

Final report for eSTEEeM project:

Investigation into running course specific taster tutorials within prisons for non-OU students & an evaluation of effect and impact of having SiSE only tutor groups.

Keywords: prison, SiSE, tutorials, education, mathematics, student support, SiSE only, tutor group.

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1 Executive summary

Students in Secure Environments (SiSE) can typically have different issues to other students from pre-registration through to the end of their studies.

The first part of this project was the establishment of 'taster' tutorials within prisons in the North of England for non-Open University (OU) students. The idea was to run them as informal sessions with an emphasis on mathematics and engineering. A member of the student in a secure environment (SiSE) support team would attend to cover administrative areas for both prisoners and the education department. The prisons approached were those with low OU student numbers, woman's prisons and Young Offender institutes.

The second part of the research is an evaluation of an associate lecturer (AL) running SiSE only tutor groups on two mathematics level one modules MU123 and MST124 as opposed to just a couple of SiSE students in a group.

The research has delved into other SiSE related areas within the OU and this report will bring these together and suggest areas for improvement.

The main finding of the taster sessions is that these are extremely beneficial and informative for the prisoners and prisons, but they should be run in a coordinated way with higher level backing and coordination from both prisons and the OU rather than an AL trying to organise on an ad hoc basis.

The main findings from the SiSE only groups are that the AL is much more efficient and effective, there is consistency for the education departments and the AL naturally develops deeper knowledge and understanding of the nuances of SiSE through networking both within the OU and within prisons.

Several 'quick win' solutions to current issues when supporting SiSE became apparent.

One recommendation that came out of the evaluation is that a compulsory short training module should be completed by all ALs tutoring SiSE to aid knowledge and understanding and also consistency.

2 Aims and scope

2.1 Background

Students in secure environments can be in prison, released from prison under license, on probation or in a secure hospital unit. I have taught in prisons for a number of years and visited many to run tutorials.

The inspiration for this project came during said tutorials, I noticed that other inmates would look at what we were doing. To conduct a tutorial in a prison you must be supervised at all times by either a member of the education department or occasionally a prison officer. You end up working in an open environment as there are not enough staff to cater for one-to-one time. This open environment usually consists of a couple of members of the education department who are joined by a number of prisoners who are currently involved in some form of education. (Farley and Pike 2016) investigated learning communities within a prison environment and found small-group interaction had wide-ranging benefits beyond that of just the qualification gained. This intensive group work offers a learning opportunity as an alternative to the other inevitable anti-social communities within prisons (Adams et al 1994).

This education can be OU related or many other examples such as City & Guilds qualifications, GCSEs or basic numeracy and literacy. As a lecturer you sit at a table with *your* student(s). The mixed and large room attendance causes it to be a dynamic and noisy place with people moving around all the time. This is the reason I found students coming to have a look at what we were doing.

One particular example of this came at HMP Garth. I had three students and managed to arrange a joint tutorial session. Other prisoners showed an interest and were looking at the material we were covering on a level one first entry mathematics module. It appeared that:

- They were under the impression they would never be *allowed* to do an OU degree because they did not have the basic school qualifications required.
- They thought a degree was well beyond their grasp.
- They lacked the confidence to start a degree.
- Once they had looked at the material for this level one maths module they felt ‘they could do this.’

This session sowed the seeds of the eSTEEeM project. This project’s main aim is to explore the following research questions:

- 1. What are the barriers for prison students taking up OU study or more widely any sort of education?**
- 2. Would informal ‘taster’ tutorial and information sessions to non-OU prisoners generate more uptake in OU modules?**

In asking these questions there was a chance for rich evaluation into a prisoner's educational background and *their* reasoning for not furthering their education. (Scurrah 2008) discusses the three main barriers to learning for prisoners identified by (Merriam and Caffarella 1999) as being dispositional, situational and institutional. The evidence gathered at the sessions backed these up.

Starting the project in 2020 was obviously a hindrance due to longer than expected prison lockdowns due to Covid. The project had to be put on hold. There were other extraordinary factors which got in the way of gaining access to prisons in order to run the 'tasters' which are discussed later. These factors forced a change to the project's original aims.

Further aims were identified which are briefly summarised below:

3. **What benefits would ALs taking a SiSE only group have for AL, student and education departments?**
4. **How can the OU improve silo working when it comes to SiSE?**
5. **How can the OU and prisons improve tutorials?**
6. **How can the OU improve consistency for SiSE?**

3 Activities

3.1 Part 1: Taster Sessions

A literature search and review of data (Prison Reform Trust 2019) highlighted key data about prisons in the UK. Those most relevant to the project work were utilised throughout, such as:

- Over 47% of prisoners in the UK do not have any formal education
- 57% of adult prisoners had literacy levels below that expected of an 11-year-old
- 30% have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)
- 43% decrease in reoffending rate for prison learners
- 13% higher chance of employment for prison learners
- There are 200 prisons, secure units and private prisons in UK
- UK prison population c95,000
- Women make up 4% of total prison population
- OU SiSE students c2000

Establishing the right contacts within the OU to help with data on the OU's relationship with each UK prison was time consuming. Eventually the SiSE support team provided rich information, detailing each prison and how many current students were pursuing OU modules. This information along with my own experience allowed me to draw a shortlist of prisons I would contact for the taster sessions.

