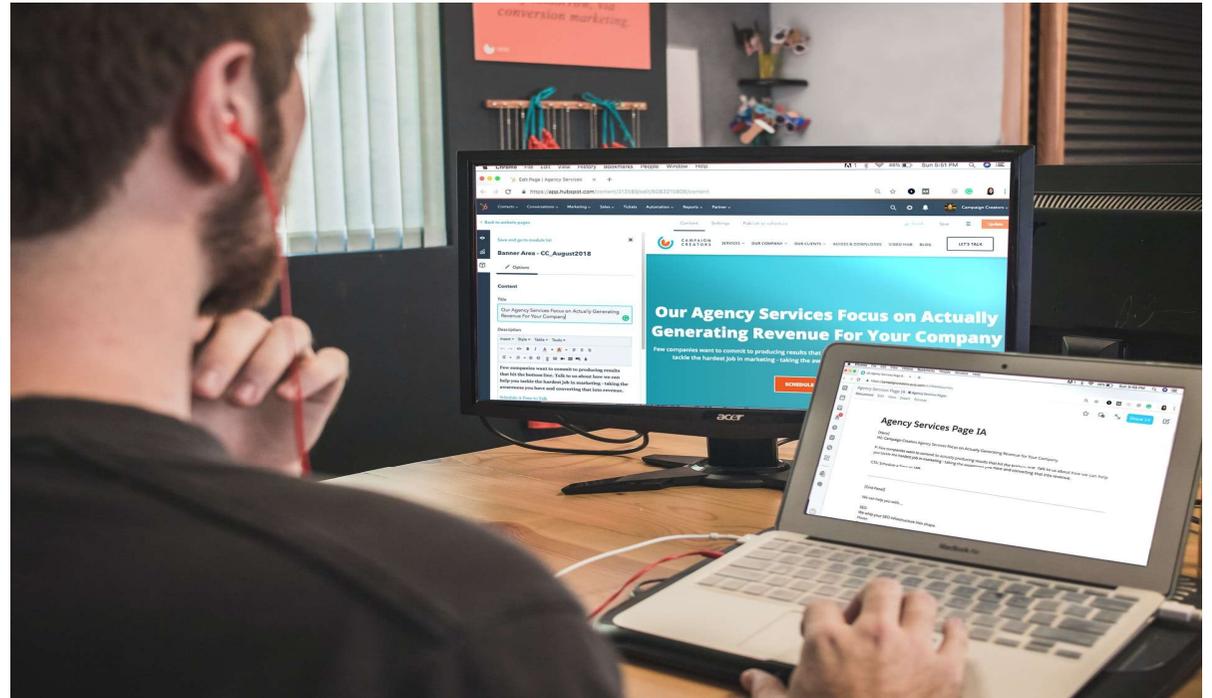


Reading and
writing blogs:
How can students
influence
teachers' practice?



Unsplash, CC0, Campaign Creators

Dr Jenny Scoles

ENGAGE

May 25th 4-5pm

Workshop objectives

- Introduce blogging, specifically in learning & teaching
- Showcase Teaching Matters blog
- Explore 'engagement' with blogging
- Present research findings
- Highlight different ways student + blogging can influence teacher's practice
- Discussion questions

What is academic blogging?

- Most posts are short, concise and communicate ideas or concepts in broad general terms.
- Writing for blogs requires different skills from scholarly writing; the writing is more informal and conversational.

Sometimes a blog post will be more valuable than a book, because

- a. It is open access so more people can reach it;*
- b. It is shorter, so busier people can read it;*
- c. It is simpler language than more scholarly work, so more practitioners can understand it, and*
- d. It is more immediate, so there is less “time” lost between my thinking the thought, and it reaching someone to benefit him/her.*

[Academic blogging revisited: Thinking, writing, action](#), Maha Bali, Reflecting Allowed

What academic blogging is *not*...

- An announcement channel
- Promotion of an event
- A repository of documents
- Accusatory or offensive
- A rant!



