huish
RICHARD HUISH COLLEGE

# ACTION RESEARCH

JUNE 2025

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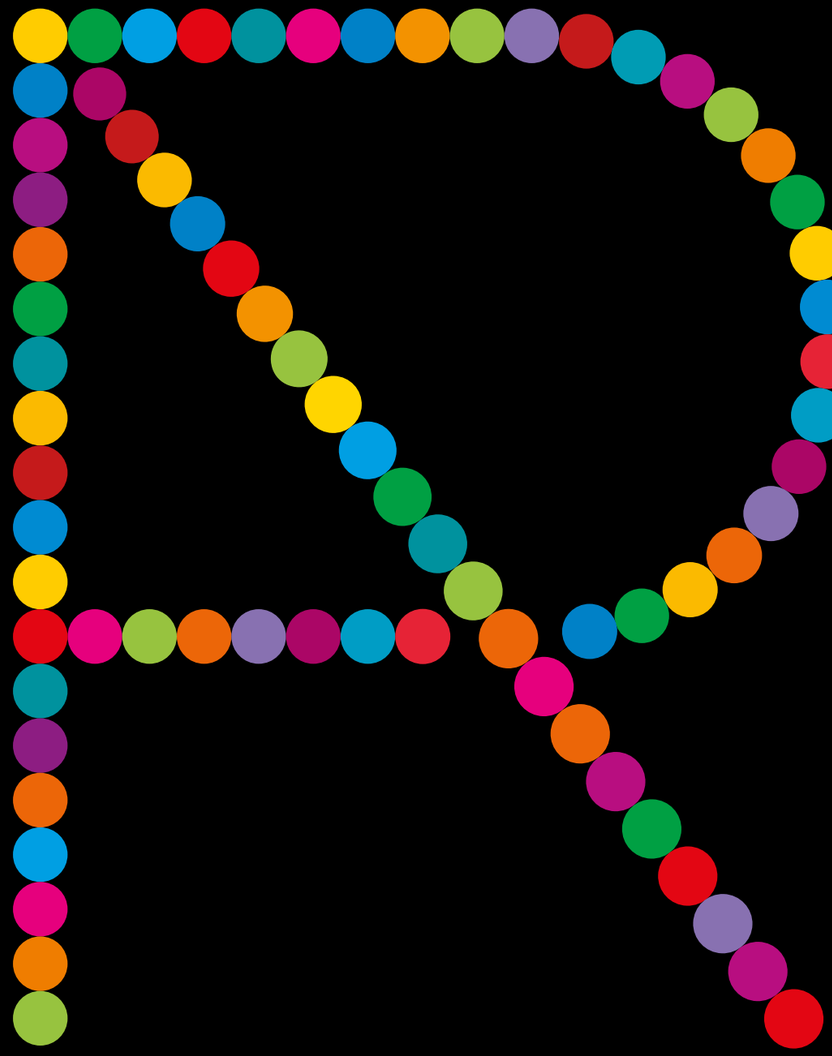
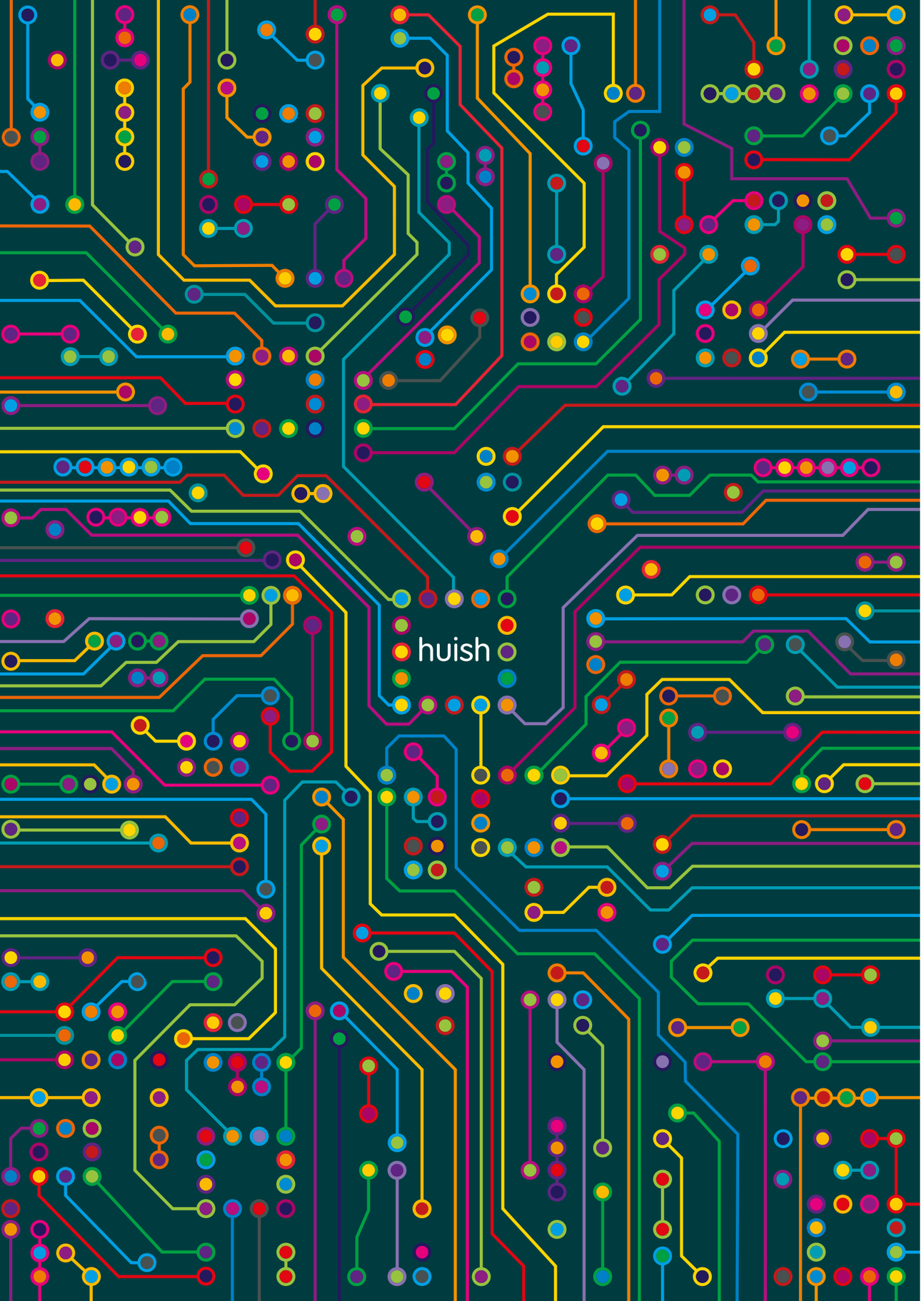
HUISH TEACHING & LEARNING



# ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS JUNE 2025




# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Huish Action Research Journal. This year, we have broadened our Action Research framework to include three distinct pathways: Academic Research, Lesson Study, and Collaborative Inquiry. This expansion empowers staff to explore their interests in ways that best align with their professional autonomy and the needs of their students. Across all three pathways, we remain committed to an evidence-based approach while actively engaging students as learning partners, amplifying their voices in shaping our ongoing Action Research initiatives.

Participants in Academic Research pathway also contribute to the wider educational community by publishing their findings on CamTree, a digital library for teacher-led, close-to-practice research. Within this journal, you will find abstracts from these projects, accompanied by a QR code linking to the full report on CamTree.

The Lesson Study pathway, inspired by the Japanese model of practitioner-led research, involves small teams identifying key areas for improvement. Through collaborative planning, observation, and reflection, participants refine their interventions based on direct student impact.

The Collaborative Inquiry Sets fosters professional dialogue, enhances appreciation for colleagues' expertise, and supports the evolution of best practices within our institution.

I am delighted that we also have a few student-led Action Research groups this year too, involving our Student Executive and student Huish Researchers.

As I reflect on this journal, I am inspired by the enthusiasm and confidence our staff and students have demonstrated in embracing new research methodologies. Their work is making a meaningful impact–not only in teaching and learning but across all our student support services and tutorial programme. I would like to thank all contributors for their dedication, insight, and thoughtful reflection. A special thank you to the other Professional Development Coaches, Hannah Curtis, Amy Lees, and Rowena Mudge and to Lis Sheridan, Assistant Principal for all their help and support. Many thanks too, to Emma Fielding, Principal, for her continued leadership and commitment towards practitioner-led research.

It is a privilege to share this collective achievement with you. I hope you find this edition both insightful and inspiring.

Sarah Marshall

Professional Development Coach

# CONTENTS





# COMPUTER SCIENCE & IT

*Impact of AI in the classroom*

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

This research explored two strands of AI integration in further education: using AI tools to support oracy in the classroom, and evaluating the impact of AI use on students' preparation and performance in vocational and academic assessments. In Computer Science and IT, students increasingly use AI to generate notes and assignment content, raising questions about effective and ethical implementation. Concurrently, AI offered potential to enhance classroom interaction and reduce teacher workload.

AIMS:

The research aimed to assess whether AI-supported starter activities could improve student oracy, and whether the benefits of AI-assisted learning outweighed the drawbacks in exam-based contexts.

DESIGN OR METHODOLOGY:

