



Current Praxis Projects 22/23

Here are details of all our current projects. You will see that we're engaged in activities across a wide range of themes relating to teaching and learning in Higher Education and we'd love the opportunity to tell you more – or even to explore collaborations where your interests overlap with ours. We've included contact details for all the project leads or <mailto:wels-praxis@open.ac.uk>

Project Lead	Project Title	Project Summary
Alison Glover alison.glover@open.ac.uk	Initial Teacher Education and the use of video technology in Open University Partnership schools.	This project will provide essential evidence for the PGCE programme regarding the use of video technology to support the teacher training that is taking place in partner schools. The potential and application of video technology in Initial Teacher Education is constantly evolving and if student teachers are to receive the maximum benefits of using this tool it is necessary to establish the current level of schools' engagement, the tasks/activities they use it for and the perceived benefits and challenges to all involved.
Joan Simons joan.simons@open.ac.uk	Student perspectives of Associate Lecturer support for students with a mental health difficulty.	This is the third and final stage of a project that has previously explored the experience of Associate Lecturers supporting students with a mental health difficulty. In the first two stages it became apparent that the most obvious need of communication with students experiencing a mental health difficulty is not likely to be addressed through the use of a Confidence Framework. This

		third stage will focus on student input and identifying student expectations of their tutors.
<p>Sylvia Warnecke sylvia.warnecke@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Developmental testing of the professional learning badge assessment strategy and tools of 'Learning Languages with Senior Learners' and producing an assessment model for a suite of 6 badged Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses for social care staff.</p>	<p>Continuing our work to date on the project 'Learning languages with Senior Learners', developing a digital badge for innovative social care professional learning seeks to implement findings from the current project and evaluate the assessment strategies and tools we have developed for the social care CPD course 'Learning Languages with Senior Learners'. We will continue the collaboration between the Schools of Languages and Applied Linguistics (LAL) and Health, Wellbeing and Social Care (HWSC), as well as the partnership with the social enterprise Lingo Flamingo. We will run the pilot with care homes in two Scottish local authorities (urban and rural).</p>
<p>Jen Aggleton jen.aggleton@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Optionality in assessment on 'Developing subject knowledge for the primary years' module.</p>	<p>This project will assess the effectiveness of optionality introduced as part of a new assessment strategy being implemented in the 'Developing subject knowledge for the primary years' module for presentation for the academic year 22/23. The findings will work together with the BA (Hons) Education Studies (Primary) qualification-wide Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) funded project on the assessment experiences of underrepresented groups, and a Praxis-funded project on staff experiences of anti-racist and inclusive assessment. From these three projects, we will improve</p>

		the qualification assessment strategies, develop inclusive maintenance and production practices, and establish principles for successful assessment practices which can be disseminated widely.
Samantha Austen samantha.austen@open.ac.uk	An evaluation of the impact of a group in-session EAP programme on post-graduate students of applied linguistics.	This scholarship project will evaluate the impact of the introduction of group in-session English for academic purposes (EAP) sessions on the MA Education: Applied Linguistics. The project, which will involve full-time academic staff, Associate Lecturers and students, should provide valuable information about the impact that the initiative has had in relation to performance on the modules, student perceptions of their EAP needs, how the programme has met them and their ideas about the importance of EAP in post-graduate study. The project will take a mixed-methods approach (Ivankova and Wingo, 2018) with the collection of qualitative data in the form of focus groups, interviews, surveys and written Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) and quantitative data in the form of pass rates, submission and resubmission rates.
Paula Addison-Pettit paula.addison-pettit@open.ac.uk	An exploration of staff perspective about anti-racist and inclusive assessment in the school of Education, Childhood, Youth and Sport (ECYS).	By exploring the practices, lived experiences and perspectives of The Open University (OU) staff, this study will advance our knowledge about how anti-racist and inclusive assessment practices can contribute to the work of reducing degree awarding gaps for Black and Minority Ethnic students in the OU. The proposed study will contribute to the literature about reimagining assessment in Higher Education and is aligned with the OU's aim to progress its application for the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award. Additionally, it is intended to address issues relating to existing recruitment and retention challenges with Black and Minority Ethnic students in the OU. It will support those responsible for module production and presentation and staff

