



JISC RSC Scotland South & West Case Study @University of the West of Scotland

Using Assessment21 and Electronic Voting Systems for formative and summative assessments

Transcript of podcast

Grainne: Hello, I'm Grainne Hamilton from the JISC Regional Support Centre Scotland South & West. I'm here with Neil McPherson, a Lecturer in Sociology at The University of the West of Scotland. Neil will be talking about his experiences of using a variety of e-Assessment and Web 2.0 tools for formative and summative assessment.

Hi Neil.

Neil: Hi Grainne.

Grainne: Can you tell us about the role that you have here at the University of the West of Scotland please?

Neil: My prime role is that I'm a lecturer in Sociology within in the School of Social Sciences at The University of the West of Scotland. I'm based at Hamilton – UWS is a multi campus institution and I'm working at the Hamilton Campus.

Grainne: OK. You use a variety of technology with your students for both formative and summative assessment – can you tell me why you decided to use those technologies?

Neil: I was very focused on developing the student experience of learning in the Social Sciences, and particularly in my modules, so I decided it would be a good way to engage the students in terms of their own learning by embedding e-learning technologies and e-assessment technologies in the modular programme.

Grainne: Great. Did you encounter any barriers to using the choice of tools that you wanted to use?

Neil: At an institutional level there weren't any barriers in terms of actually using tools, in terms of being able to use the tools, but in terms of training, in terms of engagement of members of staff there can be barriers.

Grainne: What precise tools have you been using?

Neil: I've been using audience response systems, TurningPoint in particular, I've been using Turnitin, an originality checking and detection software and I've also recently been using Assessment 21, assessment by computer software.

Grainne: Could you tell me a bit more about Assessment 21?

Neil: Yes, Assessment 21, ABC as it's called - Assessment By Computer, is a tool that allows both formative and summative assessment on line. The reason I started to use it was because I wanted to help students develop their own learning experience at their own pace. So I created it as a teaching and e-learning tool within the syllabus and I also use it for the final high stakes exam at the end of the year.

Grainne: What were the benefits of using those over say, methods you'd used previously?

Neil: Well, the benefits were that I used it to employ, in the seminar classes, a sort of "Just In Time" teaching approach. So I delivered multiple choice, primarily in the class, I delivered multiple choice questions to the students and they would start off the seminar we would start the feedback At the end of the assessment, and we would discuss the areas they were not so strong in.

Grainne: And did you feel that there were significant benefits to marks or to how students engaged with your classes as a result?

Neil: Firstly the students were very comfortable using the technology. There was very little instruction required for students to engage with the technology. Following that, the students were much more competitive with each other and much more engaged in the learning process much more prepared before they came to classes because they knew that this was going to happen at the start. But also, they were happy that they were going to get feedback directly there and then about the things they didn't understand and the things that understood could be dealt with in slightly less context.

Grainne: And were there any benefits for you?

Neil: For me, student engagement was definitely a benefit. The students engaged well with the technology and were much better prepared. In terms of feedback, as a reflective practitioner myself, I really welcome the feedback it gives me and it lets me know where I have to develop lectures in terms of getting the material across to students.

Grainne: How do you see your use of this developing in the future? Are you OK to continue using it?

Neil: At present I am using Assessment 21 tool for multiple choice and slotted questions, but the potential is there to extend that into short answer questions. There is a component within the software that allows you to do a variety of things with short answer questions. There is also a very good tool for allowing the students to develop, so using it as a formative tool and as a summative tool within many of my modules is what I am looking at in the future.

Grainne: And if anyone else was looking to implement this, do you have any tips?

Neil: Go for it! I think it really works. I think it's really beneficial to the students, its really beneficial to the lecturer in terms of feedback and also the practicalities in terms of marking the final summative exam. We had the first summative exam last week on campus at Hamilton. We had 82 students over 6 labs. We invigilated each lab individually but we also had the central invigilation point. The exam lasted for 2 hours and within 2 hours the exam was marked, moderated and the marks had been entered in the student information system.

Grainne: Great, and the students responded well to that?

Neil: Well, the students haven't had the final marks back from the summative part, but in terms of the formative assessments they get feedback directly, there and then. As soon as they have finished the assessment they click on the end of assessment button and the feedback is given to them directly. We set it up so that they could work on this in the seminar classes but we also set up assessments that they can work on it from home, in their own time via Blackboard.

Grainne: Are there any other technologies that you are looking to use or are currently using for formative or summative assessment?

Neil: I'm using Turnitin at the moment and I think my colleague Jo is going to speak more to you about this shortly, but Turnitin is one of the most powerful tools I think that we can put in the hands of students. I think it's very, very beneficial to students but it also give the institution greater security and students are actually engaging with material in appropriate ways. Turning Point Audience Response system is another one. This year actually, because of the increased intake of students – we doubled the intake of students in my module. I went from 40 students to 90 students. That meant I couldn't use the audience response system because we didn't have enough audience response tools – clickers – and also just the practicalities of handing them out and collecting them in class. That is where Assessment 21 stepped in. I had to use that form of assessment but in the future I will be also using Turning Point audience response systems in the classroom as well as Assessment 21, hopefully.

Grainne: And how is it you are using Turnitin?

Neil: I am using it as a system that allows students to check their material before they put in a final submission. Check it for plagiarism; check it for mistakes and direct quotations. Also check to make sure that paraphrasing is appropriate. It allows students to upload a version of their essay or maybe a second version and it allows them to upload a final version for marking in Turnitin.

Grainne: Great, well I think that is all we have time for today. Thank you very much for speaking with us.

Neil: Thank you.