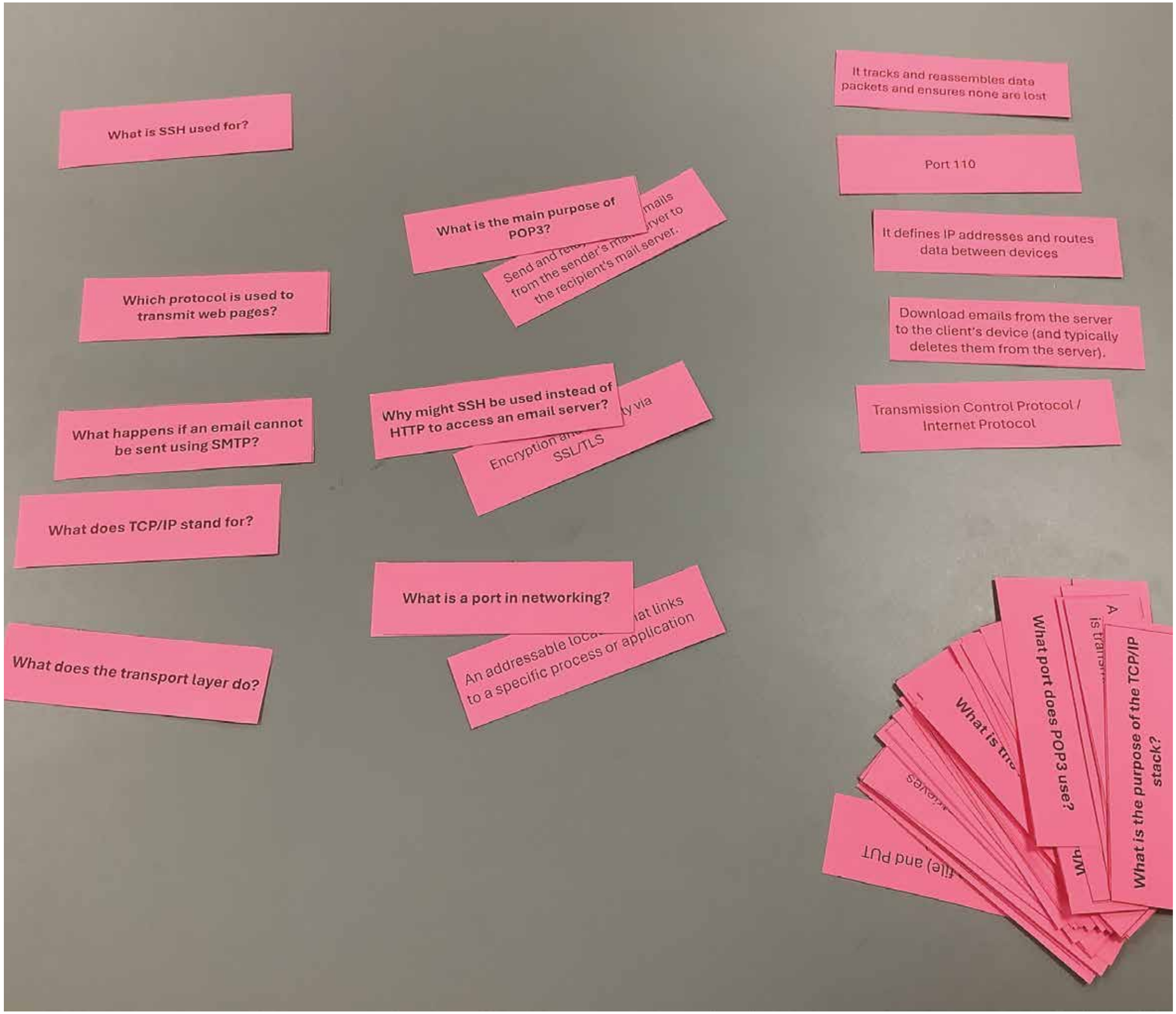
Using practitioner action research, one study focused on Computer Science classes using AI to generate discussion-based starter tasks. The second strand investigated Year 1 and 2 BTEC students' use of AI in exam preparation, comparing exam outcomes and student perceptions.

FINDINGS:

AI-generated starters effectively supported oracy, helping students collaborate, speak with confidence, and engage inclusively. In contrast, exam preparation revealed mixed outcomes. Some students copied AI-generated responses uncritically, limiting learning. Others mistrusted AI entirely. However, a subset used AI reflectively, tailoring and refining their work. While AI enabled rapid content generation for teachers, overreliance on 'stock answers' negatively impacted Year 2 exam performance.

CONCLUSIONS:

AI-supported oracy starters were positively received and easily implemented. In contrast, AI in exam prep required greater scaffolding to promote deeper learning and adaptability under pressure. Future practice should focus on guiding students in critical AI use, providing exam-specific training, and using AI to generate varied, scenario-based materials. Both strands highlight AI's value when thoughtfully integrated into pedagogy, while underlining the importance of student agency and reflective use.




Baud Rate is best described as:

A) The number of bits sent per second
B) The number of signal changes per second
C) The range of frequencies a channel can use for transmission
D) The time delay in transmission

# GCSE MATHS

*Real-life context*

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

Dickinson et al, (2020; 2012) and Chapman (2006) report improvements seen in problem solving when using real-life context problems. However, De Bock et al. (2003) and Jablonka (2008) argue that students were reluctant to attempt problems if the context is unfamiliar.

AIMS:

This research forms part of a wider action-research project to improve students' outcomes by focusing on their ability to solve mathematics problems framed in real-life context.

DESIGN OR METHODOLOGY:

As part of the wider project analysis of student performance over multiple GCSE examinations, attending to students' socioeconomic background and gender, identified that students struggled with speed, distance, time questions when they involved real-life contexts. Through a process of departmental collaboration, a set of two lessons were designed, implemented, observed and the outcomes analyzed. The lessons were designed to encourage discussion and thinking through a set of tasks involving real-life context. The primary task involved discussion around a set of teachers running over a period of times and distances. The purpose of the lessons was not to teach how to calculate speed but to focus on what speed is and how does time impact on it. A set of pre- and post-assessments were carried out along with group discussions with the students and the teachers involved in teaching the lessons.

FINDINGS:

The findings from this work showed improvement in students' understanding of what speed is and more specifically in their engagement during the lessons.

CONCLUSIONS, ORIGINALITY, VALUE AND IMPLICATIONS:

The students enjoyed being part of the lesson and sharing their ideas. In addition, students wanted to take a step further to create their own race videos which could be used as a learning tool. However, it was noted by the teacher participants that the lessons were more mentally demanding to teach and would require more training to develop these techniques further and to generalize for use in other topics.