The pandemic was now in full flow, so the project was postponed for over a year. The prisons were slow coming out of lockdowns, much slower than regular society and this had an impact on my ability to arrange face to face sessions.

I had a shortlist of ten prisons and sent an email (appendix A) to each explaining the project and the idea of a taster session asking if this is something they would be willing to host. The email was sent to a contact from the education department rather than the prison hierarchy as it was felt this informal approach would be the most successful. The shortlist was selected on location, category, sex, private or public, young offender or regular and number of OU students the establishment historically had. This was to enable as widespread data as possible.

Five out of the ten came back to me showing an interest and requested a phone call conversation to explain more. These all went well and the essence of what I was trying to achieve was easy to get across. Four agreed in principle to sessions. The fifth decided not to go ahead with it as they felt that the prisoners within their establishment (HMP Preston) would not be suitable. They felt that due to the prison having a transient population with lots of drug and mental health issues it would be impossible for me to keep a large group's attention. On pursuing this further the education officer was trying to advise me not to try and do this as it would be too difficult, the prisoners were rowdy and poorly educated. I was taken aback by the response and did explain that these were the type of prisoners I was more interested in exploring. Research shows (Porporino and Robinson 1992) that the more education inmates have the less likely they are to reoffend. More importantly (Hunn 2015) goes on to show that prisoners engaged in higher level education improve their critical thinking skills which naturally makes them question life choices.

Out of the four interested prisons I only managed to complete a taster session in one of them, HMP Styal. There were several reasons for this and it was a frustrating time. Prisons would agree in principle but then pinning down a date was the problem. We even agreed dates, but this was postponed last minute on a couple of occasions. The prisons clearly did not have my visit as a priority which was understandable. Some of them needed to get a higher level of agreement to allow it to happen. The education departments change and move around frequently so the trail went cold a few times and I had to pitch the whole idea to someone new. I widened my shortlist again and started contacting even more prisons but at times it felt like I was trying to sell something. At other times I would get a response back from a prison saying they thought it was a good idea but when I tried to arrange a call again the communications would cease. I ended up feeling like I was pestering them, so I sought advice from eSTEE M directors and from this discussion the change of direction was planned which is described as Part 2.

The taster session for HMP Styal was arranged and Shaun McMann from the SiSE student support team delivered the session alongside me. With Shaun being an AL in another school, we were able to showcase a variety of courses. I generated the taster session plan, the questionnaires for evaluation on completion and created the more in-

depth telephone interview questions I would use for further analysis. I acquired the necessary permissions required for the data analysis.

HMP Styal is a women's prison with not much OU take up. Three education officers were in attendance and seventeen prisoners. The visit generated good interest within the prison so other members of staff visited the classroom and took pictures for their own records and presentations.

I made the session as interactive and informal as I could. It lasted three hours with a break in the middle. The session parts are detailed below in table 1.

Session title	Content	Led by
Introductions and over to you	Colin and Shaun introduce themselves and the project reasoning. Open questions to prisoners asking for their experiences of education from both a child and adult perspective. Asking them to expand specifically on Maths. What are their thoughts on embarking on OU study.	Colin Blundell
Maths problems	Explaining some basic algebra concepts and showing some problem solving on the board.	Colin Blundell
Groupwork Maths	Giving them problems to discuss/solve as small groups based on material just covered. Using the time to chat informally to each group and allowing education staff to join in.	Colin Blundell
SiSE support	Explanation of OU study options, rules, fees and how they would be supported. Informal session again where prisoners and education staff were encouraged to ask questions.	Shaun McMann
Maths and Engineering problems	More problems from maths and engineering but	Colin Blundell and Shaun McMann

	with more real-world applications.	
Final Q&A	Questions were asked throughout the session but a final session to allow them to discuss anything else and also gave me time to hand out my evaluation questionnaires.	Colin Blundell and Shaun McMann

Table 1: Taster session plan

During the maths session it was explained clearly that the concepts covered would be taught slowly throughout the module and this level of understanding was not expected on day one.

After the session I conducted telephone interviews to add to the paper-based questionnaires (appendices B-D). I completed my own reflective diary and asked Shaun for his thoughts on the project as a whole. I spoke to the education department members numerous times and managed to get both formal and informal feedback from them to add to the evaluation material.

3.2 Part 2: SiSE Only Groups

I was approached to take on SiSE only student groups for level one maths modules MU123 and MST124.

