



Praxis Projects 21-22

Here are details of all our current projects. You will see that we're engaged in activities across a wide range of themes relating to teaching and learning in Higher Education and we'd love the opportunity to tell you more – or even to explore collaborations where your interests overlap with ours. We've included contact details for all the project leads, or you can [email the Praxis team \(wels-praxis@open.ac.uk\)](mailto:wels-praxis@open.ac.uk).

Project Lead	Project Title	Project Summary
Alison Glover alison.glover@open.ac.uk	Effective mentoring in Initial Teacher Education – what works and why?	The Open University Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Partnership, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Programme's student teachers and those who support their training, contributed to interviews, discussion groups or submitted audio or written reflections on approaches to effective mentoring. Some of the critical elements of the mentoring process reported include the importance of a trusting relationship between the mentor and student teacher, the encouragement of self-reflection and supporting student teachers to observe a range of teaching styles. As a result of the research, new support materials for the PGCE Programme's mentors have been developed, alongside a publication of 10 case studies that

		showcase effective mentoring approaches in schools across the Partnership.
<p>Azumah Dennis</p> <p>azumah.dennis@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Professional doctorates negotiating diverse knowledge landscapes</p>	<p>The Knowledge Landscapes project explored how Professional Doctorate students negotiated the impact of new knowledge on their personal and professional identities. Participants identified impacts on their own thinking and identity and on their professional work. The project concluded that the Professional Doctorate can be a time of disruption, subversion and challenge and that research can inform, overlap and sometimes unframe practice.</p>
<p>Danielle Pullen</p> <p>danielle.pullen@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Peer-to-peer mentoring network for younger learners on level 1 modules: impact on student support and retention</p>	<p>This report summarises the findings from the first peer-to-peer mentoring pilot initiative in the Open University's School of Languages and Applied Linguistics (LAL), which took place during the 2021-2022 academic year. The report outlines how peer mentoring supported not only students new to studying at Higher Education (HE) level in the Open University's distance learning context during their first year of study, but also in what way it facilitated and enabled the development of the skills and confidence of the mentors providing this one-to-one support. Furthermore, this report establishes an effective way of rolling out peer mentoring across the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, how the mentors' efforts should be recognised and how recruitment and matching of mentors and mentees can be enhanced to enable successful mentoring partnerships.</p>

<p>Erica Borgstrom erica.borgstrom@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>Improving feedback for End of Module Assessments (EMA) resubmissions</u></p>	<p>Feedback is important in distance education to enable students to know how they can improve their future assignments. When a student fails their module and has the opportunity to resubmit the final assignment, they may find themselves in a situation where their motivation and understanding of their module is challenged. Within the Health and Social Care curriculum area of The Open University, we examined the experiences of students who were in this situation in order to determine their preferences for feedback. We, therefore, trialled two formats of feedback to observe the effect, if any, they had on completion rates of resubmission and pass rates at resubmission. We also collected information about the process of producing this feedback during the conflation period from a range of stakeholders. High-level survey findings indicated that students who were surveyed said they wanted feedback, with as much information as possible. This informed the two formats of feedback trialled, focusing on written individualised feedback delivered via emailed letters. During the October 2020 conflation period, seven out of ten Health and Social Care modules successfully participated in the trial. Quantitative analysis indicates that neither feedback format was better than the other in improving completion and pass rates; this varied on a module-by-module basis and all results were not statistically significant. Follow-up surveys and qualitative interviews with students indicate that students found tutor support important for improving their motivation and understanding of how to improve their assignments. Process evaluation indicated that module teams</p>
---	--	---

		<p>experienced variation in terms of time involved in producing feedback letters and differing views on who could produce feedback and in which format it should be delivered. Overall, the findings do not indicate a clear direction for action for the provision of feedback with the intention to improve resubmission completions and pass rates.</p>
<p>Gemma Ryan gemma.ryan@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>Using the OU foundation degree curriculum to support trainee nursing associates to develop professional identity.</u></p> <p><u>'A framework to effectively promote professional identity in nursing associates: a realist ethnographic study'</u></p>	<p>This ethnographic study conducted surveys, focus groups and interviews with trainee nursing associates and people working with trainee nursing associates. From the data collected it concluded that the trainee nursing associate, their team, employer, the university, and key organisations such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) should collaboratively act to promote the professional identity of nursing associates. As a result, a framework of interventions for the OU to promote the professional socialisation/identity formation of nursing associates was produced.</p>
<p>Helen Hendry helen.hendry@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>Student as partners. Student and staff module co-creation through 'change laboratories'</u></p>	<p>This project tested a new approach to module co-creation with master's in education students and staff. Using a Developmental Work Research approach and Change Laboratory method of interactive online workshops we co-created materials that reflected the diversity of experiences of our student population and gathered student ideas for tasks and activities to be used in the module that reflect students' diverse ways of learning. We propose a way forward for co-creation on other modules using Change Laboratories.</p>

