Blog 1: Introduction

Submission for Fellow of the Higher Education Academy

I am currently Senior Lecturer in <department> and Head of <name of section/institute> at <School name>, University of Edinburgh. My role is to co-ordinate the service <in department name>; to provide <expertise in that setting including for external support outwith the University>; as well as oversee and provide <specialised> teaching for final year students (A1, A2). Final year students have arrived at this point with a wide variety of life experience, some have entered the course straight from school, another group enter via the graduate entry programme where primarily they are graduates primarily from North America but also world-wide, other students can be mature students who have spent part of their working life in another career. This means that the groups can have a very wide range of ages, backgrounds and life experience (V4). Groups of 6-8 students have 1 week (a total of 24 groups or weeks) with the department where the majority of teaching is case-based as well as tutorials on <specialised> topics which the students will often select. The main focus of teaching here is to crystallise what the students have been taught in the preceding years: improve the student’s ability to formulate <solutions to commonly presented problems in a work-based environment> as well as develop a logical approach to <their specialised work> (K1,K2). Other areas, not directly involving the subject <specialism> which are also taught and assessed are: client and colleague communication, time management, recording concise and accurate <> notes as well as practical skills such as <examples> (A2). After <other parts of their programme>, final year students can choose a further 3 week period in our <department> to gain further skills in this area. Feedback to students is given verbally during the <block of teaching>, where I can assess the effectiveness either immediately (e.g. <practical work-based skill>) or during the rest of the <teaching block>(A3, K5). Formal feedback is given via the online platform <name of virtual learning environment> at the end of the week (A3).

Other undergraduate teaching duties include lecturing and practical <specialised> sessions, setting and marking exam questions and essays (A1,A3). In addition, post-graduate teaching is undertaken for senior and junior <non UoE student> scholars who are qualified <practitioners> starting down the path of specialisation. This takes the form of <specialised> instruction, similar, but in greater depth than the undergraduates and also provision of lectures and seminars as well as mentoring individuals.

Over the last year I have been involved in the development of sections of the <name of School> online MSc course, providing a 5 week course on <academic area>, 1 week on <academic area 2> and part of one week on <academic topic> (A1,A3). These take the form of providing a narrated power-point presentation, discussion questions, providing multiple choice questions, participating and moderating the discussion forum as well as marking course work. Students on this course are all qualified <practitioners> but from a diverse background: different types of practice, some doing non-clinical work and, as it is on-line, from all areas of the world with associated difference in facilities, ethos and common clinical problems. These diverse groups require a course that is applicable to all participants (V1,V2,V4).

Teaching external to the university includes guest lecturing to undergraduates on a BSc (Hons) <programme name> course for Napier University on <specialised topic area>, and providing continuing professional development nationally and internationally to <specialised practitioners in multiple domains>(V1,V4).
Inclusive learning and teaching.

This blog focuses on my thoughts after participating in the University of Southampton’s MOOC on inclusive learning and teaching.

This course was very useful as, although I was aware of some aspects of making teaching materials inclusive due to a member of the family being dyslexic, it enabled me to gain a fuller picture of the range of ways that materials can be inclusive. I thought this was a very useful way of looking at teaching materials as previously I’ve thought about making them accessible rather than inclusive: this may mean that the material is converted for a specific set of circumstances rather than being designed from the beginning to be as inclusive as possible i.e. Universal Design. [1] (A1) I was also not aware of the impact that the format of written materials has on inclusivity. Until this time, I was not making full use of word document styles such as headings and figure captions. I’m now aware that use of these allows automated text readers to more fully capture the structure of the document, improving inclusivity (A2, A4). I had often thought that creating PDF documents was a useful way to format materials as it would prevent the document being modified and standardised formatting. I now realise that this is very restrictive in terms of accessibility and will make documents available in word as this seems to lend itself to accessibility for text documents. I will also now consider alternative formats to present the same information, be that video, audio etc (K2, K4). I am aware that students frequently request to record my lectures which I’m happy to do so and that also the University has recently started using Media Hopper Relay to allow recording and uploading of lectures but that a University policy of opt-in or opt-out has not yet been finalised. I have used the system once and the advantage is that it is fully automated and therefore extremely easy to use (K4). Potentially there is a problem if the timings of the lecture do not coincide with the timetabled start time but this has not happened to me as yet. There is the possibility that routine recording of lectures may reduce physical attendance of students to the sessions however it may be that remote access may improve student retention of knowledge: performance in examination is more important than physical presence in the lecture room.

Reference