Logistically there were some differences having these groups compared to a regular tutor group with or without SiSE students. The group was a maximum of thirteen rather than twenty-one and this was due to the additional time that would need to be spent individually supporting each student. Another difference is that there was no additional pay for the SiSE students. If an AL has a regular group of students with SiSE students included, they are able to offer between four and seven hours extra support by way of individual support sessions depending on module level and points. The OU is paid for this via the Ministry of Justice.

This part of the project builds on research a previous eSTeEM project started. (Alexander et al 2020) were able to use a large module (S111), which has a high SiSE number, to allocate multiple SiSE only groups alongside regular groups with SiSE allocated. This allowed a compare and contrast strategy using reflective diaries. There were many parallels between my experience and the previous research, and I was able to expand upon it and make further recommendations.

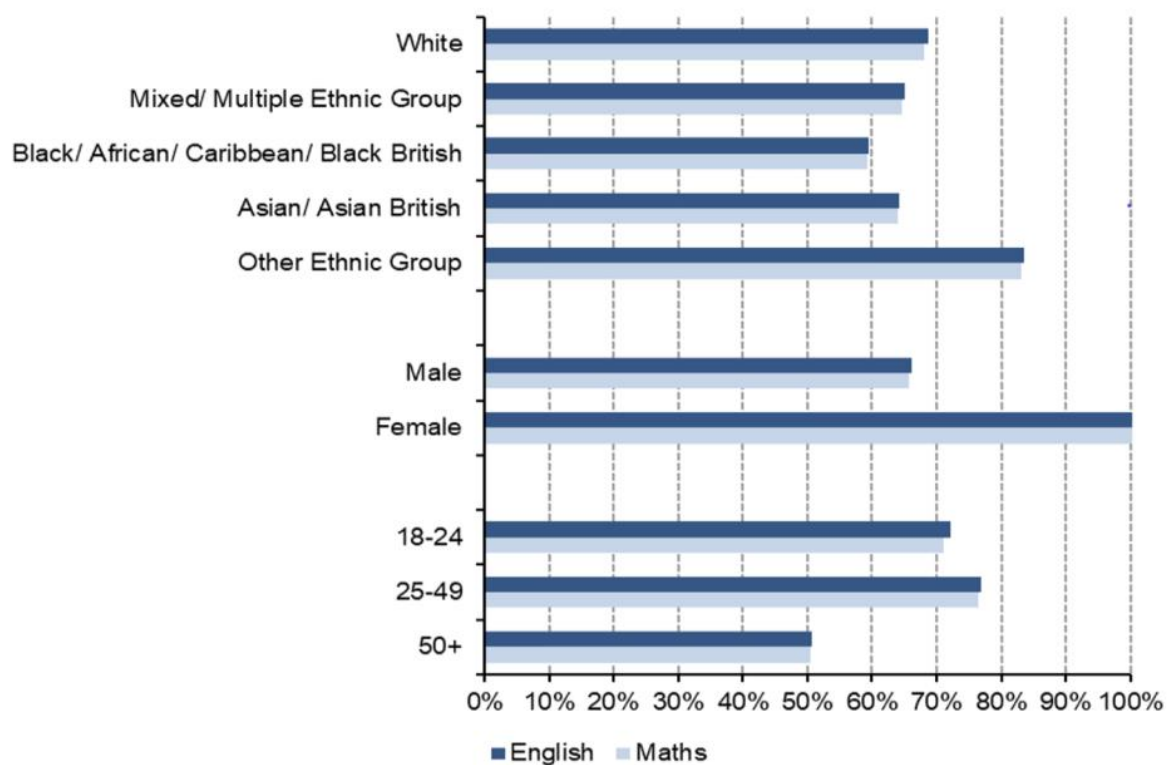
The two modules have now been running for three presentations for SiSE only groups and the aim for this research has been to tutor and support the group as you would a regular group but also to evaluate what benefits there are to having such groups through self-reflection tools. More formal evaluation has taken place speaking with and interviewing education departments and SiSE students.

Being involved in research that encompasses two large areas and presenting my findings to a wide range of audiences has led to involvement in other areas of the OU such as the way Curriculum Managers (CMs) think about materials and modules for SiSE. There has been involvement with module teams, SiSE support, other ALs and colleagues starting their own research into SiSE.

4 Findings

After analysing the data (appendices B-E) from the evaluation for the taster sessions the following findings can be drawn out. Before this is an interesting piece of data (Ministry of Justice 2023) which shows percentages of various groups of prisoners who have an initial education assessment in English and Maths. This points to a wider problem with education in prisons in that more could be done by the prisons in the early stages of incarceration.

The proportion of the prison population that completed an initial assessment by prisoner characteristics in England, 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 (Source: Tables 1.2, 1.3 and OMSQ statistics)



4.1 Findings from Taster Sessions

1. Overwhelmingly prisoners have barriers not just to study with the OU but to education in general. Many have extremely low literacy levels and/or special

educational needs so see education as a reminder of a difficult childhood and schooling experience.

