



Teesside University Excellence Case Studies

2024/2025

Reflective Curriculum Design in Initial
Teacher Training (ITT): Enhancing Student
Engagement and Professional Practice
through AI Integration

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content



Design,
collaborate and
construction of
knowledge

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Introduction and Background

In 2023/2024, Christina Snaith was appointed as the module lead for the Subject Specific Practice Project on the PGCE Secondary course at Teesside University. This core module aims to equip trainees with essential skills in educational research and its application in classroom settings. Christina's background in sociology and research methods, combined with her experience in special educational needs, provided a strong foundation for this role. Christina's project focuses on creating meaningful learning experiences for PGCE Secondary students by embedding educational research into the ITT provision.

Approach

Christina utilised the Utrecht Roadmap for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (UR-SoTL) and Bassott's integrated reflective cycle to systematically investigate and reflect on her teaching practices. The project was heavily reliant on student feedback and involved redesigning the module curriculum to better meet the needs of ITT trainees, incorporating self-regulatory practices, and fostering resilience and learner autonomy. Strategies included the implementation of thematic 'research interest' groups, the use of Blackboard and Microsoft Teams for collaborative learning and planned targeted interventions for students identified as needing extra support.

To monitor success and ensure that student feedback remained at the heart of the module, Christina used the results from Evasys as the same questions were used each year, allowing Christina to track progress and make data-driven improvements to the curriculum.

Pre-emptive Targeted Interventions:

As an indirect response to EVASYS feedback from the 2023/24 cohort who requested more support,

opportunities for feedback and tutor time, a significant aspect of Christina's approach was the implementation of pre-emptive targeted interventions. By utilising diagnostic tests in maths and English at the beginning of the course, Christina has been able to pre-emptively identify students who might struggle with written work. These students have been placed on a targeted intervention list, allowing for early support and tailored assistance from the very beginning of the module, scaffolding intervention as necessary. Additionally, students with identified SEND needs, such as dyslexia, were also provided with specific interventions. This proactive approach not only supported student success but also accounted for staff workload by planning and distributing the support requirements. This ensured that the interventions were manageable and effective, leading to improved student outcomes and a more inclusive learning environment.

Inclusion and Coverage of GenAI:

A significant innovation in Christina's approach was the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to enhance both teaching and learning experiences. Recognising the growing importance of AI in education, Christina attended training sessions and developed strategies to incorporate AI literacy alongside traditional academic knowledge. AI-driven curriculum planning in line with TU's statement on AI, allowed Christina to generate and refine curriculum plans, introducing innovative teaching methods adaptable to diverse student needs.

Christina's approach to AI was twofold: "I know how AI can help me as a professional. Now, how can it help the trainees as professionals?" This perspective guided her efforts to integrate AI into

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the curriculum to benefit both her workload and the student's learning experiences.

Engaging with the Chartered College of Teaching:

Christina used her professional membership with the Chartered College of Teaching and participated in their pilot 'Journal Club' scheme. This initiative involved evaluating educational research with real-life practice. Through this involvement, Christina and her colleagues critically analysed contemporary educational research and discussed its implications for their teaching practices. This engagement provided a model for trainees on how to embed research into their professional lives post PGCE. The insights gained from these discussions were integrated into the module, enhancing its relevance and rigour. This experience not only enriched Christina's professional development but also demonstrated to students the importance of ongoing engagement with educational research.

Outcomes

The project led to several positive outcomes, including improved student engagement and the development of a robust assessment rubric aligned with module learning outcomes. The use of rubrics facilitated standardisation and provided clear criteria for student performance, enhancing both student and tutor satisfaction. Quantitative and qualitative data collected through EVASYS surveys and structured interviews indicated that the redesigned module effectively supported student learning and professional development. The integration of AI tools further enriched the learning experience by providing innovative ways to engage with course content.

Future Plans

These include further aligning the module objectives with the Department for Education's Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework (ITT CCF) to ensure relevance and applicability. Christina also plans to continue using mixed

method approaches to gather data and refine the module curriculum based on student and tutor feedback. Additionally, there is a focus on integrating AI literacy into the curriculum to prepare trainees for the evolving educational landscape.

Christina is also exploring new and innovative approaches to curriculum design that incorporate emerging technologies and pedagogical theories. Furthermore, she plans to implement more robust mechanisms for collecting and acting on student feedback to continuously improve the learning experience.

Conclusion

This case study highlights the importance of reflective practice in curriculum design and its impact on student engagement and professional development. By systematically investigating and refining her teaching practices, Christina has created a more effective and supportive learning environment for ITT trainees at Teesside University. The project underscores the value of adaptability and continuous improvement in educational settings. The integration of AI tools has not only enhanced the learning experience but also prepared trainees for the future of education, making this project a significant contribution to the field of Initial Teacher Training.

Contact Information

For more information on using AI in summative assessments, please contact Digital Transformation (DX) in SLAR.