Welcome to volume 14, issue 1 of Compass, Journal of Learning and Teaching!

We are excited to bring you the first edition of 2021. This Winter issue contains a fascinating range of articles, including a report on an iterative design process of an 'Inclusive Course Design Tool'; a scrutiny of technological systems applications in HE; and an evaluation of a blended-learning strategy incorporating self-regulated learning. Contrasting case studies demonstrate a pedagogical intervention to develop creative writing skills; collaborative assessment design in the context of education for sustainable development; an evaluation of using 'talking-head' videos in online delivery and a call to re-establish the significance of traditional lectures in teaching English Literature. There are also thought-provoking pieces: one proposes a framework on the elimination of race-based inequality in the world through Higher Education; another offers timely insights on inclusive online teaching. A brief snapshot of each paper follows.

Dennis A Olsen, of the University at West London, conducts an interesting exploration into and evaluation of the application of 'talking-head' videos as a pedagogical tool in the online delivery of material to undergraduate students following subject courses in the creative industries. This well-balanced and informative paper describes how focus groups of students watched two videos – identical except for the camera angle (eye-level and low-shot) – of a presenter, presenting, before discussing their perceptions of the quality of the medium and of the teaching. In the context of both the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcome Framework and the ineluctable movement of higher educational institutions to online teaching because of Covid-19, the research exercise confirmed that students regarded the eye-level camera angle as superior to the low, but that they had, as regular YouTubers, reservations about production quality and also about the apparent lack of the kind of sparkle they experienced in face-to-face tutorials, this latter much more likely to enthuse and engage them. The author draws conclusions about the need for institutional support for staff producing and taking part in such videos and the means by which presenters may enhance emotional connectedness, learning partnership and mutual respect in the student-staff relationship. Presenter-centred videos may well not alone achieve these results or positively influence student satisfaction, though they have potential value, especially for revision purposes. The paper concludes with some suggestions for future research into relevant aspects of this approach.

A detailed presentation of the 'Inclusive Course Design Tool' (ICDT) describes the creation of a systematic means of addressing, in particular, the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) achievement gap at Leeds Beckett University. It was intended as a way of encouraging course designers and course teams across the institution to examine their practice and reflect on how their courses might fail to be inclusive and thus not adequately meet the needs of very diverse groups of students, not just BAME. By focusing attention on curricula, the classroom (virtual or physical), pedagogy and possible implicit and unconscious bias, the ICDT has, in its first outing, clearly demonstrated its scope for enhancing teaching and learning for all students and, especially, those from under-represented groups. The authors of this paper, Susan V Smith, Ruth Pickford, Janice Priestley and Rebecca Seller, are committed to the principles which underpin the tool's application and here, against a background of relevant literature, describe the structured approach it offers, covering course planning, course management, student support, establishment and nurturing of a course community, provision of development opportunities for all students and ensuring challenge for all. Eminently clear from this paper are the

complete commitment of the whole institution to the implementation of the tool, evidence of the creators' careful consultation beforehand and the painstaking subsequent collection of feedback data to inform its continuing development. It is perhaps unsurprising that other higher education institutions have requested it and the authors confirm their intention that it should be made available.

Objective scrutiny of the various technological systems now available for application in education is vital if their best features are to support active learning and effective teaching, especially at a time when the traditional lecture has been very adversely appraised and, indeed, when lectures have not been permissible because of a pandemic. After providing sessions to familiarise all participants equally with the nature and practical characteristics of particular tools, Michael Detyna and Eleanor Dommett of King's College London conducted small focus groups to take account of both student and staff perceptions, seeking to discover user views of which individual technologies might variously be harnessed to maximum pedagogical effect – in order to enhance the value of lectures by incorporating interactive and problem-solving experiences. Their findings drew attention to how best to optimise existing practice, to support new approaches, to ensure ease of use for both students and staff and to avoid overload and distraction. There is considerable food for thought in this balanced and meticulous study, which recognises the importance of taking account of the often-conflicting attitudes to digital methodologies of students and teachers respectively.

Agnieszka Herdan, Antonella Russo and Elizabeth Warren, of University of Greenwich and Lorenzo Neri of Birbeck University, carefully outline their study of the effectiveness of a blended-learning strategy incorporating self-regulated learning (SLR) in enhancing the writing skills of business school students, in this case those following accounting courses. They report on their deployment of MyWritingLab as a transferable means of addressing the identifiable written communication deficiencies in new graduates entering the workplace. The detailed findings of this research paint a very positive picture of the impact of the approach on students' written communication skills as well as on student engagement and confidence, for such a method appears to promote a sense of personal responsibility for learning and a degree of autonomy; students also have control over their pace of study. Such independent learning, in the context of dedicated online tools and teacher support in the classroom, clearly does produce in students a sense of satisfaction at having come to understand what they do and don't know about writing and thus at being able to improve relevant skills. This paper offers helpful practical suggestions as to how to apply SLR within blended learning.

A fascinating exercise in analytical composition is provided by Rachel McCabe of La Salle University, who sought to develop in students an appropriate understanding of text (here, film) and of the complex choices behind its creation, in order to develop in their written responses a sharper critical awareness, a deeper and more sophisticated exploration of method and a more refined and relevant specialist vocabulary for discussing construction and impact of text. What is particularly interesting in this case study is the manner in which the author adjusted, over time and in the light of experience, the nature of the task, which began as small-group creation – using personal cellphones – of a film scene or trailer that typified a particular genre, but eventually became the filmed re-creation of a scene from a professional movie. This evolution helped to eliminate unnecessary and time-wasting preparation of original material and to achieve focus on analysis; it evened up inequalities in the creative skills students brought with them; it also aided innovation. The reader of this paper is left with a powerful sense of student engagement: the participants watched original

scenes repeatedly and together interacted with the content; post-screening discussion between creators and audience honed mutual appreciation; they were ultimately able to articulate well in writing the elements of composition, skills readily transferable to other kinds of text.