Credit: Pixabay, geralt, CC0

Teaching Matters

[Teaching Matters blog – Promoting, discussing and celebrating teaching at The University of Edinburgh](#)

Teaching Matters blog

Promoting, discussing and celebrating teaching at The University of Edinburgh



[Home](#) [About](#) [Contributors](#) [Podcast](#) [Browse by theme](#) [Browse by School/Centre](#) [Resources](#)



Teaching Awards 2022: Online Ceremony



23RD MAY 2022

Managing the upgrade of Learn from a stability and security perspective

Newsletter

[Sign up](#) to receive our monthly newsletter

Subscribe

Sign up to receive email notifications when a new blog post or podcast episode is published

Established
January 2016

Multi-authored blog site

- Learning and teaching practice
- Professional & Academic Staff and all students
- Solicited and volunteered content
- Two themes: Hot Topic & Learning and Teaching Enhancement (2 month duration)
- Weekly podcast episodes
- Monthly newsletter
- Student engagement officer and student podcast producer

Student writers and illustrators

Creating a community of Freshers: A new culture in engineering education



Original illustration by Li-Yi Huang, Edinburgh College of Art student.

In this post, Borislava Georgieva and Azwa Iman, two students who took the Engineering Principles 1 course redesigned by Dr Simone Dimartino, reflect on their experience of being part of a virtual community of engineers of all interests and abilities. This post is part of the Learning & Teaching Enhancement theme: [Building Community](#).



BORISLAVA GEORGIEVA

Borislava is currently in her second year of studying here at The University of Edinburgh. She is very passionate about her degree and especially interested in Nuclear engineering. She is also part of the Chemical Engineering society in the role of Social secretary, and was recently voted Industry Liaison for the next academic year.