<p>Jackie Musgrave jackie.musgrave@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>How can we work with students to promote and develop good academic conduct?</u></p>	<p>Plagiarism remains a significant threat to all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), both nationally and internationally. This qualitative study included a survey (completed by 26 students) and a semi-structured interview to explore students' knowledge and understanding of academic conduct. The findings reveal that students use a range of resources, not just one. The role of their tutor is instrumental in supporting students to develop their academic skills, especially for students with low previous qualifications, and the role is highly valued by students. The findings have implications about the importance of guiding and reminding students about good academic conduct throughout their studies. There are also considerations about staff knowledge and understanding about the difference between poor academic conduct and plagiarism, suggesting that there is a need for a consistent approach to training to develop a shared understanding of the complex issues relating to academic conduct.</p>
<p>Jane Dorrian jane.dorrian@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>What is a tutorial? An exploration of 'learning event literacy' on student experience</u></p>	<p>The learning events that student attend, whether face-to-face or remotely, are intrinsically linked to their level of engagement. At the Open University all 'live' learning events are referred to as tutorials, but there is no definition of what this term means and what types of pedagogic approach students can expect to receive. Using 'tutorial' as an umbrella term to cover the full breadth of provision limits opportunities for students to develop their learning event literacy and match their expectations to the experience they receive. The better the match between student expectation and received</p>

		<p>experience the greater the likelihood of ongoing engagement and success. This project explored the information sources that students use to develop their learning activity literacy, looked at the characteristics of learning activities currently taking place in tutorials and investigated the impact of delivering a session with a clearly defined pedagogic approach. The findings showed that there is a wide range of different pedagogic practice currently being labelled a tutorial and this diversity could be resulting in a mismatch between student expectations and their experiences. Providing a clearer description of the intended content and delivery of the taught session was beneficial in reducing student anxiety and enabling them to feel positive about their role on the session.</p>
<p>Jim Lusted jim.lusted@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>What might a Black Sport and Fitness Student Network look like? A student-led investigation</u></p>	<p>The project took a staff-student collaborative approach to exploring how peer support might be designed to enhance the learning experiences of black students on Sport & Fitness modules. Participants in the study felt that existing spaces for peer support (formal and informal) on modules were not effective and so rarely engaged with. A student-only, supportive online space specifically for those with a similar lived experience could help black students develop a sense of belonging, reduce feelings of isolation/exclusion, and learn from each other's experiences of studying OU modules.</p>
<p>Karen Storey karen.storey@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>Are Practice Tutors equipped with the knowledge and skills to give written constructive and developmental feedback to</u></p>	<p>Prior to the introduction of the new Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Education Standards for Student Supervision Support and Assessment standards (SSSA) Practice Tutors (PTs) did not assess nursing and nursing associate students during practice. However,</p>

	<p><u>nursing students following a Practice Assessment Interview?</u></p>	<p>the introduction of the SSSA standards led to the introduction of the Practice Assessment interview (PAI). It is now part of the PT's role to assess nursing students. This involves a professional discussion surrounding the student's clinical practice. PTs have received training following the introduction of the SSSA standards on the role of the academic assessor but no specific information/training of what constructive written feedback looks like. Guidance has also been given as to what is expected during a PAI by the module team and how to carry out the PAI. However, there is an assumption that each PT is aware of how to provide constructive written feedback and how to feedforward. The project focused on what actions are required to give the PTs the skills and knowledge needed to give quality feedback enhancing student performance and in turn the reputation of the Open University.</p>
<p>Karina von Lindeiner-Stráský <u>karina.von-lindeiner-strasky@open.ac.uk</u></p>	<p><u>Follow-up to: Web-based Machine Translation tools (WBMT) as a valuable skill in language teaching and learning: the practitioners' view</u></p>	<p>In October 2020, a team of Languages and Applied Linguistics (LAL) Central Academics and Associate Lecturers (ALs) from German and Spanish, led by Karina von Lindeiner-Stráský, successfully carried out the Praxis-funded scholarship 'An investigation into web-based machine translation (WBMT) in the use of digital language learning, teaching, and assessment'. The project employed mixed methodology (including surveys, focus group interviews, and task force meetings) to produce evidence-based guidelines for the implementation of Web-based Machine Translation tools (WBMT) into LAL's curriculum, assessment, and teaching strategy.</p>

