



Digital Excellence Impact Case Studies

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Taking a closer look at an online module: Ethical Practice for Working with Children

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The module was designed to encourage students to critically reflect on a range of issues in relation to the notion of ethical practice. It provided students with an opportunity to explore a variety of ethical theories/frameworks and principles that guide practice for working with children in a range of contexts. Concepts such as moral obligation, accountability and responsibility, moral autonomy, justice and human rights were explored. More specifically the module aimed to:

- Enable students to further develop their knowledge and understanding of the ethical and legal concepts and principles to support them in making informed ethical decisions.
- Develop the student's ability to think critically about legal, ethical and professional issues when working with children.
- Facilitate the student's ability to critically reflect on their practice to analyse and evaluate the impact of ethical, legal and professional frameworks.
- Enable student's to utilise evidence-based practice in support of their practice experience.

When creating the online module, a couple of issues were highlighted in relation to the design and delivery of the learning activity. The previous year had a low student number, the material was very loose in its approach and whilst structured for a semi-autonomous approach, it would not be manageable with larger numbers. It did not allow enough differentiation for student abilities and would overwhelm the module leader if they had to run it with larger numbers. More structure, direction and focus were needed. Also, whilst ethics is a foundation stone of professional practice, the literature tends to be woven into discipline-based literature rather than identified clearly in specific texts as stand-alone sources. Clearer sources and examples of critical perspectives were required, made accessible and clearly linked

to the module outcomes and associated disciplines. A further issue is that the ECA is a case study on an ethical dilemma (chosen by students from their own experience and negotiated with the tutor, or they use one provided). Fostering exploration of ethical dilemmas and negotiating appropriate material became a strategy issue.

In the first year it was delivered, the module was structured around the key concepts but links to learning material were quite broad, linked to standards but leadership and business in some areas. Examples included YouTube video clips and discussion boards for students to explore the concepts they studied; however, the lectures were general, and the module strategy was one of open enquiry rather than giving a good foundation explaining concepts and critical examination of them in its material and structure.

In order to improve the module, the structure and material were reviewed against the module concepts and aims. Video material was kept and Panopto lectures with powerpoint were created – limited to 20-30 minutes. The scheme of work was altered and key information about case-study and identifying them was introduced very early in the module – discussion boards became very important to help negotiate these choices with the module leader. I feel that these discussions helped other students to vicariously learn from them and help them focus on their cases, as well as learn about what ethical cases other students contended with.

The screenshot shows the TU Online course interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Course Home, Content, Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, Classlist, Grades, Class Progress, Module Tools, and Help. The main content area is titled "Week 1 Panopto Lecture 'Values and Principles'". On the left, there is a sidebar with links for Overview, Bookmarks, Course Schedule, Table of Contents, Module Introduction, Unit 1 - Personal Values and Principles, The Aim of this Unit in Week 1, and Week 1 Panopto Lecture Case Study. The main content area contains a summary of the lecture, a "Upload / Create" button, an "Existing Activities" dropdown, a "Bulk Edit" button, and a "Lecture 2 - Values and Principles" section with a "Web Page" link. At the bottom, there is a "Add a sub-module..." input field.

An example of the interface for this module on TU Online.

The screenshot shows a discussion board interface. At the top, it says "Week 3 Discussion Board" and "Available on Monday, 18 January 2021 8:30 AM GMT". Below this is a table with columns "Topic", "Threads", "Posts", and "Last Post". The topic "Week 3 General Teaching Content Queries" has 7 threads and 14 posts, with the last post by David Taylor on 1 February at 10:05 AM. A task titled "Task - Add your Reflections" is displayed, asking students to identify teacher values and principles. It includes a list of questions and a response from David Taylor on 1 February at 10:07 AM.

An example of a discussion board inside the module.

In regards to digital technologies, there were a range of different concepts that were chosen. Video lectures helped to explain lecture material and also add further points and explanations – it helped to differentiate between disciplines and cater for students backgrounds. The discussion boards became a mainstay of the module delivery in response to these case study ideas. A strategy to take the students higher up Bloom's Taxonomy was used – Tasks were given that provided the opportunity for students to apply their learning; later, answers or information was given to extend learning, however then the students were given discussion space and asked to reflect further on what meaning they drew from these learning activities. This was done on the discussion boards for students to make further comments and insights on. For example, early in the module a video lecture covered 'values and principles' then the students were asked to identify their values and principles, reflect on them together and form some conclusions about how these values underpin ethical practice – a high response with great investment and depth was the product. Using the tasks in this way shaped further reflection on other concepts and links to theory and practice and ethical standards with children. The comments on the discussion boards together with the communication about the case studies, gave examples of where analysis and synthesis were occurring in knowledge creation. This was a good product of the digital space and technologies as students engaged much more confidently and positively with material than a lot of students would have done in live undergrad classes; where perceptions of peer pressure, anxiety, and the constraints of classroom time can curtail the intended learning.

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Digital excellence has been embedded throughout this module with video, discussion boards, adapting Socratic and reflective teaching and learning methods, to engage and draw meaningful responses and further debate and interest. Digital excellence is how we adopt new methodologies or adapt existing ones, to allow us to teach to the highest standard and optimise students' learning across a range of accessible, clear, and informative mediums and platforms. Improving the experience of learning in a digital age and reflecting on how to improve things even more to make the digital conduit and space more relevant and usable to students and staff; underpinned by HE and university standards and quality – and being trustworthy enough to do this well, it is not an add-on or a gimmick, it is an expression of who we are and how we operate digitally in a professional world; this I think gives a sense of a digital wider sense of curriculum if it is done well.

The results of these changes were many more engaged responses from students. Also, the Case studies the students used were much more specific to their own fields of practice and interest, resulting in more application of the concepts, higher up Bloom's and with more good quality ECA's, not just the reiteration of one given case study. To develop this work further, a pilot of short video clips at the end of each week to sum up and also extend learning with further points and questions that have arisen from student engagement could be considered. The key message from this exercise is structuring with a good scheme and clearly accessible material provides a foundation with which to then prompt deeper learning and activity from learners on a digital platform. The Space becomes like a classroom and feels like it when you open up the discussions and keep the line of communication and engagement open.