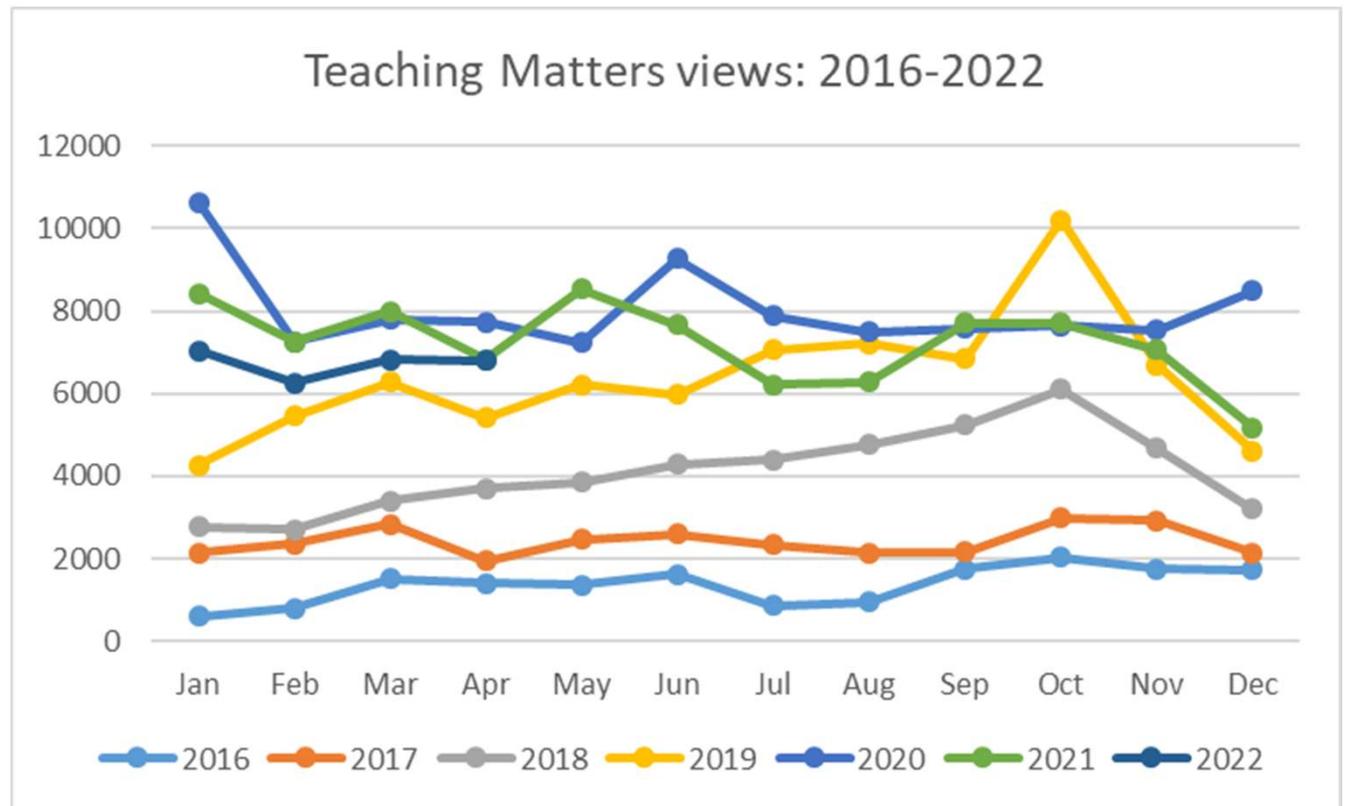
AZWA IMAN

Azwa is a second year student studying Chemical Engineering at the University of Edinburgh. She is the current second year student representative as well as the Staff and Alumni Liaison of the Chemical Engineering Society. Her main interests lie in the Sustainability and Safety sectors within the field.

[Creating a community of Freshers: A new culture in engineering education – Teaching Matters blog](#)

Teaching Matters stats

- 903 blog posts published
- Over 700 authors
- 386,125 all-time views
- 150-350 views per day
- 16,000 in 2016
to 86,000 in 2021



Beyond the metrics...



Tim Fawns
@timbocop

Of about 150 @UoE_Teaching blog posts in 2020, I wrote or co-wrote the top 3.

Recognition is rare. Stuff modesty, I'm tweeting about this! 😊 (also, thanks for reading the posts!).



Top Ten Teaching Matters Posts of 2020
teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk

07:37 · 16/01/2021 · Twitter Web App

10:44



Mary Jacob L&T
@MaryJacobTEL1

Clear summary of seminal pedagogical lit to help make learning meaningful, good for new #AberPGCTHE folks. Learning and teaching approaches in Higher Education: Promoting deep learning through constructive alignment teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/learning-and-t... @UoE_Teaching



teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk
Learning and teaching approaches in Higher Education: Promoting deep learning through co...

09:45 · 26/11/2021 · Twitter Web App



Tweet your reply



Oh my gosh, this is so exciting!!! It looks great, thank you so much!! We did it, yeay! My first ever blog, I can't believe it. 😊 Thank you both so very much!! With best wishes, and a definitive boost to keep working on the journal article.



@DrMarkCarrigan

After 15 years of academic blogging it's quite nice to work somewhere that takes blog posts seriously as academic outputs, for the first time since I was at LSE in the early 2010s.

15:53 · 19/05/2022 · Twitter Web App

9 Retweets 43 Likes



Promoting engagement

Dr Somia Imran, a recent PhD graduate in Clinical Psychology and a postgraduate tutor in the School of Health in Social Science (SHSS), shares how she is enhancing students' self-determination using a theory-based approach in her tutorial teaching...

[Enhancing students' self-determination: A theory-based approach in tutoring – Teaching Matters blog](#)

9,860 views since October 2019



Promoting your Teaching Matters blog post or podcast episode

Add to social media
Share your post on your social media platforms.

Convert the URL to a shorter [edin.ac link](#).

Pose a question to invite discussion or debate.

Promote yourself
Share your post with your school/department marketing and communications colleagues. Suggest they include it in their blog, newsletter or webpage.

Add the title of your blog post and URL link to the bottom of your email signature.

Use in your teaching
Add the blog post to your teaching reading list, if appropriate.

Share with your students in a class or tutorial, and invite them to share their viewpoint.

External colleagues
Send it to external colleagues who have invited you to visit, collaborate or present as an example of your work.

Share good practice
Highlight your post to your line managers or colleagues who are asking for examples of sharing good practice.

Consider repurposing it for publication on [THE Campus](#).

Email teachingmatters@ed.ac.uk for any further help or advice



Data Collection

- Two online surveys (Summer 2019)
 - N=101 contributors; 39 readers
 - Reader habits, barriers and benefits, conversations with others, and impact of blogging.
- One focus group (Experienced Teacher network)
- One editor interview (Charlie Jeffrey)
- Twitter trace pilot

PTAS award: *Conversations, community and collegiality: Exploring the effect of blogging on teaching and learning practice*):

- 20 Interviews (internal and external readers, and contributors)

Benefits of writing a blog

(compared to other forms of academic communications)

- Immediacy: “It gets new ideas out into the public sphere faster than does academic publishing.”
- Reaching a wider audience; jargon-free
- Helpful writing exercise: “Forces you to simplify and tighten up your ideas.”
- Freedom: of format, of conformity, of opinion, of academic voice.