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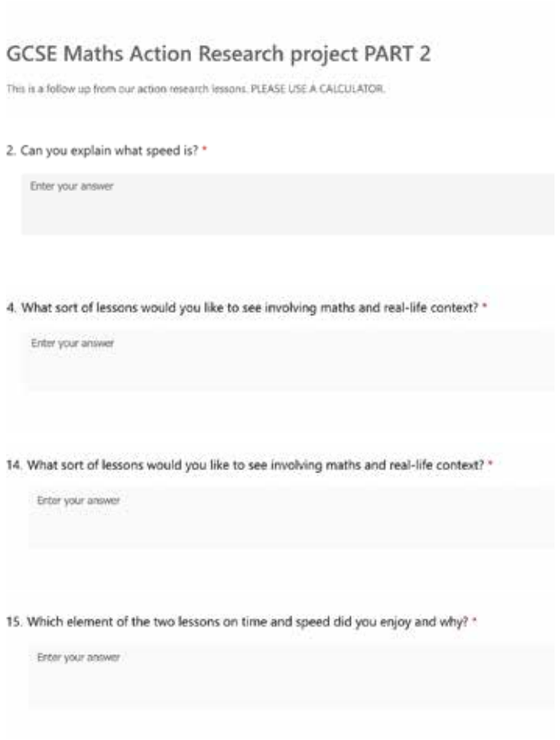


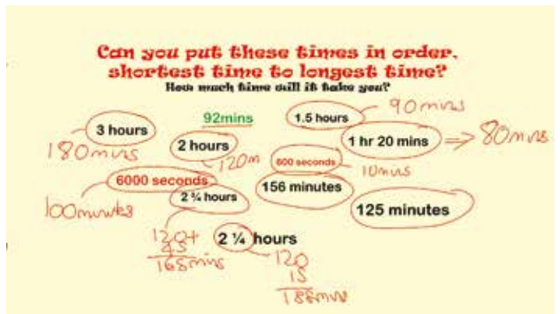




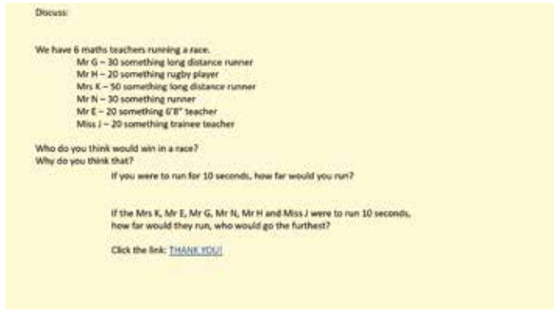


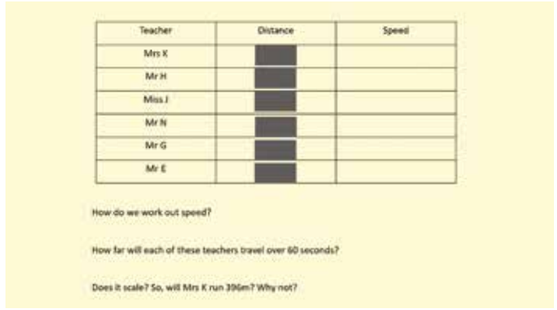


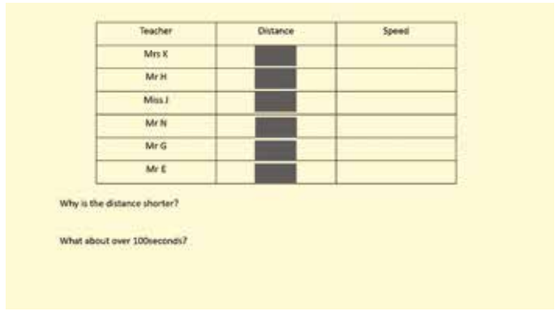


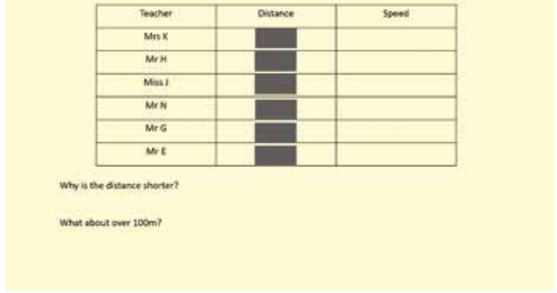


# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COACH

*Andragogy*

Pedagogy or Andragogy? An exploration into Teaching and Learning in the Sixth Form Sector and Implications for Curriculum

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

The rationale for the inquiry was to explore the principles of andragogy in the context of a 6th form college and to investigate if 6th form students are more aligned in their learning preferences to how children learn (pedagogy) or how adults learn (andragogy). This research was needed to address an understudied area of sixth form instruction as post-16 teacher training courses usually use principles of pedagogy even though students in this sector are not children, therefore this topic required further exploration.

AIMS:

The inquiry aims to investigate a significant challenge in post-16 teaching which is supporting students transition from school into college and the delivery of a curriculum that enables students to develop the confidence and independence to move from teacher-directed to self-directed learning. The focus of the inquiry is to establish to what extent 6th form students share the same characteristics as adult learners using the 5 assumptions of andragogy as a framework.

