

## Past Praxis Projects 22/23

Here are details of all our current projects. You will see that we're engaged in activities across a wide range of themes relating to teaching and learning in Higher Education and we'd love the opportunity to tell you more – or even to explore collaborations where your interests overlap with ours. We've included contact details for all the project leads or <mailto:wels-praxis@open.ac.uk>

Project Lead	Project Title	Project Summary
<p>Alison Glover <a href="mailto:alison.glover@open.ac.uk">alison.glover@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Initial Teacher Education and the use of video technology in Open University Partnership schools.</a></p>	<p>The potential for, and application of video technology in Initial Teacher Education is constantly evolving. This project established the current level of schools' engagement, the activities video technology is used for, and the perceived benefits and challenges to all involved. More than 100 participants, including student teachers, mentors, school senior managers and pupils contributed their views on the use of video technology in lessons. These views were collected using an online survey, interviews and group discussions</p>
<p>Joan Simons <a href="mailto:joan.simons@open.ac.uk">joan.simons@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Student perspectives of Associate Lecturer support for students with a mental health difficulty.</a></p>	<p>More students are disclosing mental health conditions at the OU. Reports show that students with mental health conditions are more likely to discontinue their studies, less likely to continue into skilled work or further study, and less likely to graduate with a first or upper-second class degree.</p> <p>This project aims to help Associate Lecturers communicate effectively with students with mental health difficulties and provide them with appropriate support to succeed in their studies.</p>

		Students with mental health difficulties were asked about their views on Associate Lecturer support. Discussions included communication, contact time points, and support.
Sylvia Warnecke <a href="mailto:sylvia.warnecke@open.ac.uk">sylvia.warnecke@open.ac.uk</a>	Developmental testing of the professional learning badge assessment strategy and tools of 'Learning Languages with Senior Learners' and producing an assessment model for a suite of 6 badged Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses for social care staff.	Continuing our work to date on the project 'Learning languages with Senior Learners', developing a digital badge for innovative social care professional learning seeks to implement findings from the current project and evaluate the assessment strategies and tools we have developed for the social care CPD course 'Learning Languages with Senior Learners'. We will continue the collaboration between the Schools of Languages and Applied Linguistics (LAL) and Health, Wellbeing and Social Care (HWSC), as well as the partnership with the social enterprise Lingo Flamingo. We will run the pilot with care homes in two Scottish local authorities (urban and rural).
Samantha Austen <a href="mailto:samantha.austen@open.ac.uk">samantha.austen@open.ac.uk</a>	<a href="#">An evaluation of the impact of a group in-session EAP programme on post-graduate students of applied linguistics.</a>	This scholarship project evaluated the impact of group in-session English for Academic Purposes (EAP) sessions on students studying the three stages (years 1-3) of the MA Education: Applied Linguistics. The project focussed on student perceptions of their EAP needs and the extent to which the EAP sessions met these needs. It also assessed the impact of EAP sessions on the students' developing academic literacy as evidenced in assessment tasks.

<p>Paula Addison-Pettit  <a href="mailto:paula.addison-pettit@open.ac.uk">paula.addison-pettit@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p>An exploration of staff perspective about anti-racist and inclusive assessment in the school of Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport (ECYS).</p>	<p>By exploring the practices, lived experiences and perspectives of The Open University (OU) staff, this study will advance our knowledge about how anti-racist and inclusive assessment practices can contribute to the work of reducing degree awarding gaps for Black and Minority Ethnic students in the OU. The proposed study will contribute to the literature about reimagining assessment in Higher Education and is aligned with the OU's aim to progress its application for the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award. Additionally, it is intended to address issues relating to existing recruitment and retention challenges with Black and Minority Ethnic students in the OU. It will support those responsible for module production and presentation and staff development to implement more inclusive assessment practices. It could provide insight into the use of the OU Inclusive Curriculum Tool and how this could be applied to new assessment practices. The project has been designed to develop an understanding of staff perspectives in relation to anti-racist assessment at the OU and how these may be supported or constrained by existing pedagogical strategies and institutional structures.</p>
<p>Ximena Arias-Manzano  <a href="mailto:ximena.arias-manzano@open.ac.uk">ximena.arias-manzano@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Video feedback for speaking Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs): The emotional impact of hearing the tutor.</a></p>	<p>This project was about providing an opportunity to a team of LAL ALs to experiment with innovative ways of giving feedback on assessment to their students. Exploring the use of screencast technology, ALs were able to develop their own style of feedback creating an interactive approach. The production of video feedback in a guided environment where ALs had the opportunity to be trained and to receive comments from their peers to continue improving the use of screencasts in a more effective way when correcting assignments. The emotional impact of hearing the tutor and receiving more personalised feedback has been the focus of this scholarship project. The reflection and</p>