		<p>The project met with great interest in the student, Associate Lecturer (AL) and Central Academic body. The data collected exceeded the project team's expectations in terms of complexity and depth. Thus, the team hired a professional data analyst to help provide an in-depth analysis of the results.</p> <p>The current project built on this successful performance by taking these results to the next level. It implemented, observed, and analysed the knowledge gained, put it into context and into praxis, and further disseminated it.</p>
<p>Kate Breeze kate.breeze@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>Exploring the study journey of level three female students from South Asian backgrounds</u></p>	<p>Using a mixed-method approach, the project aimed to explore the experiences of female students from South Asian background in relation to the awarding gaps at level 3. Recognising the importance of intersectionality, we set out to examine the effects of con-current study at level 3, relationship between study, work and family, gender, identity and belonging as well as support at the Open University (OU), its curriculum and teaching and learning practices. Together with the student participants we uncover important insights to the students' journeys and propose initiatives that can be put in place at the School / University to bridge the awarding gap between White and Asian student.</p>
<p>Renu Bhandari renu.bhandari@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>Exploring the transitions of Neurodiverse Access students to level one study: Narratives of study skills and support</u></p>	<p>This study focused on the following three research questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What forms of support do neurodivergent students transitioning from Access to Level 1 study value? 2. What barriers to success may the current access curriculum create

		<p>for neurodivergent students?</p> <p>3. How can neurodivergent students transitioning from Access to level 1 be better supported?</p> <p>Students from the three access modules moving to any level 1 module were included in the sample. This paper focuses on the findings from the five remotely conducted in-depth interviews and an associated photo-elicitation task. Through a thematic analysis, a number of key themes were developed: finding their own way, support, quality of tutor support, wider systems of support, understanding assessment, facing new systems, the jump, language of learning and referencing issues. The paper explores these with examples and highlights how these might inform future practices to improve transitions for neurodivergent students. The paper also highlights the limitations institutional-focused research with these groups' places upon the scope of this kind of research.</p>
<p>Sarah Lightfoot sarah.lightfoot@open.ac.uk</p>	<p><u>The Thinking for Myself Project: creating an online environment that enables undergraduate distance learners independent thinking</u></p>	<p>This Associate Lecturer (AL) led Praxis project arose from an observation that there appeared to be a gap between students engaging with course content and subsequently demonstrating their understanding in their own words in their assignments. The project's overarching aim was the creation and provision of an online 'thinking environment' (TE) (Kline, 2015) for students - a more democratic learning community assisted by supportive technologies; one which provided a safe space for students to think independently, without interruption, in the presence of others, about module content 'Exploring perspectives on young children's lives</p>

		<p>and learning' (E109) and their developing academic identity and voice. Although the project was AL-initiated, students were co-creators of the process. The establishment of a TE depended on their willingness to volunteer, to be active and present in order to nurture their own, and their peers', independent thinking.</p>
<p>Sylvia Warnecke sylvia.warnecke@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>eTwinning on 'Learning to teach languages in primary school' – enhancing students' primary languages teaching and employability skills as well as their pupils' learning</p>	<p>This report summarises the findings from the in-module eTwinning pilot on the Open University's School of Languages and Applied Linguistics Teachers Learning to Teach Languages(TELT) primary teacher Continuing Professional Development(CPD) programme, which took place during the 2021-2022 academic year. It outlines how the in-module eTwinning enhanced the participating TELT students' language learning and teaching skills development; boosted teachers' and pupils' motivation for language learning; increased teacher confidence; improved all stakeholders' digital skills; facilitated co-creation between teachers and pupils and enabled significant professional partnership and collaboration. The study found that in-module eTwinning provides a focus and purpose to language learning and teaching in the primary classroom and can have long-term benefits for teachers and pupils through the establishment of long-standing school partnerships.</p>
<p>Sylvia Warnecke sylvia.warnecke@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>'Learning languages with senior learners' – developing a digital badge for innovative social care professional learning</p>	<p>This project aimed at enhancing the employability impact of the study of the non-accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course 'Learning languages with senior learners', designed to upskill social care professionals in using engagement with languages and cultures as a non-medical intervention to improve</p>

		<p>the health and wellbeing of care home residents with degenerative brain disease. Our objective was the development of a digital badge that aligns with CPD frameworks and is recognised by the relevant professional bodies across the UK. Our scoping review established: the needs of the target audience in relation to professional recognition for career development; by what means the learning can be made accessible for social care staff without formal training and function as a pathway to those qualifications; the current situation in the social care sector regarding the requirements for and recognition of continuous professional learning; and the changes in educational, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of social care staff.</p>
<p>Zsuzsanna Barkanyi zsuzsanna.barkanyi@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety</p>	<p>In online and distance learning contexts, students with and without mental health issues worry to the same extent when they have to speak in a foreign language, however, their main fears are different. Students with mental health issues fear that their self-image is threatened, while students with no such conditions are worried about their inadequate knowledge and performance in the target language. Mitigating strategies that students apply to cope with Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) can be grouped into three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) skills-oriented strategies (ii) general strategies in the online and distance learning context (iii) self-talk strategies