DESIGN OR METHODOLOGY:

The inquiry was implemented as a Learning Preferences questionnaire which was devised to measure the extent to which students agreed with statements relating to the 5 assumptions of andragogy. 873 sixth form students responded to an online questionnaire that was anonymously completed independently, in class or during tutorial. Quantitative analysis compared descriptive statistics on each dimension of andragogy.

FINDINGS:

The inquiry found that 6th form students showed preference for andragogy across all dimensions, there was no significant difference between students enrolled on level 3 & 2 courses. Level 2 students demonstrated views more aligned with pedagogy in relation to Readiness and there was a significant difference in Motivation between sixth form and FE students.

CONCLUSIONS, ORIGINALITY, VALUE AND IMPLICATIONS:

In the context of sixth form teaching andragogy is more relevant than pedagogy, explicit use of these principles within the curriculum can help students to make the transition from school and recognition of motivation, experience and readiness to learn in the post-16 classroom may be a more suitable approach to teaching adolescent students than theories devised for the teaching of children.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Pedagogy or Andragogy? An exploration into Teaching and Learning in the Sixth Form Sector and Implications for Curriculum.

Amy Lees

*Richard Huish College, Taunton UK*

**Abstract**

**Background and purpose:** The rationale for the inquiry was to explore the principles of andragogy in the context of a 6th form college and to investigate if 6th form students are more aligned in their learning preferences to how children learn (pedagogy) or how adults learn (andragogy). This research was needed to address an understudied area of sixth form instruction as post-16 teacher training courses usually use principles of pedagogy even though students in this sector are not children, therefore this topic required further exploration.

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**Findings:** The inquiry found that 6th form students showed preference for andragogy across all dimensions; there was no significant difference between students enrolled on level 3 & 2 courses. Level 2 students demonstrated views more aligned with pedagogy in relation to readiness and there was a significant difference in motivation between sixth form and FE students with regards to motivation.

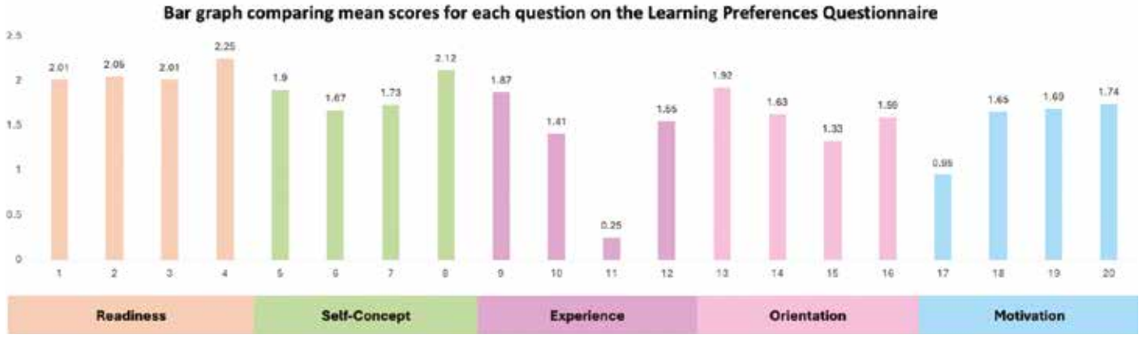
**Conclusions, originality, value and implications:** In the context of sixth form teaching andragogy may be more relevant than pedagogy; explicit use of andragogical principles within the curriculum can help students to make the transition from school and recognition of motivation, experience and readiness to learn in the post-16 classroom may be a more suitable approach to teaching adolescent students than theories devised for the teaching of children.

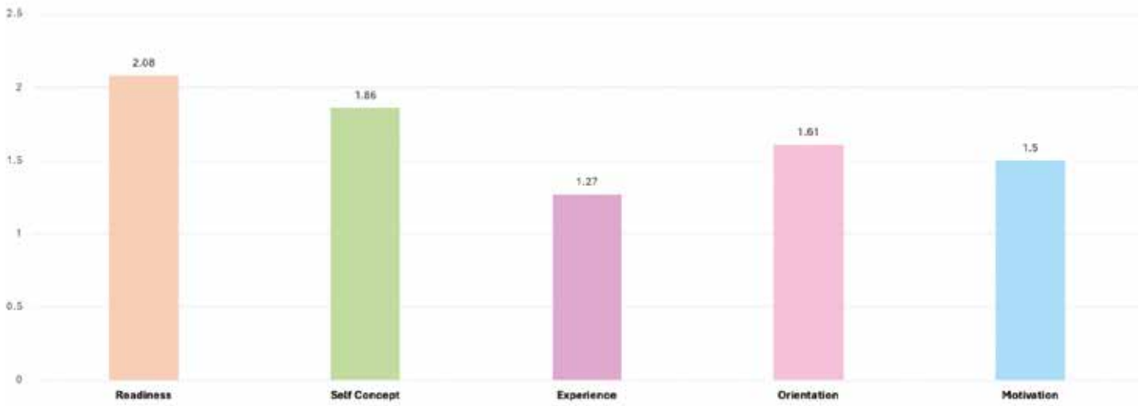
**Keywords:** andragogy; post-16 education; sixth form; further education; independent learning; adult learning; student-centred learning

Table 1: Mean values by question (scale ranges from -3 to 3)