2. Many prisoners come from dysfunctional families and see education as something not to be trusted, part of authority and this puts them off making that first step.
3. Prisoners see degree level study as being too difficult for them to even start. They feel they are not good or worthy enough. To back up the findings of these first three points see charts below. They are taken from the questionnaires and interviews conducted for evaluation.

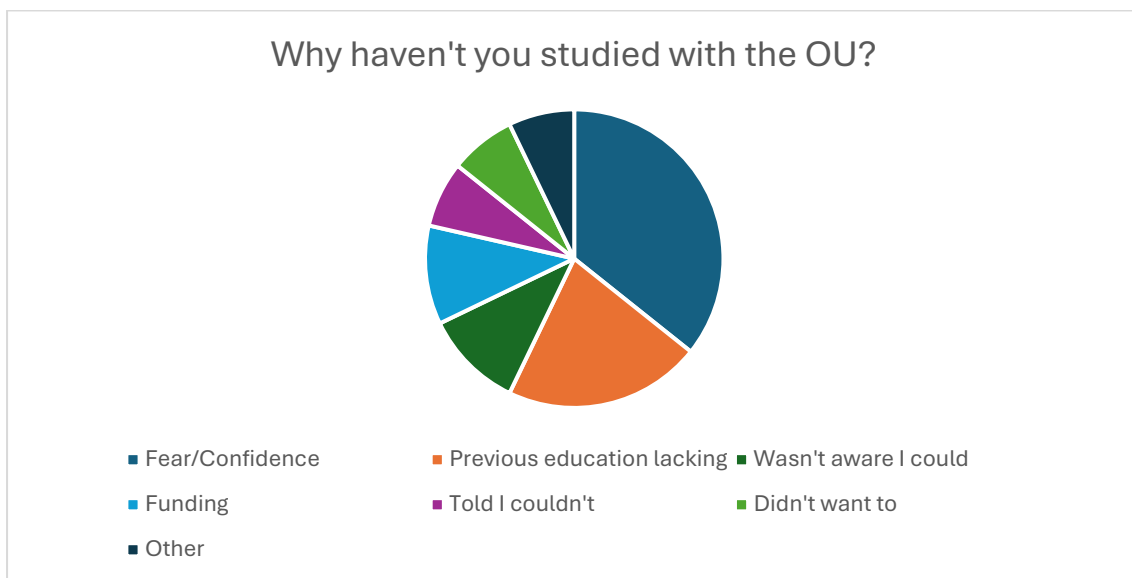


Chart 1 Why have you never taken up OU study?

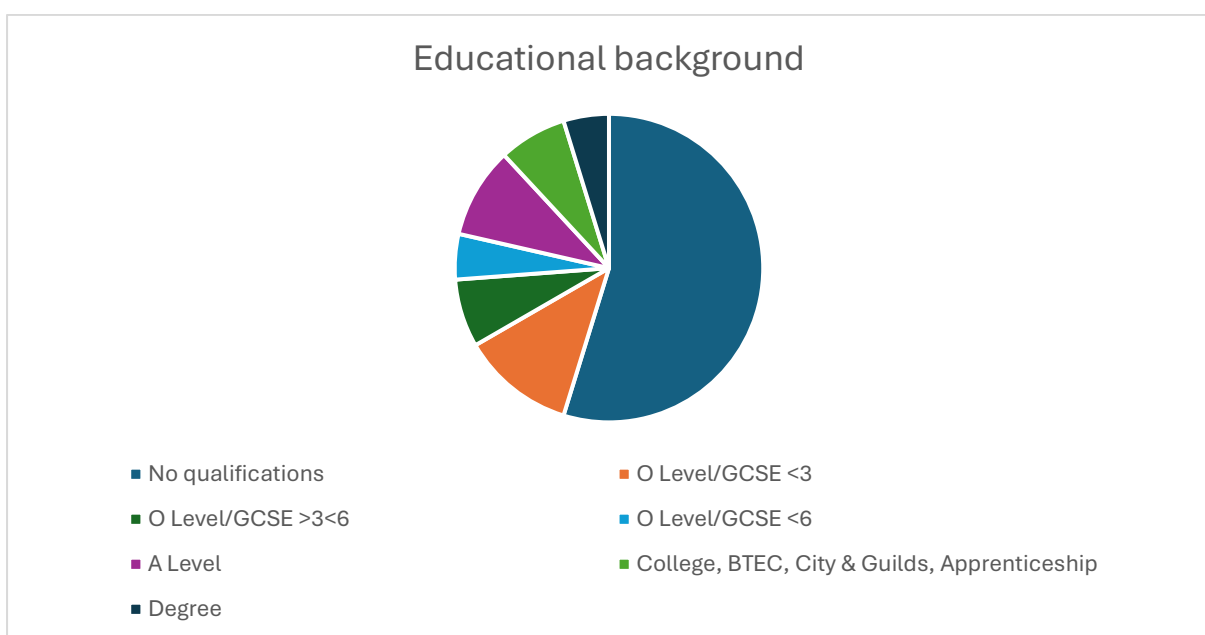


Chart 2 What is your educational background?

