Discussion Paper **8**

Title: **MOAR: Making Our Aspirations Reality**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

Consider the potential to engage students in mapping their own learning gain using a technologically enabled tool;
Facilitate students to identify personal development planning opportunities through sharing their experiential learning inside and outside the curriculum;
Work in partnership with students to iteratively define and adapt a mapping tool for different subjects and career paths.

Session Outline

As more students enter University than ever before under an increasing fee regime, the range of student needs has widened and their expectations have risen. Consequentially, the requirement for Universities to set expectations early on and support the transition of students into Higher Education has grown (Yorke 2000). Research continually highlights the growing importance for graduates to leave University with an extensive range of "soft skills" (Tomlinson 2008) to graduate entirely employer-ready. These challenges can be addressed through strong inductions and comprehensive academic guidance support programmes (Lowe & Cooke 2003) including direction on how to address weaknesses (Jarvis 2006 cited in Thiry et al. 2011). This session describes a staff-student partnership to meet these expectations.

Loughborough University Student Union identified a need to improve the Personal Tutoring system to encompass experiential learning beyond the academic curriculum and enable students to appreciate their own worth. The School of Science (SoS), consisting of 1850 students and 120 staff, have responded by creating an electronic mapping tool and accompanying personal development programme which promotes student reflection. This comprehensive planning tool was designed to operate across the entirety of the student-body and bring together both subject-specific knowledge/skills and the soft skills gleaned from other experiences outside the curriculum e.g clubs and societies involvement. The inherent adaptability that was necessary to build in to this programme as a result of the diversity of the subject range in the School has resulted in a system that has transferability to not only other subjects but also other institutions. The presenters in the panel session will focus on the areas of relevance to their developmental role; pedagogy and response to student feedback (Panchmatia), technological adaptability (Davies) and quality assurance and enhancement (Dann) highlighting problem-solving on the ground and integration with the University strategy.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is a follows;

Dann will go first to explain the context in terms of the University Strategy, the wider QA and QE challenges e.g. in relation to demonstrating student learning gain and the TEF plus the approach to the implementation plan to manage staff expectations and encourage student engagement

Panchmatia will then highlight the pedagogic approach across the different subject-areas, inclusion of different staff groups (academic, technical and support services) and students at every stage of the development. This will include the creation of the MOAR wheel with 80 reflective statements separated into 4 different headings, Interpersonal skills, Professional skills, Core Knowledge and Subject Specific skills and enabling the terminology and technology to be student friendly e.g. how the wheel fills with colour depending on the student's rating of the statements, visually displaying how confident they are feeling in that area. The tool creates a visual snapshot at key contact points over the entirety of the degree programme as students plot their progress. The accompanying academic tutoring programme will also be described.

Davis will explain how the technological aspects were developed and how her prior experience of Loughborough as a student herself supported the successful development. This included tailoring the tool to be used on platforms most used by students and different media usage. The self-populating wheel will be demonstrated, along with the outcomes. Finally how the integration of the students own experiential learning in use of the tool was fed back into the support programme to ensure that neither good practice or lessons learnt were lost by creation of a skill solver activity.

Finally, Dann will present the student feedback we have collected through focus groups and surveys about the Academic Guidance module and the online tool. Dann will highlight any changes we plan to make to the next iteration of the module in light of the feedback.

By covering the whole package from strategic goals through the technological and practical aspects to iterative feedback loop, it is expected that the session will raise many questions e.g how differences between different subjects were accommodated, how staff were engaged, how the programme was rolled out over levels 4-7, how students from different academic, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds were accommodated as well as disability support while managing student feedback/expectations.

As question and answers are taken Davis will capture emerging themes on flipchart paper, and also note any issues that come out of discussions in an 'issue park' for the panel and others to take away with them in order to strengthen the model with further development.

References

Thiry, H., & Laursen, S., & Hunter, A., (2011) What Experiences Help Students Become Scientists?: A Comparative Study of Research and Other Sources of Personal and Professional Gains for STEM Undergraduates, Journal of Higher Education, 82 (4), pp. 357-388.

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Yorke, M., (2000) Smoothing the transition into higher education: what can be learned from student non-completion, Journal of Institutional Research, 9 (1), pp. 35-47.

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