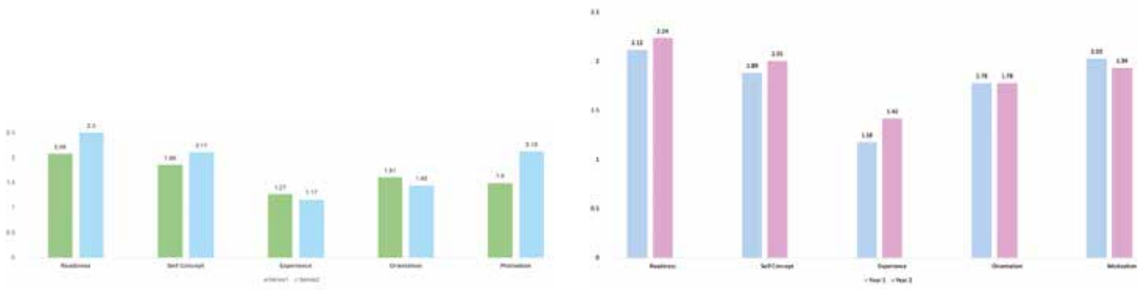
| | |
|---|---|
| **Readiness** | |
| It is important to know why I am learning something | 2.01 |
| I think what I learn should be of value to me in my life | 2.05 |
| I am at a point in my life where I am ready to learn | 2.01 |
| Learning will help me to move to the next stage of my life | 2.25 |
| **Self-concept** | |
| I am responsible for my own learning | 1.9 |
| It is important to me that my teacher sees me as independent | 1.67 |
| I think the classroom should be a collaborative learning environment | 1.73 |
| I think it's important to have choice about how I learn | 2.12 |
| **Experience** | |
| My own experience is a valuable resource that helps me learn | 1.87 |
| It is important to me that what I learn can relate to my own life experience | 1.41 |
| I feel rejected when my teacher does not acknowledge my own life experience | 0.25 |
| I find I can use my own intuition when learning something new | 1.55 |
| **Orientation** | |
| It is important to me that my learning helps me to acquire skills | 1.92 |
| I learn most effectively when information is applied in a real life context | 1.63 |
| I am more interested in learning when it is of immediate relevance to me | 1.33 |
| I think it is important to learn information that I can use in my life now | 1.59 |
| **Motivation** | |
| I prefer to find my own solutions when faced with a challenge in my learning | 0.95 |
| I am driven to learn by my own ambitions and have pursued further education for myself | 1.65 |
| I am motivated to learn by a desire for personal growth and fulfilment | 1.69 |
| I am motivated to attend lessons for my own development rather than to avoid consequences | 1.74 |

| Readiness | | | | Self-Concept | | | | Experience | | | | Orientation | | | | Motivation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.01 | 2.05 | 2.01 | 2.25 | 1.9 | 1.67 | 1.73 | 2.12 | 1.87 | 1.41 | 0.25 | 1.55 | 1.92 | 1.63 | 1.33 | 1.59 | 0.95 | 1.65 | 1.69 | 1.74 |




| Readiness | Self-Concept | Experience | Orientation | Motivation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.08 | 1.86 | 1.27 | 1.61 | 1.5 |



# VISUAL ARTS

*Visual Culture in Excellence*

## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This Action Research aims to investigate what makes a great visual art student. We know that our "excellent" students do this, but we want to find out more about how and why they work in the methods that they do.

The initial inspiration for this research was a forum attended with Andy Cope called The Art of Brilliance. Cope's intent is to 'change the narrative and re-focus psychology away from what's wrong with people to what's right'. The Ethic of Excellence by Ron Berger describes a culture where succeeding is seen as the "norm" and those outside of this norm naturally aim to be part of the most prominent culture within the social group.

## AIMS

We wanted to learn from our best students and present their ethos to foster a culture of excellence.

## DESIGN OR METHODOLOGY

Through a questionnaire about learning habits for all students we coded VESPA themes into a visual arts context. Students completed this about their own creative habits. This was completed in the classroom setting. The context of the questionnaire was explained before completion.

## FINDINGS

We analysed the average score for each question for the top eight students which allowed us to identify the specific views of the VESPA qualities.

Out of 137 respondents there is a relatively small group ranking highly (over 85% score). These students became our focus group. The main finding is that for top scorers, effort is the quality that they value lower than their vision and their systems. These students value practise and attitude towards their work over effort.

## CONCLUSIONS, ORIGINALITY, VALUE AND IMPLICATIONS

There is the perception that success in visual arts is entirely about skill. We will now discuss with the focus group their views on effort and unpick their thoughts and approaches to their creative practise. Where does effort plus moderate skill surpass high skill with low effort?