4. Some prison education staff look for an easy option rather than allowing prisoners to progress. HMP Preston did not want to participate as this would have made more work for them eventually and they felt their population were not really the right participants for OU study hence backing up the barriers and fears the prisoners already feel and completing this cycle. Prison officers too can affect the success of a prisoner just thinking about embarking upon some form of education whilst incarcerated, (Farley and Pike 2016) pointed out those in authority and in day-to-day contact with prisoners can have huge influence on their decisions. Prison officers have the capacity to motivate or de-motivate and an ability to enhance or undermine goals of the prison (Kjelsberg et al 2007).
5. Informal taster sessions help to break down some of these barriers. Allowing potential students to see the sort of material they would be working on creates confidence. Students who fear education and do not have a good relationship with any sort of bureaucracy do not want to be reading prospectuses, looking at forms and reading rules about study they want to see what it involves.

“I never thought I would be able to understand degree level Maths...but I did!”

Trudy, HMP Styal, Feb 2023

“I liked it that the 2 of them spent time talking to us and asking our opinions”

Jessica, HMP Styal, Feb 2023

“I enjoyed the visit, some of the Maths was hard but appreciated the guys coming in to talk to us like we matter”

Sam, HMP Styal, Feb 2023

6. Education departments can learn from these sessions too. They can ask questions informally and talk about things such as tutorials, module materials, alternative materials and computer requirements.

“This project supports the ‘access to education for all’ agenda.....the buzz in the room was palpable”

Kathryn, Education Officer HMP Styal Feb 2023

“Kathryn and I really enjoyed the session you and Shaun put on. I thought it was very informative and we both learned a lot about the enrolment process and different course options...You both were very approachable and made the session relaxed which created a great atmosphere.”

Jonathan, Education Officer HMP Styal Feb 2023

7. Whilst it was never one of the aims of the project to try to generate income or increase student numbers for the OU the possibilities of this cannot fail to be

noticed. With so much evidence pointing towards the benefits of OU study for SiSE and how it enhances both the prisoner and prison experience it seems obvious that as an institution we should tap into this market. The OU has around 2% of the UK prison population undertaking study which means there are significant opportunities to increase student numbers. If the OU does not do this a competitor will.

4.2 Findings from SiSE Only Groups

After analysing the data from the SiSE only groups (appendix E) the following findings are detailed.

1. Running SiSE only groups help build relationships with education departments and SiSE support teams. The AL becomes deeply knowledgeable about issues felt by SiSE learners and education departments.
2. Having fewer ALs covering the SiSE population allows for more efficiency and consistency in the tutoring and support they give. The AL becomes more involved in the various communication flows and blockages and can make a difference.

“Col’s effort with David, Josh, Steven and Will has had a positive impact on their studies. He has either sorted all the issues out or signposted me to where to go for help. He was quick to respond to all queries, sent loads of extra stuff by way of examples, exam past papers and hints and tips. He offered numerous individual tutorial sessions which the lads greatly appreciated. The support offered by Col was of a much higher standard than I have been used to from the OU.”

Linda, Education Officer HMP Channings Wood May 2024

3. There is a huge amount of work in the first few weeks of a module for an AL due to the one-one support required and the individual nature of that support due to each prison education department having wide-ranging knowledge, understanding and experiences with OU study.
4. There is lots of evidence of silo working within the OU and prisons and this causes many of the issues felt by students and ALs.

“...I don’t quite understand who to go to with a query, the materials just appear sometimes and some of it is missing, the course tells the student to do something then we can’t find where the something is, only to be told by the teacher that we won’t have access to this thing. It all feels a bit disjointed.”

Tina, Education Assistant HMP The Verne Jan 2024

5. There is a lack of consistency in what support ALs offer to SiSE due in some part to a lack of understanding and knowledge from the AL. The support must be

proactive. Waiting for students to make contact first means students do not get the support they need. SiSE only groups combat this problem.

6. The tutorial provision we give SiSE is shockingly bad, in a world of advanced technology we are trying to teach maths via a phone. The lack of face to face is a backward step and overwhelmingly the feedback from education staff and students is that they want this to come back. Failing this we must pursue other options of getting better at the remote tutorial. The results from all the evaluation I undertook on the question regarding would the prison want and welcome back face to face tutorials was 100% yes they would. This was asked of a multitude of prisons, education staff and SiSE students.
7. Delays in materials and communications between the OU and the student are a major cause of inferior performance, dropouts and pain for SiSE.

Previous research into supporting SiSE (McFarlane and Pike 2020) highlighted the importance the interaction between OU student and tutor, especially in prisons. At the time of the research, it was well acknowledged that this contact would be face to face for a certain number of hours which would back up the feedback the student gets from assignments and emails. Since the pandemic, this aspect of supporting SiSE seems to have been forgotten about.