		feedback collected from tutors and their students will form the basis of our final report.
Danielle Pullen <a href="mailto:danielle.pullen@open.ac.uk">danielle.pullen@open.ac.uk</a>	<a href="#">Peer-to-mentoring network for younger learners on level 1 modules: impact on student support and retention.</a>	The project centred on the rollout of a peer-to-peer mentoring project in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics. After a successful pilot project, the mentoring scheme was offered to all new students in the School. Mentors created a short biography and mentees selected the mentor that they felt was most suitable for them. Contact was then made via email and/or Adobe Connect and the relationship evolved throughout the mentee's first year of OU study.
Mel Green <a href="mailto:mel.green@open.ac.uk">mel.green@open.ac.uk</a>	<a href="#">Creating harmony from Discord™: Using innovative technology to create a sense of community in distance education.</a>	The project focused on the application of Discord, a VoIP platform originally designed for gaming communities, in the educational context of the Open University, the UK's largest distance learning institution. This investigation specifically probed both the student and tutor experiences, exploring how the platform facilitates interaction, engagement, and a sense of community within the virtual learning environment. Through its versatile functionalities like synchronous and asynchronous communication channels, screen sharing, and custom 'servers', Discord emerged as an effective tool for enhancing educational outcomes and interpersonal connections. The study went beyond the traditional focus on academic collaboration online to evaluate Discord's broader influence on emotional and intellectual well-being. Employing frameworks such as Anderson and Dron's (2011) generations of distance education and Moore's (1989) three levels of interaction, the research provided a nuanced understanding of Discord's potential to address the challenges inherent in a geographically dispersed and virtual educational institution.

<p>Mike Trott  <a href="mailto:mike.trott@open.ac.uk">mike.trott@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Physical activity and academic performance outcomes: a longitudinal study.</a></p>	<p>Physical activity (PA) levels have been positively associated with several physical and mental health outcomes, including levels of anxiety. Studies have consistently negatively correlated anxiety levels with academic performance, with other studies reporting that PA is associated with academic achievement, however, this has not been comprehensively examined in distance learning students. The aim of this pilot study, therefore, was to examine associations between PA, anxiety, and sedentary activities, and academic performance in distance learning students</p>
<p>Dorothy Barcroft  <a href="mailto:dorothy.barcroft@open.ac.uk">dorothy.barcroft@open.ac.uk</a></p> <p>Claire Richardson  <a href="mailto:claire.richardson1@open.ac.uk">claire.richardson1@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Investigating the effectiveness of ISSS in the module Exploring childhood and youth (E232).</a></p>	<p>This research project aimed to understand more about the process of an Individual Student Support Session (ISSS) and what makes for an effective session to foster students' development of good academic practice. Ultimately, the goal was to provide recommendations for future ISSS.</p>
<p>Lore Gallastegi  <a href="mailto:lore.gallastegi@open.ac.uk">lore.gallastegi@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p>Understanding changes in study intensity among BA (Hons) Education Studies (Primary) (Q94) students.</p>	<p>Module Team Chairs (MTCs), Associate Lecturers), and Learner and Discovery Services (LDS) colleagues, with students and Associate Lecturers being research participants. We recognise the recent developments in relation to student voice and engagement in scholarship teams, and we would like to include students in our extension project as researchers as well as participants.</p> <p>The role of the Student Support Team (SST) is key in the students' decision-making process on study intensity, and they hold key conversations with students who are considering changing their study intensity. To complement the experience of academics and students, the Scholarship team will also include SST colleagues.</p>

		<p>Conscious of the difficulties students might have in expressing their reasons in oral interviews, students will be offered the opportunity to take part in a written interview, or an audio-recorded interview they do themselves, as well as the more common recorded interview with a member of the project team.</p> <p>Separate online focus groups will be undertaken with a group of SST senior advisers and a group of Associate Lecturers to support the development of the student interview questions and to understand student decisions. A second online focus group with each group (SST and Associate Lecturers) will be undertaken after the student interviews analysis has taken place to present the findings and record advisers' and Associate Lecturers' responses to the findings.</p>
<p>Jim Lusted  <a href="mailto:jim.lusted@open.ac.uk">jim.lusted@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Evaluating the 22J pilot 'OU Sport Black Students Network'.</a></p>	<p>This project is the third phase of a larger body of scholarship that has been investigating ways to enhance the learning experiences of students with Black heritage on sports &amp; fitness modules. This phase utilised a student-staff collaborative approach to evaluate the OU Sport Black Students Network (OUSBSN) and gain insights into its early effectiveness in providing peer support to Black students. This network was purposefully designed to be a student-only space, aiming to create opportunities for students with Black heritage to come together in a safe informal space, and meet and support each other across their studies. The evaluation of the OUSBSN was led by one of the student members of the project team, who conducted one-to-one online semi-structured interviews with existing moderators and members of the network to gain an understanding of their experiences of being part of the group and recommendations concerning the future design of peer-support networks</p>

<p>Liz King  <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.king@open.ac.uk">Elizabeth.king@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Practice Tutors' views on their readiness for supporting OU pre-registration nursing students who require reasonable adjustments for clinical placement.</a></p>	<p>This project accessed Practice Tutors' views on their readiness to support OU student nurses who require reasonable adjustments in clinical placement. Primarily, the rationale for this project was to ascertain current experiences and which resources Practice Tutors require to support these students. Findings would be generated through thematic analysis of virtual focus group data. Conclusions taken from the data could then identify relevant recommendations for future development/training for OU nursing Practice Tutors.</p>
<p>John Butcher  Karen Foley  <a href="mailto:Karen.foley@open.ac.uk">Karen.foley@open.ac.uk</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Preparing for Success: understanding the impact of Y032 on WELS Students</a></p>	<p>Understanding more about the impact of an Access module (Y032) on student preparedness for L1 modules like E102, K102, DE100, DD102. Data from a survey (aimed at L1 students who commenced their OU studies with Y032) was analysed and integrated with findings from a tutor focus group (all teaching both on Y032 and a L1 WELS module). Explored through a framework utilising Gorard et al's (2006) model identifying dispositional, situational and institutional barriers.</p>