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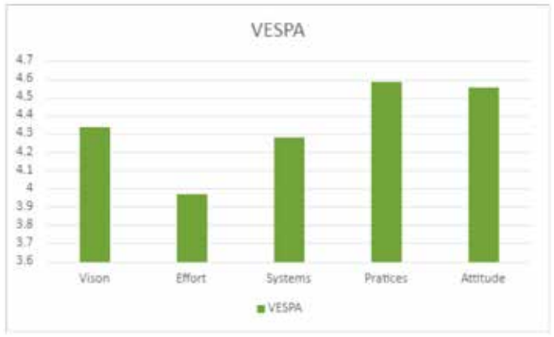
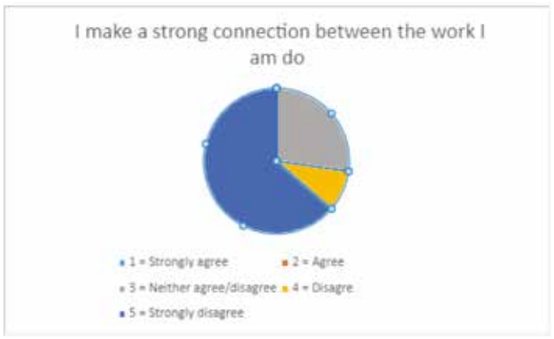
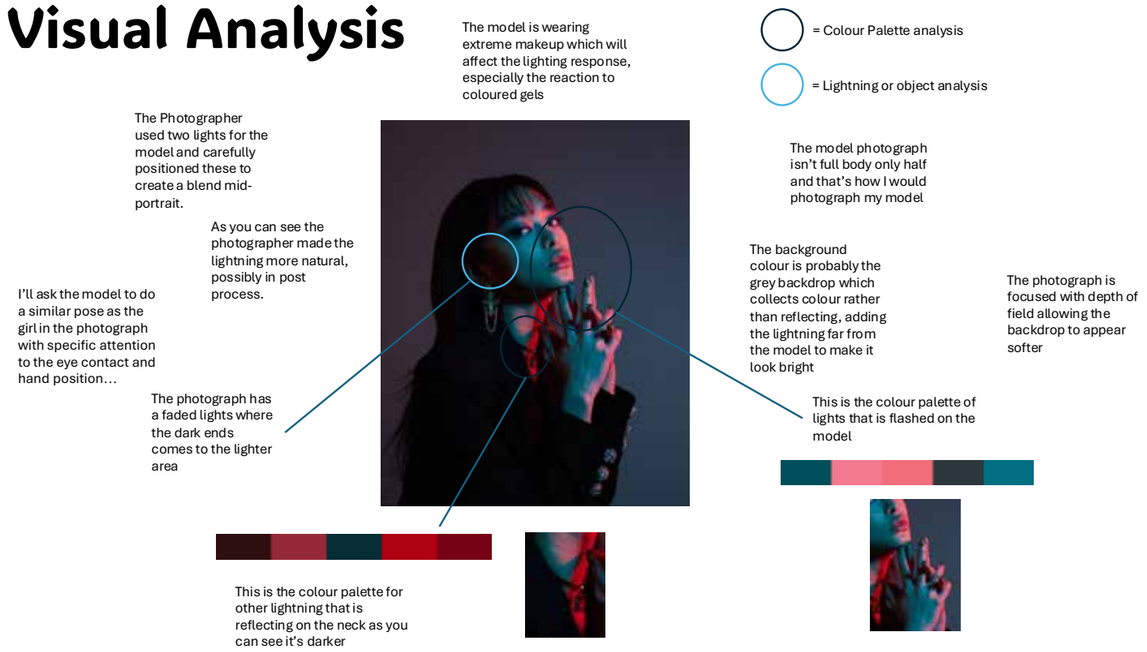




# Visual Analysis




# A LEVEL CHEMISTRY

*Collaborative Homework*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to find out how we can get better at encouraging collaborative learning outside the classroom in order to develop the relationships built up within the classroom with the aim of increasing the progress each individual student makes during A-level chemistry.

The benefits of collaborative learning (structured group work) within the classroom are well-documented with research indicating up to 10 months of additional progress in secondary school Science (EEF, 2021). Peer relationships within the A-level Chemistry classrooms are well-established and students actively work as co-learners, supporting each other and communicating ideas allowing them to learn together and from each other.

Our previous research has looked at the use of a buddy system as an intervention strategy, using high attaining Year 2 students to support struggling Year 1 students with both their basic knowledge and their study skills and this yielded positive results and raised retention within Chemistry. Peer tutoring has been shown to have a high impact for very little cost, with students making 5 or more additional months of progress in research studies (EEF, 2021). Following the last project, we questioned students on their study habits and found that over 80% of students only occasionally or never complete their Huish 30 or revision with a friend. Students were asked for suggestions for how we could get them to work together outside of lessons and several of the respondents suggested research or revision tasks that they complete with other class members therefore we decided collaborative learning outside of the classroom would provide a new avenue to explore.

## 2. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

The first stage of the project, each member of A-level chemistry teaching staff set pieces of Huish 30 homework to their classes that were to be completed in groups. Classes in both Year 1 and Year 2 were involved.

In order to explore the kinds of tasks collaborative learning might suit the best, we devised these homework tasks individually as class teachers.

*Examples of homework activities set:*

- Research project on organic molecules
- Produce a piece of work (poem, video, PowerPoint, song) on the intermediate nature of bonding
- Produce a video record of the oxidation of alcohols practical
- Post-mocks reflection – reviewing mark scheme and then helping each other develop further understanding
- Group revision pre-mocks

*The groupings used were also varied – we explored:*

- Pairs selected by students
- Pairs selected by students who had similar gap in knowledge
- Pairs selected by teacher based on complementary ability
- Established pairings from practical groupings

Students then carried out their homework activities. Following the implementation stage, the tasks were evaluated as part of a department meeting, contrasting and comparing the approaches we had each taken. The students were then asked to reflect on their experience using a Microsoft form.

## 3. WHAT DID YOU FIND OR LEARN?

The student questionnaire was completed by 79 Year 1 students and 78 Year 2 students (from 100 in each year group). Under normal circumstances, 93% of Year 2 students and 73% of Year 1 students never or only occasionally complete their Chemistry Huish 30 with other students.