“It **covers a middle ground** that is/was largely unrepresented in academic writing, namely that between idea generation/brainstorming/initial discussion and published work”

Benefits of reading a blog post

“Digestible, easy to read, more personalised”.

- Accessible
- Informal
- Personable
- Brevity/short
- “Easy to read on the bus”

“Blogs are an informal form of reflection. Instead of being bound by academic conventions requiring references, blogs allow the flexibility of expressing thoughts”

HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ THE TEACHING MATTERS BLOG?

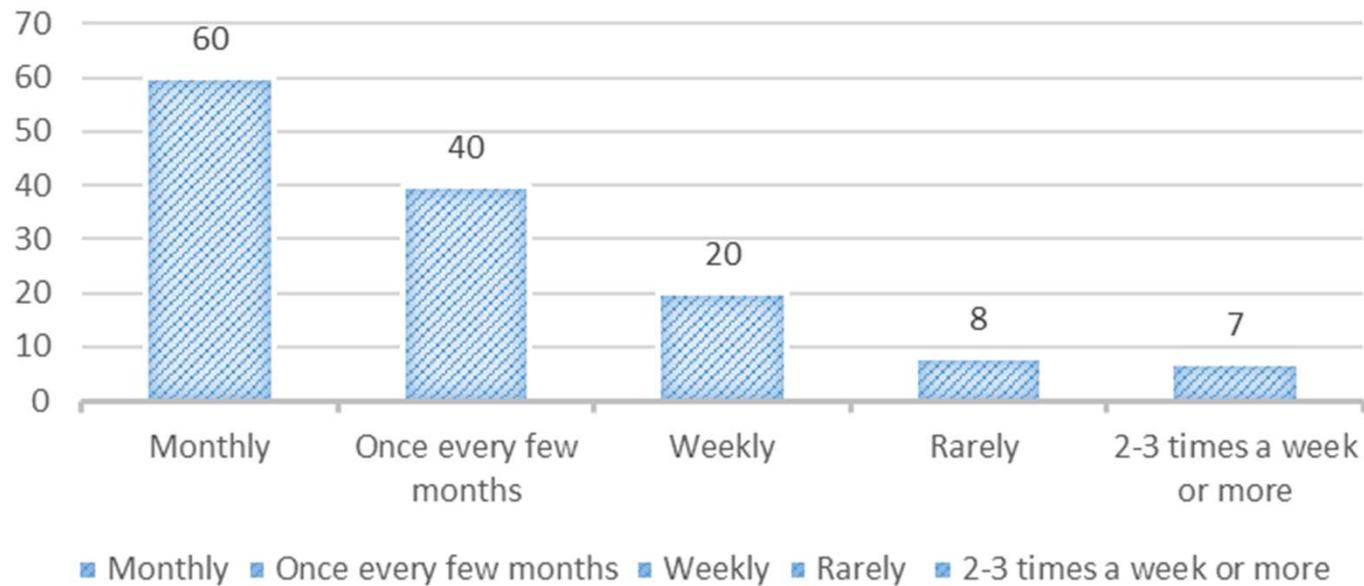


Figure 5:
How often
respondents
read Teaching
Matters blog

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO READ TEACHING MATTERS BLOG POSTS?