5 Impact

5.1 Taster Sessions

The session we did in Styal was massively rewarding and a real pleasure to be part of.

We visibly had an impact on the prisoners we encountered and have no doubt at least some of these will engage with education after the visit and some will go on to study with the OU. See chart 3 below for responses to the question 'Did the taster session give you confidence to embark on future study?'



Chart 3 Did the taster session give you confidence to study with the OU?

The feedback from *all* prison education departments (bar HMP Preston) I approached was positive. These are initiatives they want to happen and want to be part of. They want outside visits to engage with the inmates. They have a desire to know more about OU study especially those who have had little or no OU involvement previously. (Gray 2012) discusses prisons being *total organisations* which leads to prisoners becoming institutionalised and the danger of them becoming part of a false society. What I found in interviews was how refreshing it was for prisoners and education departments to *feel* an outside influence. It is important for rehabilitation for prisoners to be aware of another world they can be part of. The education journey is clearly important, but it is the stepping stones to starting that journey that these taster sessions offer. The sessions offer a different view of the world for the institutionalised prisoner.

The sessions are difficult to arrange locally. One proposed solution is to organise these more centrally with communications between higher levels of the OU and the Ministry of Justice. Prisons could then be approached in a more formal way and more widespread sessions organised between the AL/SiSE team running them and the education departments.

“...we'd welcome this exciting research here at HMP Altcourse. I'll be delighted to host you here, you just need to request permission, let me get back to you...”

Joe, Education Manager, HMP Altcourse Sep 2022

5.2 SiSE Only Groups

The SiSE only groups study identified ‘quick wins’ which will be extremely beneficial for student success.

5.3 Consistency in support

One of the findings of the SiSE only groups was that there are inconsistencies between various ALs in the support they give. Currently an AL gets an email informing them they have a SiSE student which has a set of links embedded within it. These point to a large and complex set of pages and within each even more links to various aspects of SiSE tutoring. All the information you would need is there but many ALs simply do not have the time to wade through it all. There is an extremely helpful forum for SiSE ALs and many ALs who do have a query or are confused about something go straight to here as usually a fellow AL or a SiSE support team member will answer. I have noticed through my work with SiSE generally and more so recently due to the research that many of the queries are similar in nature or crop up at regular intervals. I have also been a mentor for new to SiSE ALs. I have been surprised by the ALs lack of understanding of where to find information and more importantly what support SiSE students should be given.

This led me to propose a SiSE AL training module which would be compulsory when an AL has a SiSE student in their group for the first time. This would satisfy two crucial issues. It would be interactive in nature requiring the AL to navigate around the various pages while being shown the information. It would also list in detail the general extra requirements that an AL should be thinking of when supporting SiSE. This would not be tutor led but pre-recorded in the same way the data protection and safeguarding courses are built. The suggestion was met with agreement, and I had a meeting with two Associate Deans Vic Nicholas and Laura Alexander. We have sketched out the course and are just waiting for funding to be able to create it.

5.4 Streamlining Communication

An impact that has been felt by me personally and one that I have tried to pass on to those I have mentored and any other AL I encounter who deals with SiSE is that there is so much an AL can do to help when things do go wrong. As mentioned, the OU and some prisons are guilty of silo working and there seem to be delays and blockages in information routes. As an AL you are pivotal to the student's success and very central. I have realised as I have picked up more information about how the various departments work both within the OU and in prisons that as an AL you can sometimes just sort the issue or at least pass it to the correct person more quickly than if you just leave it to the laborious communications and process system. This is helped by building up your network of people who do deal with SiSE and know them by name rather than what mailbox they are in. (Alexander et al 2020) had similar streamlining findings but due to the pandemic this research was cut short and some of the impacts were not able to be explored.

Two examples of the above point in action are detailed below.

MU123 iCMA results

Several education departments contacted me saying they did not have results for student's iCMAs. Ordinarily this query would be fed by the AL to SiSE support and eventually the student would get their result. There were enough similar queries for me

to investigate further. Previous interactions had given me an insight into how the marking process worked for iCMAs as it was vastly different to the regular student process whereby the iCMA is marked online and the result automatically appears on the student's record. I was able to contact the various departments that participated in the SiSE iCMA marking process. The reason the students were not getting results back was due to a simple lack of communication between assignments handling office (AHO) and the education department. AHO thought that once the result appeared on student home this would be enough but in many prisons students or education departments do not have access to this or are unaware of where to find it. A simple suggestion by me to solve this was to include SiSE support on the communications who would then inform the prison of the score. This raised a further issue; the prisoners were not getting any feedback on their performance for iCMAs either. I alerted the module team to this, and it is being addressed. Previous research (Pike and Mcfarlane 2020) suggest the OU's Virtual Campus should have been in almost full UK prison use by 2022 but my findings do not back this up. There is a disconnect between what information the OU holds on a prison's ability to provide online support and on what is actually happening.

