STUDENTS AS
CO-CREATORS

A Curriculum Design Collaboration

Towards a more inclusive, flexible and competence-based Themes in Contemporary Hispanic Studies

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Curriculum Design Collaborations (CDC) Evaluation Report

1. Where did the inspiration to do the project come from?

Whilst in general terms the student satisfaction on the module, as evidenced by the yardstick of the annual Student Module Evaluation (SME) has been relatively high, since its creation during the Learning Futures implementation, it was felt, however, that there were several key areas where there was definitely room for improvement namely in the area of EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and the continued quest to embed employability/graduate skills into the curriculum and hence bolster graduate employability.

The Co-Creators project was conceived as a result of an initial pondering of how the Level 6 core module Themes in Contemporary Hispanic Studies could potentially be adjusted to enhance its accessibility, flexibility and inclusivity and add elements (particularly in the areas of content, delivery and presentation of content, and assessment) that would allow future students to participate in such a way that no-one would feel "left out" or penalized by inflexible teaching and/or assessment methods.

There was also an underlying desire to incorporate students' voice in curriculum design. The reason for this was twofold: On the one hand, students co-leading the project should gain a better understanding of module design (i.e. the process of constructive alignment and its three key elements of syllabus content, teaching methods and assessment strategies) and the application of the UDL (Universal Design for Learning) framework and guidelines to three curricular components (teaching materials, teaching methods and assessments) with a view to minimizing barriers and customizing learning for all students. On the other hand, by allowing students to share responsibility and ownership of module design, they should develop confidence to put forward their own perspectives.

A Students as Co-creators project seemed like the perfect vehicle to address such a review of the module with a staff member working with a group of student volunteers who had either attended the module or who were still to embark upon it.

2. What did you set out to achieve?

The principal aim of the project was to gather vital feedback from the student body about how they feel about the current content, pedagogical strategies and assessment of this module and to use the data collected in order to analyze together in which areas the module could be tweaked in the

future to take account of the views expressed. After lengthy discussion amongst the project team, it was decided given the timescales and availability of students, the best approach was to produce a survey and to invite 3 distinct groups of students to participate in this. These groups consisted of Level 5 students who are yet to embark on the module (will start it next academic year), Year Abroad students – most of whom will also take the module next year although a few were on deferred placements and had already taken it – and Level 6 students who had completed the module and are soon to graduate.

The stated purpose of the project in terms of any potential modifications to assessment, content and teaching methods was to specifically integrate more 21st century skills and make the module more inclusive and flexible overall.

3. How did students and staff work together on this project?

The group embraced Microsoft Teams as the collaboration tool of choice as this allowed us to hold regular follow-up meetings online from various locations as well as permitting interactions in between our meetings via the chat facility. This was particularly helpful for quick interactions and queries between team members.
A generic mailbox was created as a single "student-facing" point of contact between the project and the students who participated in the survey (albeit that the actual access to this mailbox was limited to the staff member participant).

Staff provided guidance to students that had not undertaken research before and mixed level 6 students with level 5 students – level 6 students had done research in 2021-22 (final year project and some undertook small research projects in optional modules) and could act as mentors to their level 5 peers. We worked as a group to design our survey – a process which proved to be quite lengthy as our original list of questions was too complex and extensive to be able to effectively achieve our aims. Participants considered and reflected on the questions and at our meetings we discussed the benefits and disadvantages of certain questions and how we could consolidate these. After detailed discussions, we were able to narrow down and fine tune the survey and decided to run a pilot amongst some of the project team members. We used JISC as the platform for the survey creation. In order to protect anonymity but at the same time offer an incentive (Amazon vouchers) via a random draw we prepared a separate survey in Microsoft Forms that was embedded in the JISC one in order to keep the response data segregated from the entry into the draw. Students were shown how to manage the survey in JISC by loading a respondent list and using the tool to send invitations and then follow-up reminders. Student Project team members also used existing student Whatsapp groups to encourage participation. Reading material was provided to all student participants in respect of how to analyze (and report on) the results of a survey.

4. What kind of impact do you anticipate that your work may have on learning and teaching going forward (specific to your course/module or in a broader context)?

The data collection and analysis will inevitably provide the platform to be able to make some decisions with regards to changes to the module assessment methods, content and teaching channels that are backed up by the feedback and conclusions of the survey data. It is our view that consequently in the medium term, post-changes, this will subsequently lead to improved student engagement as the teaching strategies and assessment types will count on student input. It is hoped that this in turn will result in stronger student attainment across the board, which is also

likely to have a positive impact of levels of student satisfaction. The other aspect with a likely impact is that through any future addition of new or alternative teaching, presentation, content and assessment delivery methods, we should be able to influence better graduate outcomes and boost employment opportunities after graduation, particularly when calling up specific skills or tasks that may be relevant to workplaces.

5. Any lessons learned from working in partnership?

The Students as Co-Creators partnership project has been a very enriching experience and one which I would very much like to take part in again in the future. It has been a pleasure to work alongside students in a slightly different role to the usual lecturer/student classroom relationship. One of the observations I have made that I would consider as a lesson for any future project is that I had assumed that once the exams were over it would be an opportune time to really focus on the project but in practice, the majority of the student participants were embarking on a range of activities (work in London, work abroad, international summer school courses, etc.) which unfortunately made it rather difficult for some of them to commit to a significant number of hours a week to this project.