Evidence of social inequalities, social injustices and the persistence of racial prejudice is not difficult to find, however frequent the calls for change. In this forthright and cogent opinion piece, Mazia Yassim of University of Greenwich offers a coherent strategy for higher education institutions to adopt in order to move their policy and practice from mere raising awareness of these issues to logical steps to the genuine achievement social change. The author sees the five stages of Goodman's (2013) 'Cultural Competency for Social Justice' proposal as a framework which, when given equal weight and profile right across institutions, will help to develop in their whole communities a sense of social justice and cultural competence and encourage in students the self-belief and determination to become social change makers. Effective education about social change, she argues, must be embedded in the curriculum and the staff must be appropriately trained and supported to deliver it; students must enter employment confident that they can make a difference and achieve change. Perhaps most striking in this piece is the author's emphasis on adequate measurement of change at programme, institutional and even national levels; unless social change engagements by alumni are specifically included in the tracking of their progress beyond higher education and unless the impact of related institutional practices are monitored and properly measured, true improvement to society will remain elusive.

It is certainly true that good teachers are those who continuously reflect on their own practice and are prepared to question methodology in the interests of pedagogical improvement. Finding herself once again a student – on the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education course at the University of Greenwich – Nandini Boodia-Canoo took the opportunity to consider the teaching of higher education Law (and her own previous teaching experience therein) in the light of, specifically, Social Learning Theory, Constructivism and Cognitive Load Theory. Her reflective paper here is a tribute to her critical acumen in appraising these theories against both her own teaching and generally accepted practices in teaching law to undergraduates; she is keen to stimulate discussion and debate and to encourage willingness to innovate, to challenge teachers' personally held assumptions about students and how they learn, to question the efficacy of particular approaches, to review methods and materials and to enhance the learning experience of all those who choose to follow courses in Law.

The provision of expert advice on upskilling by staff to meet a real challenge – in this case, the application of online learning and teaching strategies in a pandemic context, when socially distanced, on-campus and 'in-person' measures have their own disadvantages – is always to be welcomed, particularly when it reminds us of the broader needs of all students and particularly of those who may be marginalised. Donna Hurford of the University of Southern Denmark and Andrew Read of London South Bank University, recognise that universities and their staff may well benefit from some timely guidance about the provision of online delivery to ensure that it is both motivating and inclusive. This helpful paper summarises the key aspects of online methodology, listing the key principles for making it effective and accessible, and then offers precise information about putting those principles into practice. The whole is an excellent aide-memoire for all, emphasising as it does the fact

that those students with the least sense of belonging are likely to be the greatest beneficiaries of a well-executed strategy.

In the context of a level 5 Environmental Management module, Debbie Bartlett of the University of Greenwich set out to involve two small consecutive cohorts of students in curriculum and assessment design. In accordance with the literature, which clearly demonstrates the value of formative feedback in stimulating reflection and developing learning (because it is much more akin to workplace reality than ever summative assessment can be), the author opted to engage her students in module co-design in a conscious effort to increase their control over their own learning and to stimulate their assessment literacy. The students chose to use the 'sustainable development goals' as their focus, with two assessment tasks – a group presentation and an individual report. The reader will be interested to note that, during the course of her description of the work of the two cohorts, the author makes a clear case change from third to first person plural, which confirms the collaborative and participatory nature of this student/staff relationship. Another striking aspect of this paper is the evidence of student enthusiasm for 'real-world' opportunities in the form of contribution to their institution's ISO14001 submission and the delivering of a conference presentation. The overall logic of this study is undeniable: if students exercise control over their curriculum and understand how it is to be assessed, the benefits to them far exceed conventional methods of final assessment.

In a reasoned and well-constructed argument, Katarina Stenke of the University of Greenwich maintains that, for English Literature, the traditional lecture continues to have significant value and relevance, for students in this discipline are 'expected to read at length or otherwise to engage with extended and complex discursive modes' and are not, contrary to recent research, mere passive learners in the lecture setting; nor, indeed, is a literature lecture just a one-way transmission of content. The author argues that the literature lecture does a range of very powerful things: it introduces and advertises set texts, habituates students to academic and literary discourse, models best practice in reading attention and critical argument and demonstrates how to read and transform into personalised meaning what is often very abstruse material. Looked at another way, the literature lecture becomes a social and worldly experience, a 'community of practice' that stimulates thinking and promotes reflective engagement. Helpfully, the author illustrates ways by which such a learning and teaching medium can enthuse students and suggests that the social learning theories that lie behind condemnation of the lecture need to be repurposed to recognise their genuine constructive qualities. Some offered insight into observations of Katarina's own teaching practice confirm that a lecturer's personal dynamism and love of literature, as well as awareness of how to generate interaction in the lecture setting, may be also of crucial importance to a lecture's success.

We hope that readers will find these papers stimulating and helpful and will enjoy reading them as much as we have enjoyed collaborating with our hard-working authors and reviewers to put this issue together.

With best wishes to all Compass readers and contributors,

Rachel and Yang