

A reflective review of an incident in which I, at committee stage, rejected the progression of validation for a course which had looked to make an experimental formative LinkedIn experiment from a final year BSc course a formal, summative part of a proposed MSc course, evidenced by an extract from the committee minutes.

In this instance, I reflected back to the committee the fact that I had taken student feedback on the formative experiment at a programme board, describing the issues raised, and citing specifics with regard to accessibility, as well as stating that there were clear issues with an assessment which could not, without significant prior arrangement (which had not been sought), be monitored or supported by service teams, including myself, owing to its external placement. Crucially, the assessment was, despite "sounding impressive", not actively delivering the outcomes the programme stated it was looking for.

An extract from the committee minutes (EHSS FADC, 12th December 2018), summarising my input and commitment to work with the programme to acceptance, and to ensuring our approach to technological engagement reflected existing and developing Equality and Diversity Policy, as well as Safeguarding Policy:

Programme Proposals

MSc _____ (Paper 9) – The committee discussed the proposal.

Abigail Shaw – commented on her concerns regarding the use of live social media as a form of assessed work which is already practice at level 6. There are confidentiality issues. There are alternatives that can be put in place for example, dummy sites. This needs to be policy driven. The committee agreed that Abigail attend any further development meetings for the programme. This also feeds into the Equality and Diversity Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

The committee agreed to take the programme to the next stage, subject to the following:

- Learning outcomes to be reviewed.
- Email confirmations of approval to be received from all relevant departments.

I was tasked with working with the academics developing the course to find other ways to meet their outcomes, which I did, with the reconstructed course passing at the next validation stage.

I followed up with appropriate academic staff, and worked closely with them to replace the assignment in question, both in the proposed new course, and, indeed, in the final year assessment outlined before. Rather than create a live LinkedIn profile, the assignment was rewritten to look at LinkedIn and its place in the relevant industry, using screenshots and examples.

Students create, off-site, a profile of themselves relevant to their current desired industry, with a LinkedIn-style summary of their experience and qualities, in order to assess the students' own understanding of their capabilities, and the wider context of their work experience to date. Further, this piece of work will be created mid-way through the semester, rather than as a summary piece, and then revisited at the end of the module, to enable students to reflect on and quantify their own learning and development. Were the student to choose to post this reviewed and reconsidered profile to a personal LinkedIn having completed the course, that would, of course, be their choice.

The course was successfully validated with these changes in place, and I will be working with the delivery team throughout 2019/20 to observe and reflect on the student experience on the course. I have further engaged with my team and the teams responsible for the cited policies to inform myself and staff of key considerations when developing new assessments, and this engagement has formed a key part of training both new and existing staff in the creation of course content.

Reflection

My experience with this course validation was somewhat eye-opening - I had, when students' concerns with the existing assessment in the BSc came to light, assumed the assessment would not be rerun in its current state, thus I was, perhaps naively, surprised to encounter it in a new validation document. However, the team were receptive to the committee's request for review, based on student and policy-based concerns.

A further issue arising from my research around the specific issues with this assessment was that the university's social media policy is currently centred around staff and students' personal or promotional use. Accordingly, there was no section pertaining to pedagogical use, nor any guidance in this matter for staff.

Since this experience, I have been sure to document and follow up on any such strong student feedback at programme boards with teams directly. Similarly, as a direct result of this experience, I realised that positive student experience is not often highlighted and disseminated across the university structure, and I have since made a point of, where called upon to comment at FADC, mentioning any student-raised piece of teaching, learning or assessment which students particularly enjoyed or found useful.

Policy provides us with positive boundaries within which to design our students' learning experiences, and I believe that working with a celebratory approach to this, rather than one of being constrained or confined, leads us to more creative and productive outcomes.