		development to implement more inclusive assessment practices. It could provide insight into the use of the OU Inclusive Curriculum Tool and how this could be applied to new assessment practices. The project has been designed to develop an understanding of staff perspectives in relation to anti-racist assessment at the OU and how these may be supported or constrained by existing pedagogical strategies and institutional structures.
Ximena Arias-Manzano ximena.arias-manzano@open.ac.uk	Video feedback for speaking Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs): The emotional impact of hearing the tutor.	This project has been designed as a follow-up of the project on screencast feedback using Jing in writing assignments, run by The School of Languages and Applied Linguistics (LAL) colleagues Felicity Harper, Hannelore Green (retired) and Maria Fernandez-Toro (retired). This project intends to research the emotional impact of hearing the tutor and how this in turn will help improve performance and achievement. It also aims to fill the gap in tutor-student contact and provide students with high-quality feedback in speaking assignments. This will be achieved by training tutors in using Screencast-o-matic to produce video feedback and enhance the sense of belonging and the tutor's presence.
Danielle Pullen danielle.pullen@open.ac.uk	Peer-to-mentoring network for younger learners on level 1 modules: impact on student support and retention.	This project builds on a peer-to-peer mentoring scholarship pilot project. This follow-up project is designed to investigate the impact of the peer-to-peer mentoring project with the first cohort of the rolled-out peer-to-peer mentoring initiative in the School of Languages and Applied Linguistics. The mentoring was piloted across two Level 1 modules and focussed on younger learners who are increasingly choosing the Open University (OU) for Higher Education (HE) study. We investigated how this cohort of students felt about embarking on HE study in the OU's distance-learning environment, how they succeeded in 'finding their feet' during their first year of being an OU student,

		<p>what challenges they faced and how they overcame these, and in particular in what way the support of a peer mentor aided their progress. Initial insights from the pilot project underline that younger students do benefit from a mentor who provides pastoral support during their first year of study. The analysis and findings from our pilot project will inform our peer-to-peer mentoring initiative from July 2022.</p>
<p>Joanna Shelton joanna.shelton@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>The experience of students with a specific learning difficulty (SpLD) among WELS PGR Students.</p>	<p>The aim of this project is to explore the lived experience of the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS) postgraduate research (PGR) students with a specific learning difficulty (SpLD) at the Open University. Notably, the project aims to address the funding priority of effective and inclusive pedagogies for online tuition.</p>
<p>Mel Green mel.green@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Using Discord to create a more engaged student community.</p>	<p>The proposed project is designed to explore an alternative method of engaging students in creating class communities in order to present the Open University (OU) with a viable option alongside existing tools. The OU has been struggling to achieve consistent engagement amongst students through the current means of tutor group forums. While for some students the forum is a lifeline providing access to a distance learning community; for others, it is an antiquated system that does not feel naturalistic or encourage them to engage. The Discord chat platform is of increasing interest to the wider Higher Education sector as it is where a growing number of university-age students spend a lot of their leisure and study time outside of scheduled classes. In order to effectively work with students to create a sense of community and enhance the teaching and learning of Associate Lecturers, it is suggested that the OU needs to be considering innovative methods of student engagement. The project will enable the researcher to better understand the nature of the</p>

		platform and how it can fit into the unique structure of the OU so the university can better consider its inclusion as an external open educational tool.
Mike Trott mike.trott@open.ac.uk	Physical activity and academic performance outcomes: a longitudinal study.	It is well established that physical activity levels are significantly associated with academic performance in children. However, the literature surrounding links between physical activity and academic performance in adults, including mature students, is sparse. The aim of this study, therefore, is to assess associations between physical activity levels and academic performance in a cohort of mature students throughout one academic year.
Dorothy Barcroft dorothy.barcroft@open.ac.uk Claire Richardson claire.richardson1@open.ac.uk	Investigating the effectiveness of ISSS in the module Exploring childhood and youth (E232).	This research project aims to understand more about the process of an Individual Student Support Session (ISSS) and what makes for an effective session. It involves both the views of tutors and Associate Lecturers and also students with an overall aim of producing guidance on planning and conducting effective ISSS. These views will be gained through questionnaires aimed at both students and Associate Lecturers and semi-structured interviews with Associate Lecturers.
Lore Gallastegi lore.gallastegi@open.ac.uk	Understanding changes in study intensity among BA (Hons) Education Studies (Primary) (Q94) students.	Module Team Chairs (MTCs), Associate Lecturers), and Learner and Discovery Services (LDS) colleagues, with students and Associate Lecturers being research participants. We recognise the recent developments in relation to student voice and engagement in scholarship teams, and we would like to include students in our extension project as researchers as well as participants. The role of the Student Support Team (SST) is key in the students' decision-making process on study intensity, and they hold key conversations with students who are considering changing their study intensity. To complement

