicational resources will become increasingly reliant on a range of forms of communication, drawing image, writing, action, sound and so on, into new relationships (i.e. multimodal in character). It will offer new modes of expressing oneself, representing the world and manipulating it and new modes of articulating knowing and insight.

The full article can be found at:- <http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk/summative-report-knowledge-creativity-and-communication/>

Feedback Questions & Responses

(a) The content is arranged in a clear, orderly manner.

Courses	Responses					Average Rating
	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	
Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology	4	9	4	0	0	4.00
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care	4	5	1	0	0	4.30
Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)	0	1	0	2	0	2.67

(b) The content is accurate and up to date.

Courses	Responses					Average Rating
	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	
Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology	10	5	1	0	0	4.35
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care	5	4	0	1	0	4.30
Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)	1	2	0	0	0	4.33

(c) The content explains the concepts well.

Courses	Responses					Average Rating
	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	
Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology	9	7	1	0	0	4.47
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care	1	5	3	0	1	3.50
Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)	0	0	1	1	1	2.00

(d) The layout design of the PAL Pack is attractive.

Courses	Responses					Average Rating
	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	
Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology	3	7	4	2	1	3.53
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care	3	3	4	0	0	3.90
Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)	0	0	0	2	1	1.67

(e) The navigation design is user friendly.

Courses	Responses					Average Rating
	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	
Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology	4	7	5	0	1	3.76
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care	0	6	2	2	0	3.40
Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)	0	0	2	1	0	2.67

(f) The instructions for using the PAL Pack are clear.

Courses	Responses					Average Rating
	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	
Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology	5	8	1	2	1	3.82
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care	1	6	1	1	1	3.50
Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)	0	0	1	2	0	2.33

(g) The materials present were relevant to my course needs.

Courses	Responses					Average Rating
	Definitely agree	Mostly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly disagree	Definitely disagree	
Foundation Degree Popular Music Technology	10	7	0	0	0	4.59
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development in Health & Social Care	5	4	1	0	0	4.40
Foundation Degree Advanced Practice Skills and Management (Hair, Beauty, Spa & Complementary Therapies)	1	1	0	1	0	3.67

Supplementary Questions & Responses

Looking back on the PAL Pack, are there any particularly **POSITIVE** aspects you would like to highlight?

FD Music Technology	the links and the way it was presented was well structured and thought out
	Nothing in particular
	Some good and useful content.
	no
	the fact that you can change fonts size, colour, window size and font type really helped as I have dyslexhia and also need reading glasses
	It was a very good way of explaining the topics it covered and was enjoyable to complete due to the layout and general feel to it.
	It gave some useful examples, in particular during the choice of words section.
	allowed me to understand the terminology used in essay questions better and opened my eyes for ways to find more research.
	it allows you to get information outside of lessons in a quick easy manner
	The Harvard referencing guide has helped alot and I now understand how to reference with more confidence.
	not really
	colour scheme
	i found the links very useful
	Looking back i thought that the section on what not to do, helped me a lot.
	no
It was laid out well and was very easy to follow.	
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development	It is aimed at the work which i am doing on my corse
	I think it is clear to understand what to do and tells you well.
	It is easy to put our work together and also easy to use.
	It is easy to use
	It was clear to use.
	Overall I think it is useful and guides you step by step.
	Easy to use.
FD Advanced Practice Skills	To have a discussion encouraged learning and new ideas.
	Was good being able to interact with others.
	being able to interact with others in a messenger type to view others opionions. Better than a talking dicussion as not talking over one another and ideas more clearly understood.

Looking back on the PAL Pack, are there any particularly NEGATIVE aspects you would like to highlight?

FD Music Technology	Nothing negative to say about it.
	layout design was a bit plain
	no
	None, it was a good pal pack
	not really
	no not really
	I think that the first exercise wasn't as clear as it could be but i thought that after getting the answers wrong a couple of times that it showed the start of the wrong was good.
	no
	i would prefer using a teacher as they are a specialist in the subject and can answer my question directly in a format that i can ask about more indepth
	just the one question wasn't clear enough, it asked whether you can photocopy a book, but didn't explain whether the user was referencing the book or not
	Nothing in particular
	I would have liked to have seen some real example essay answers produced by students to assess for myself the sort of style degree students should be writing to.
	Some of the Instructions were a little hard to follow.
	a lot to read and found it slightly boring at times depending on category.
	not worded as clearly as it could be
Seemed slightly unorganized and hard to follow in sequence	
BTEC National Health & Social Care - Personal and Professional Development	No word count on the assesment task (or if there was it wasnt obvious enough).
	It could have been highlighted more clearly that the table about the different types of care provisions was in the book. The informal part of it was not in the book.
	The only thing i think is a disadvantage is that there are alot of things to download or open which can sometimes get a bit confusing but overall i think it is useful and guides you step by step.
	i do not like the book i mean it is a good idea but it takes to long
	Within a lesson, because it is computer work, the laptops take a while to load so you cant do as much work.
	on the second task, when i uploaded my work- it never replaced it. it just deleted it.
It took a while to load, and i didn't have the 'chart task'.	
FD Advanced Practice Skills	Did not keep my interest and had to ask a lot of questions before beginning the activity as found it quite confusing and unclear. It is not laid out well and looks very unattractive.
	not too clear on how to use the pack. visual design - eg colours, fonts.
	The discussion environment could have looked more interesting and fun for example, bubbles, colours etc.

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