Alternate materials

Many SiSE need to be provided with alternate materials especially for TMA questions. These are usually because the student does not have access to software or IT in general. On MST125 the alternate materials cover the unit on typesetting maths and the software package Maxima. On MU123 the materials cover the data plotter. With having SiSE only groups I was able to see a full range of student experience for this. Some prisons knew about the materials and actively asked for them or knew where to find them. Some prisons had no idea they existed and only questioned it when the student asked. Some students would bring up they were struggling on a particular question in the TMA and so I would inform them they had an option for alternate materials. There were several issues here. A lack of consistency in how these alternate materials were sent to prisons or released prisoners. A lack of awareness amongst ALs of the existence of these materials and where to find them. My suggestions have been to include this in the AL SiSE training module as now it is one of the first things I do at the start of a new presentation. I check what alternate materials are available and then inform the student and education department. I get them to check they have been sent them and if not I email them. Another suggestion has been made by me to the module team and also the curriculum managers that the availability of these materials needs to be at the forefront of the materials that are dispatched to a new student. This impact set the path for a number of conversations and meetings about improving this part of SiSE support.

5.5 Improving tutorial provision

I managed to get a slight reversal of the complete ban on prison face to face by bringing this up with the head of SiSE support and with the backing of other ALs. It is still limited but can be requested.

I have explored improving telephone tutorials with a more effective system whereby the student tells me in detail the topics they want to cover beforehand. I create some examples to help and send them to the student and they attempt them before the tutorial as best they can then we go through these on the day both looking and working on the same examples.

In a future project I will explore tutorial provision with various other options if face-to-face is not viable such as recording empty Adobe Connect tutorial sessions. Working in the tutor's Adobe Connect room live (dependent on prison access). Setting up TEAMS calls.

This blockage to a prisoner's progress and development has been recognised previously, (Garner 2017) highlighted the trials going on in the UK and Australia which provide a prison student with shared screen availability and virtual face to face communications to improve the quality and speed of the module tutorial. It does seem as though everyone involved feel there are numerous simple solutions to a devastating problem for prison learners. The difficulty seems to be generating a coordinated response to address the issues.

5.6 Support for SiSe following release

Released SiSE students are incredibly vulnerable, and we lose a lot of them. Within the OU there is a Personal Tutors (PT) trial whereby an extra person supports targeted groups of students alongside their tutor. This PT trial did not include released SiSE. I managed to persuade the PT team in charge of the project to include released prisoners studying with us as they will benefit most, having someone to guide them through those early weeks when they are having to deal with much more than just the module because of all the changes to their life.

I have been a PT for two such students in recent months and have felt an overwhelming sense of how much me being there for them has helped. They have both said to me they would have let their studies lapse if I had not been on hand to help with queries and motivation.

6 Dissemination

- STEM EDIA Seminar Series 16th May 2023-This session took the form of a panel discussion with me, a Curriculum Manager and a member of SiSE support. Andrew Potter ran the session and asked each of us questions about how we support SiSE, our experiences and the difficulties we encounter. The session had a very interactive audience and there were many questions and interest shown from the diverse audience.
- Curriculum Manager's Meeting 5th October 2023-Following on from the EDIA seminar I was invited to present at the quarterly Curriculum Manager's meeting. At the EDIA session I touched upon some of the issues I found by having the SiSE only group and Meg Blacker the Head of Curriculum Management in STEM

wanted me to expand on these to raise awareness within the Curriculum Manager community. After my presentation there was an informative discussion on how we can support SiSE more efficiently. It gave me a fascinating insight into the difficulties CMs have dealing with so many variables across multiple modules and prisons. This session informed much of my later work on this project.

- STEMinar Series 22nd February 2024-I gave a presentation on my research with a brief introduction to the two parts and an evaluation of my findings. I spent most of the time talking about the outcomes and areas where we can improve support.
- ESTEeM Conference 11th April 2024-This was presented at Milton Keynes at the main conference. It was a more formal presentation of my work, findings, impact and suggestions.
- Maths & Stats Scholarship Seminar 12TH September 2024-This will be a presentation to a Maths & Stats audience. I will be presenting with a central academic who is just embarking on their own SiSE research project. The aim is to raise awareness of the work that is going on in scholarship especially around supporting SiSE.

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8 University approval processes

- SRPP/SSPP – Approval from the Student Research Project Panel/Staff Survey Project Panel was obtained according to the Open University's code of practice and procedures before embarking on this project. Application number 2022/2227
- Ethical review – An ethical review was obtained according to the Open University's code of practice and procedures before embarking on this project. Reference number HREC/4449/Blundell
- Data Protection Impact Assessment/Compliance Check – A Data Protection Impact Assessment/Compliance Check was obtained according to the Open University's code of practice and procedures before embarking on this project. Data Protection registration number 28-04-111

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Letter to Prisons

Dear

Following on from our conversation the other day would it be possible for us to look into organising a visit from November 2022 onwards.

