

# Editorial

We are delighted to welcome you to this third issue of *Education in Practice*, a journal developed and hosted by the University of Birmingham with the aim of sharing effective practice in learning and teaching and educational enhancement. *Education in Practice* has been designed for all University staff working in support of enhancing the student learning experience, be they academic members of staff or staff from professional or support services. Contributions are also welcomed from both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

This issue contains five case studies and papers from colleagues within the University, and in one case outside of it, writing about different aspects of their learning and teaching activities. Pritchard reports on providing formative feedback in advance to help students improve their performance as they approach summative assessment; this will be of interest to anyone running project or activity based modules across the University. Burns et al. analyse the findings from a groupwork skills training programme and explore how the learning from it is applicable to anyone involved in running a training experience. Grove and Pugh summarise work first undertaken through the National HE STEM Programme, which was hosted by the University of Birmingham, to explore whether predictors of sustainability exist for learning and teaching initiatives; their work will be relevant to anyone seeking to initiate or commission learning and teaching projects or activities. Delbaue et al. report on a highly topical project, particularly given the national development of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), that explores an alternative way of viewing and approaching peer-observation; this is a recommended read for all academic Schools. And finally, Jenkins and Jones report on the use of a flipped classroom and blended approach to teaching in a module.

One of the questions that we are often asked is 'Why should I write about my teaching?' In the simplest analysis, publication allows your work and ideas to be tested and challenged so that a deeper understanding can be obtained from the observations of others, but also allows it to make a contribution to the publicly available knowledge on educational practice and theory. However there are more personal reasons for publishing.

Writing about our teaching forces us to calmly think about, or reflect upon, our own practice. We are all busy, but writing allows time to reflect upon successes, challenges, concerns and even frustrations. As scholars, be it our own disciplinary research or teaching, our aim is to continually improve and to find new, or more effective, ways of doing things. Writing forms part of this process of continuous improvement. It allows us to analyse and understand what we really think and believe, and we can learn just as much from what doesn't work if we seek to calmly understand the reasons why. But committing our thoughts to paper achieves something even greater; it makes us part of a much larger community, one that transcends the traditional boundaries of our disciplines, and one where we can engage in scholarship to develop a wider identity, sense of belonging, and achieve external recognition for our work. Most significantly membership of this community will not only help us develop as teachers, but it will also contribute to an enhanced experience for all our learners.

There exist many different publication routes and they can be considered as a spectrum ranging from a news report, which may be a few paragraphs in an educational newsletter or email, up to a fully peer-reviewed research report in a journal that provides sufficient detail to allow a study to be replicated and audited. *Education in Practice* has been designed as a publication route that 'bridges' the interface between newsletters and journals of educational research; as such, it is an ideal first publication route for those new to publishing on teaching and learning, and an opportunity for those who are more experienced to share and test their ideas with other colleagues from across the University. It provides an accessible publication route for those looking to disseminate teaching and learning practices, ideas and developments or outcomes from education-related projects.

We warmly welcome contributions from anyone working at the University of Birmingham. We would be delighted to hear from you.

**Jon Green and Michael Grove**  
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