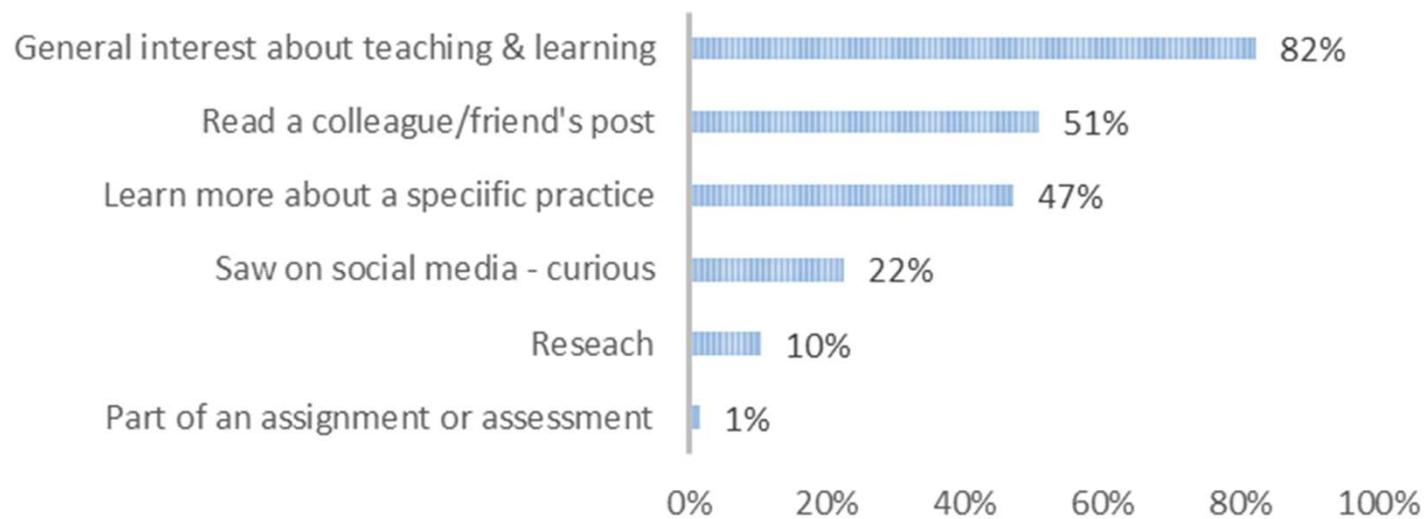


Figure 3:
Percentage of respondents (n=134) indicating their motivational reasons to read Teaching Matters blog (could choose more than one)

WHAT SORT OF TOPICS DO YOU ENJOY READING ABOUT?