		<p>the experience of academics and students, the Scholarship team will also include SST colleagues.</p> <p>Conscious of the difficulties students might have in expressing their reasons in oral interviews, students will be offered the opportunity to take part in a written interview, or an audio-recorded interview they do themselves, as well as the more common recorded interview with a member of the project team.</p> <p>Separate online focus groups will be undertaken with a group of SST senior advisers and a group of Associate Lecturers to support the development of the student interview questions and to understand student decisions. A second online focus group with each group (SST and Associate Lecturers) will be undertaken after the student interviews analysis has taken place to present the findings and record advisers' and Associate Lecturers' responses to the findings.</p>
<p>Jim Lusted jim.lusted@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Evaluating the 22J pilot 'OU Sport Black Students Network'.</p>	<p>This is the third phase of a larger project that began in 2020/21 which has been investigating – and seeking ways to enhance – the learning experiences of students with Black heritage on Sport & Fitness (S&F) modules. We will undertake an evaluation of the newly formed student-led 'OU Sport Black Students Network' (OUSBSN) which was piloted in 22J (presentation code for academic year 22/23) presentations. As with the approach taken in the previous phases, the project will adopt a staff-student collaborative approach, recruiting 4 student researchers to join the staff (x2) team to undertake this evaluation.</p>
<p>Liz King Elizabeth.king@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Practice Tutors' views on their readiness for</p>	<p>This project would access Practice Tutors' views on their readiness to support the Open University (OU) student nurses who require reasonable adjustments</p>

	supporting OU pre-registration nursing students who require reasonable adjustments for clinical placement.	<p>in clinical placement. Primarily, the rationale for this project would be to ascertain the development Practice Tutors require to support these students. Data would be collected via three virtual focus groups led by Liz King, then transcribed and thematically analysed. Conclusions would then be taken from the data with relevant recommendations identified regarding future development/training for OU Practice Tutors.</p>
<p>Sharon Mallon sharon.mallon@open.ac.uk</p> <p>Mychelle Pride mychelle.pride@open.ac.uk</p>	<p>Exploring staff Experience and Engagement in the Fitness to Study process.</p>	<p>The 'Fitness to Study' process has been implemented in Higher Education (HE) institutions in response to national regulations. At the Open University (OU) it is part of our commitment to supporting student well-being and success. However, it acknowledges a duty of care not only to the individual student but also to the student community more generally, while also balancing the institution's duties under various Legislative Acts (Equality, Health and Safety, among others).</p> <p>The 'Fitness to Study' process is used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - when a student's behaviour is unacceptable due to an underlying mental, physical or well-being issue - when a student's behaviour is impacting the ability to study, others' ability to study, or the teaching - when the disciplinary procedure is deemed inappropriate. <p>Overall, the process is a supportive one, carried out over three progressive steps, to manage escalating concerns. However, the outcome from a 'Fitness to Study' review could be a study break or to stop studying. It is important to ensure the process is consistent and sensitively delivered as it may be viewed</p>

		<p>negatively by students and be challenging for staff to implement. This project will seek to assess the evidence base of this process, with a focus on the experiences and decision-making processes of staff members. It will also work to raise awareness among staff more broadly. A full literature review will be conducted and semi-structured interviews of staff who have participated in the 'Fitness to Study' process will be undertaken. Findings from this project will be used to lead policy enhancement and/or enhanced support for staff involved in these processes.</p>
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