At the University

Update on the Canvas iVLE

Following the launch of the University's new virtual learning environment (iVLE) 'Canvas' on the 6th August 2013, over 4600 courses have been created, delivering content to staff and students across the academy. This uptake is unprecedented, with estimates of over 80% of courses with VLE content being made available exclusively through Canvas. The uptake has been largely put down to the ease of use of the system and the considerable effort of staff across the University to migrate their materials from the legacy system (WebCT).

Support materials and further information on Canvas can be found on the WebLearn website.

Curriculum Review: Transforming Teaching Delivery

The strand on 'Transforming Teaching Delivery' in the Curriculum Review has the following aim: 'We will transform our modes of teaching delivery, particularly with respect to large lectures, and we will use lecture capture and our new VLE to rebalance the interactive, as opposed to 'content transfer' aspects of teaching. We will use multiple collaborative technologies to enlarge and diversify the ways in which staff and students converse beyond the classroom.'

One of the approaches being explored to achieve the above is 'flipped teaching'. This approach covers lectures, practicals and seminars. In the extreme case, 'lectures' are replaced by totally interactive sessions. Students study material before the session that could include either online screencasts, a recorded lecture or directed reading. In addition, the 'Just-in-Time Teaching' approach is used in which the preparatory material is tested in online quizzes and students can post questions online to clarify aspects that they did not understand.

The 'flipped lecture' replaces the conventional didactic delivery with an interactive teaching experience with a focus on problem solving and collaborative learning.
through "Peer Instruction" facilitated by the use of audience response sets (more commonly known as "clickers"). The face-to-face sessions can include 'live' problem solving, putting in to practice material that students have studied pre-lecture, for example past exam paper questions, interpretation of data or other information and production of essay plans. The lecturer also addresses the main problems that were raised by students online before the session.

Clearly for lectures there is a spectrum of activity possible from a conventional lecture to one that contains some interactive material and then the fully flipped lecture. For practicals, information online can be studied by students before the session: this enables the session to run more effectively because the students are better prepared.

Several workshops have already been held to inform staff about this approach and the intention is to run further sessions and to post resources online. During the summer a session featuring four speakers on flipped teaching was run by the STEM Education Centre. You can access recordings of the session by logging in to Panopto: select "Panopto" from the drop-down list and use lecture-flip2013 as both the **username** and the **password**. Please note that the recordings are for internal use only.

You can book clickers from LRAT or find out more about lecture capture from Learning Spaces.

This strand of the curriculum review is being coordinated by DPVC Prof Jon Green, Dr Natalie Rowley (Chemistry), Julie Scarratt & Dr Clare Saunders (CLAD).

**External news**

**New report calls for urgent legislation to improve regulation of HE in England**

- Independent commission warns current HE regulatory system 'outmoded and unfit for purpose'
- Reforms needed to protect students in new diversified HE landscape
- UK global reputation at risk as 'piecemeal' reform to regulation stifles investment

The Higher Education Commission's newest report today warns that lack of government legislation to improve the regulation of higher education in England is putting students at risk from failing universities and threatening the UK’s global reputation for HE excellence.

The report, entitled 'Regulating Higher Education', calls on the Coalition Government to bring forth urgent legislation before the next election to create a new regulatory framework designed to provide students with greater financial protection, encourage investment in the sector and help enhance innovation in HE provision.

Information obtained from [Policy Connect](#)

**Call for information on the Higher Education sector (undergraduate) in England**

On 22 October 2013 the OFT issued a call for information on the higher education (undergraduate) sector in England.

Universities play a crucial role in the UK economy. They contribute directly to economic growth, employment and local economic activity, delivering skilled workers into the wider economy, and contributing to export earnings. In many respects, UK universities are world leaders in research and teaching.
In launching this project, the OFT wants to understand whether universities are able to compete effectively and respond to students' increased expectations, and whether students are able to make well-informed choices, which would help drive competition. The OFT is particularly interested in receiving information about how universities compete, the impact regulation has on universities, and the student experience of the current system. Source and more information on the OFT website.

Universities UK responds to report on contextual data in university admissions

Paul Clark, Director of Policy at Universities UK, said: "This report pulls together the widest current evidence for using additional information about applicants, as well as grades, in the university admissions process. It is right that it recommends that universities work to increase and improve this evidence base."

"However, we do know that universities are driven by the desire to maintain excellence by recruiting the best students for their courses and identifying candidates with the most potential to succeed. This report shows that increasing numbers of universities are looking to use contextual data to do this and are researching what factors work for their institutions."

"University can be a life-changing experience. Contextual data is one way of ensuring that anyone with the ability and desire to go to university has the opportunity to do so. As the report concludes, it is also important that universities are open about their use of contextual data and information. There is a need to have an informed public debate about the merits of using this additional data in the university admissions process."

More information and the report can be found on the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions website.