I am an associate lecturer with the Open University and have taught prison students for a number of years. I am project leader for research into prison Open University taster sessions. In my experience when visiting students within the educational department I have found myself speaking with non-OU students and have felt there is an interest but a lack of self-belief or awareness.

The project will be made up of taster sessions within North West prisons for students not currently studying with the OU. I tutor Maths and Engineering at level one so part of the session would be running through some activities to demonstrate the level at which they would be expected to be working at and I would make this as interactive as possible.

Also in attendance will be student support who will run through more general studying with the OU aspects such as ‘how do I...’ and fees and what sort of modules/courses are available.

We will also be building in a fair amount of time for Q&A for both prisoners and education staff.

I am looking for these to last approximately 2 hours and will arrange locally with you at a convenient date/time for all.

The sessions will then be evaluated via questionnaires and interviews.

If you have any questions, please let me know and I hope you agree that we can do this exciting research in your establishment.

If a further conversation is required, please let me know and I will call you.

Cheers

Col

9.2 Appendix B – Student Consent Form

Open University investigation into running course specific taster tutorials within prisons for non-OU students.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in in an interview/questionnaire for this project. If you are still willing to take part in an interview/questionnaire for this research project please tick the box, complete the details below and return the signed form.

At any time during the research, you are free to withdraw and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from you, up to the point at which data are aggregated for analysis. This will be in late Jan 2023.

Your participation or non-participation will not affect your access to OU study or support.

The results of any research project involving potential or current Open University students constitute personal data under the Data Protection Act. They will be kept secure and not released to any third party.

I am willing to take part in this research, and I give my permission for the data collected to be used in an anonymous form in any written reports, presentations and published papers relating to this study.

The recording of the interview and the details in the questionnaire will be accessed only by the researcher, and all information collected on the basis of the interview/questionnaire will be anonymized. The recordings will be destroyed when the project has come to an end in March 2023.

Please provide your contact details below so that we can arrange a time and date for this interview:

Name: _____

Student PI (if applicable): _____

Education coordinator: _____

Coordinator email/phone: _____

Signing this form indicates that you understand the purpose of the research, as explained in the covering letter, and accept the conditions for handling the data you provide.

Signature: _____

Date of Signature: _____

Please return completed form to your education coordinator or hand in to Colin Blundell who will be running the taster sessions within the prisons.

9.3 Appendix C – Questionnaire

Please expand on these questions as you see fit, we are interested in any of your thoughts on the sessions.

1. What date did you attend the taster session?
2. Have you studied with the Open University previously?
 - a. (if no) were you aware that you could study with the OU whilst in prison?
 - b. (if yes) what did you study and did you finish the qualification you set out on?
3. Briefly describe your educational background.
4. Thinking about the maths specific part of the session please describe how well you were able to follow the examples.
5. What were your thoughts on the pacing of the maths within the session?
6. Do you feel confident you could study at the level shown?
 - a. (if yes) why was this? Previous education, remember from school, found it easy?
 - b. (if no) why not? Too hard, too fast, unconfident, maths not your thing?
7. Now thinking about the part of the session which discussed how to enrol with the OU. Did you feel you understood what the requirements are?
8. Did you realise there were students within prison studying with the OU?
9. Do you use your education department for any sort of study?

10. Discuss your relationship with your education department.
11. Did you find the taster session informative, interesting and/or useful?
12. Do you feel you learnt something from the taster sessions?
13. Do you feel it more or less likely that you will investigate the possibility of becoming an OU student (or indeed taking up any sort of study) after attending the session.
14. Do you have any other comments at all about the sessions either positive, negative or indifferent?

9.4 Appendix D – Interview Questions

1. What date did you attend the taster session?
2. Have you studied with the Open University previously?
 - a. (If no) were you aware that you could study with the OU whilst in prison?
 - b. (if yes) what did you study and did you finish the qualification you set out on? (explore depending on answer)
3. Briefly describe your educational background. (explore)
4. Thinking about the maths specific part of the session please describe how well you were able to follow the examples. (explore)
5. What were your thoughts on the pacing of the maths within the session?
6. Do you feel confident you could study at the level shown?
 - a. (if yes) why was this? Previous education, remember from school, found it easy?
 - b. (if no) why not? Too hard, too fast, unconfident, maths not your thing?
7. Now thinking about the part of the session which discussed how to enrol with the OU. Did you feel you understood what the requirements are? (explore depending on answer)
8. Did you realise there were students within prison studying with the OU?
9. Do you use your education department for any sort of study?
10. Discuss your relationship with your education department. (explore)

11. Did you find the taster session informative, interesting and/or useful?
12. Do you feel you learnt something from the taster sessions?
13. Do you feel it more or less likely that you will investigate the possibility of becoming an OU student (or indeed taking up any sort of study) after attending the session.
14. Do you have any other comments at all about the sessions either positive, negative or indifferent?