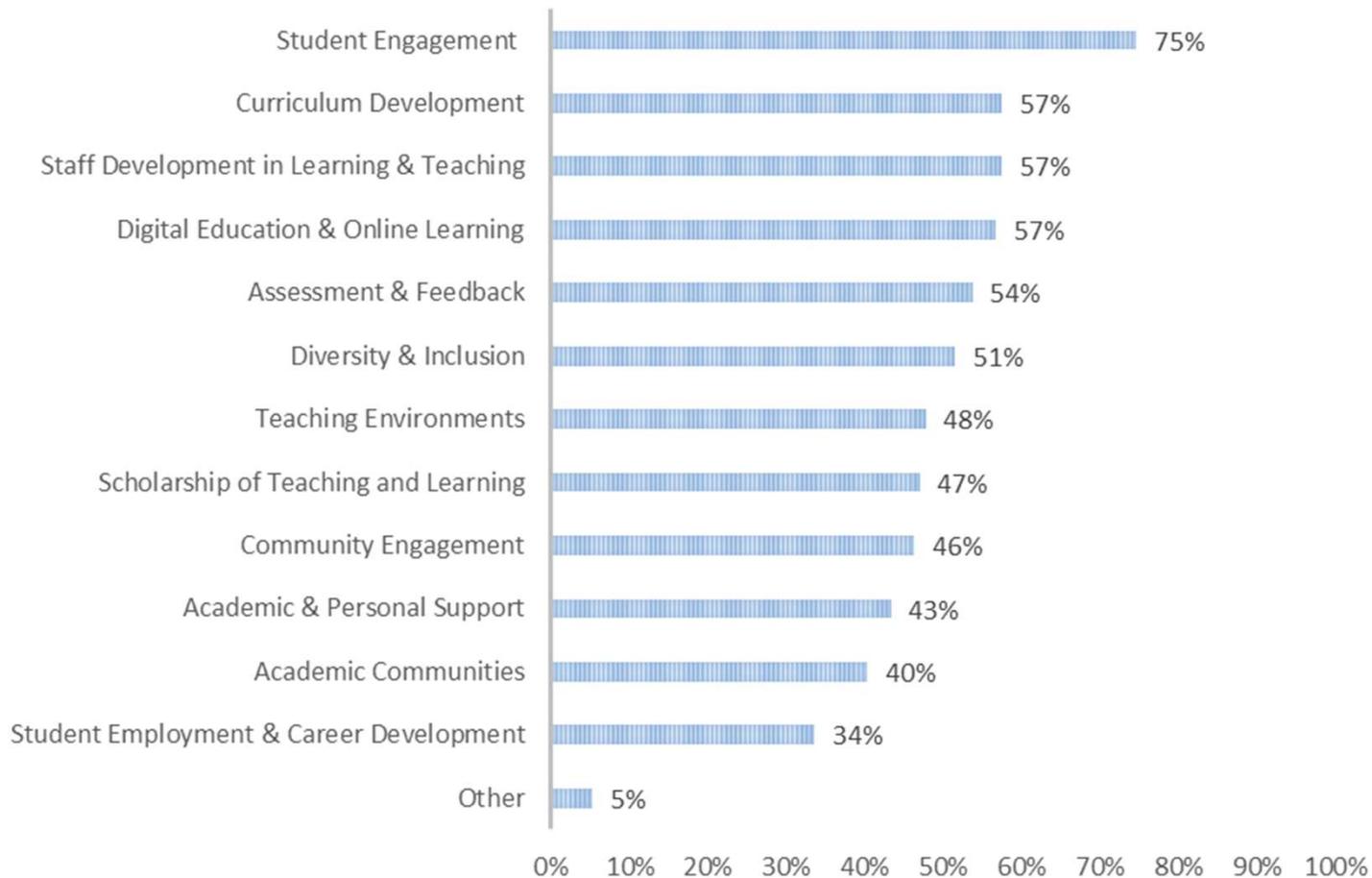


Figure 1:
Percentage of respondents (n=134) who selected topic they enjoyed reading about (could choose more than one)

WHAT STYLE OF WRITING DO YOU LIKE READING?

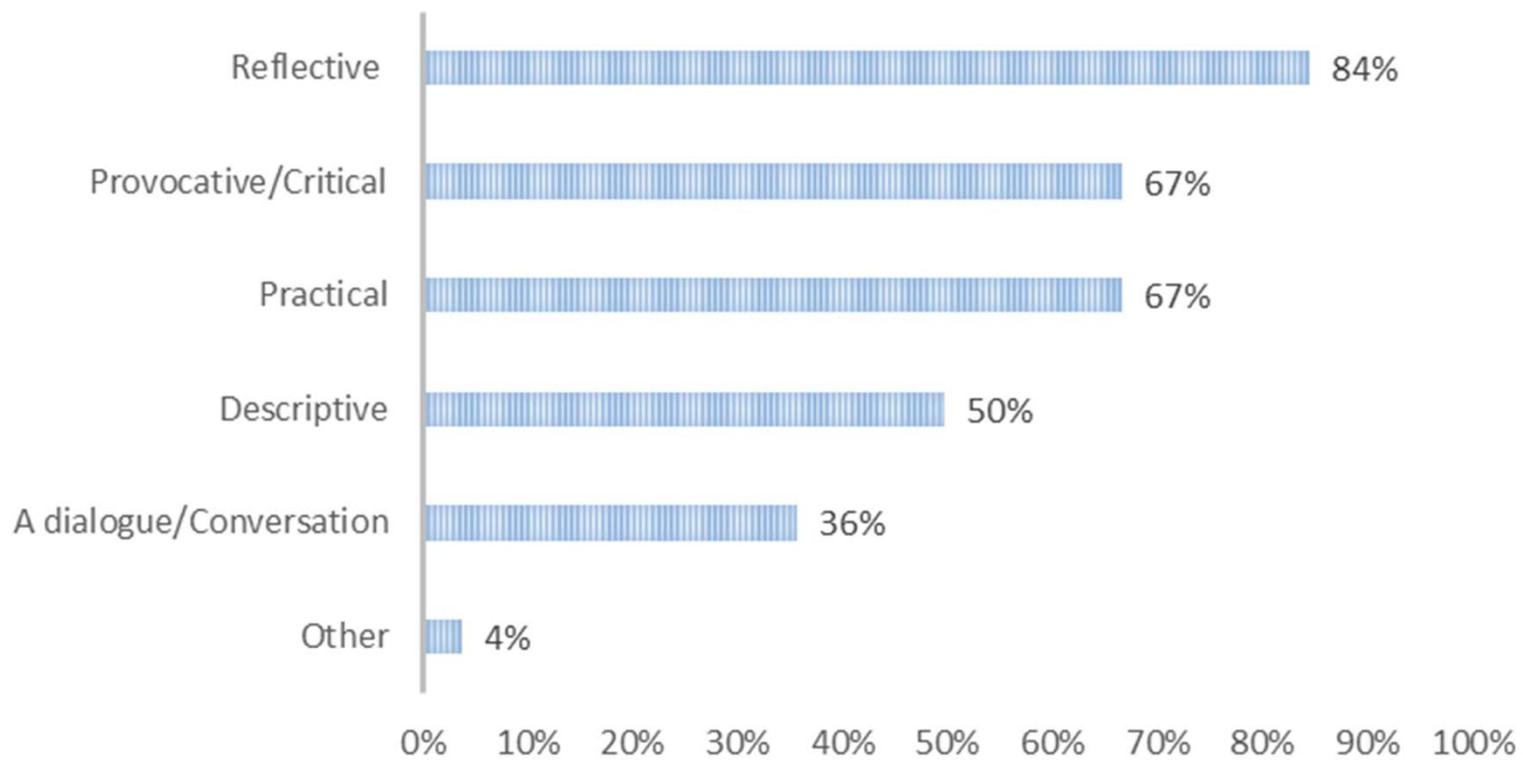


Figure 2:
Percentage of respondents (n=135) who selected one or more of the different styles of writing that they like reading

Different styles

Good teaching – student and teacher perspectives from the Conservation Science course

- Reflective; descriptive; teacher-student dialogue

Spotlight on Joint Honours degree: A student's perspective

- Reflective; practical advice for academics: “**What would I propose?**”

Do you see me?

- Provocative/critical; descriptive (narrative); use of emotion

Reframing “them and us” constructively.

Stimulating conversations between writer and reader

Are you aware of your blog post stimulating any online conversations between yourself and students? 14/101

“I tweeted the post and had many students in Edinburgh and staff outside Edinburgh commenting positively about it, I don't know if that counts as a "conversation". Some of the students' comments were very complimentary (which I find very rewarding). The outside staff were commenting on the photo of the computer lab in Murchison House, saying it was a very nice lab!”

Are you aware of your blog post stimulating any offline conversations with yourself and students? 18/101

“With students, discussions focus on reflecting on how they learn, and the reasons for introducing more playful elements to teaching and learning spaces.”

A new way of measuring impact...

Reflection:

“My favourite are where we have students and staff both reflecting on a course or practice. This has led to discussions around the value to students of a growing awareness of education as a process.”

Inspiring others:

“Some of my other PALS Leaders have adopted a similar model.”

Employment opportunities:

“When applying for an intern position at the Widening Participation office of the University I used the blog post to showcase my passion and achievement in that field. I have been fortunate to get hired and I believe the blog post played a significant part in making my application successful. I believe it's because the Teaching Matters blog is seen as a respectable source by my employers.”

Collaboration:

“usually it's a chance for us to have shared posts with students. So, I'm currently having a conversation with a couple of students who want to put in a post to Teaching Matters and we'll do it together. So that kind of opportunity to collaborate between staff and students, I think, is one of the key points, but they're all part of the community.”

Sharing practice/professional development:

“There's one called 'Student peer review: student feedback on staff feedback'...that's one that's thought-provoking ...The words of the students in it are really useful, I think, just I suppose because it's about feedback. They've kind of presented a student perspective, even though they're not students. So in it, there are some things that we're doing and I think, 'oh good, yeah. We're not just the only ones'. But there are other things in there, thinking – and maybe this is me being rather instrumental – 'oh, this would be good for colleagues to read, so that it's not just me saying this to them, that they're seeing that, actually, it's part of a wider thing'.”

Why would students blog about Learning & Teaching?

- (In)direct feedback - Valuable insights and experiences of teaching and learning at University of Edinburgh
- Reflective exercise
- Professional development
- Digital/social media skills
- Love of writing
- Suggested by academic staff
- Students are increasingly involved and in the driving seat of innovative learning and teaching practices
- ??

Why would academic staff want to read a student blog post?

- Interest/curiosity
- Feedback
- New ways of thinking
- Student perspective
- ??



Sincerely Media, Unsplash, Cc0

Discussion questions

1. What could some barriers be for a student blogging about L&T?
2. What sort of L&T topics would be useful to blog about (on Teaching Matters or other sites)?
[Student and staff perspective]
3. What sort of tone or language should students be mindful of?

How to sign up to...

- Blog: <https://edin.ac/2GpQdPF>
- Newsletter: <https://edin.ac/3oocXGh>
- Podcast: <https://edin.ac/2ZXgZMn>
- Twitter: @uoe_teaching
- Instagram: uoe_teaching
- LinkedIn: Teaching Matters

Interested in contributing? teachingmatters@ed.ac.uk