Feedback on the success of the tasks was very similar from both year groups. 33% of students felt they had produced a better piece of work as part of a group than they would have done individually compared with 15% of students who think their output would have been better on their own. When asked about 'enjoyment' of the task, 38% felt they enjoyed the tasks more working in a group compared to 27% who felt they would have enjoyed the task more individually

Students were also asked to give some written feedback:

*Positive student feedback*

- "Interesting to look at differences in people's research/ revision strategies"
- "It was nice to work with my class friends outside of lessons"
- "I liked being able to share ideas and the workload"

*Negative student feedback*

- "Working as a group means we are less productive"
- "Not a very productive use of time"
- "Hard to find times we were both free"

The department meeting evaluated the project, noting high task completion and good engagement, especially with mock exam tasks. However, research tasks lacked depth. Teacher-chosen groupings had mixed results, with some groups working well and others struggling, leading to requests for new partners. Providing feedback on group outputs, like videos and posters, was also challenging.

Finally, students were asked to reflect on what other tasks would lend themselves well to collaborative learning outside the classroom. Students suggested several tasks for collaborative learning outside the classroom, including research tasks with presentations, joint write-ups of practical activities started in class, and group revision activities.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

Through this project we have shown that students will engage with collaborative learning outside of the classroom. Although feedback was mixed, enough students felt that these activities were beneficial for us to explore the strategy further. We would like to see if grouping the students early on in their course and regularly setting them activities to complete together could have a long-term impact on the students' progress. Further exploring methods for grouping students, types of task and the output of the work will also help to refine the strategy.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Using groupings established in class was more successful than pairing students who hadn't worked together before
- Students found timetables a barrier – making sure they have shared free time first would help groups to succeed.

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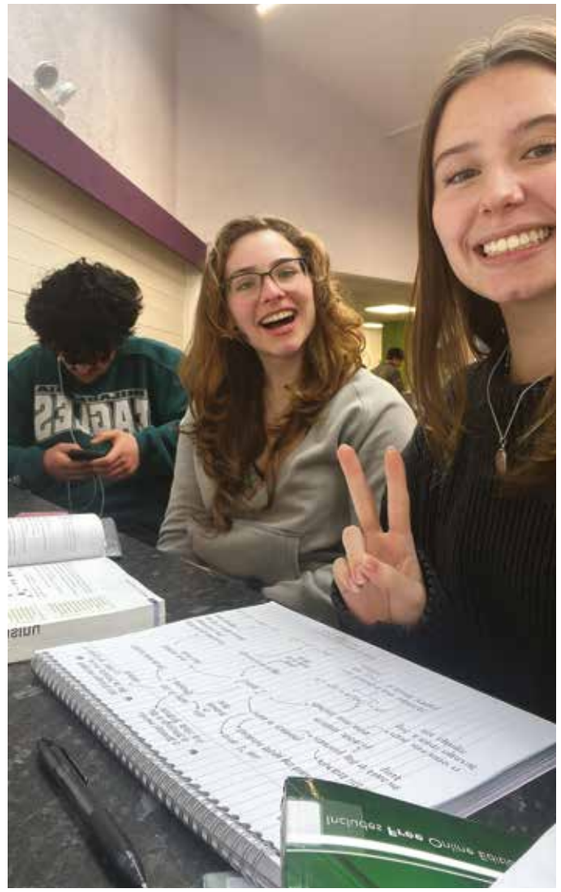
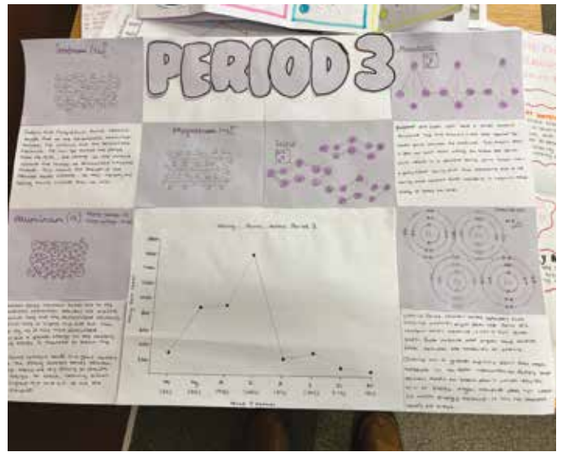
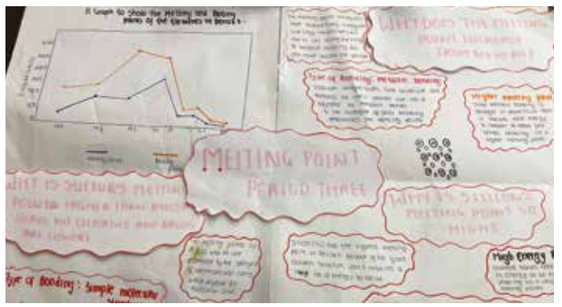





# A LEVEL LAW

*Enrichment for student engagement*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

In 2024-25, A-Level Law wanted to find out how we can get better at providing varied law enrichment to improve student engagement. In 23-24 we had only 1 enrichment running and attendance/engagement reduced after the first term. We aim to achieve this through working with students to create a student led law society and develop the mooting provision from 2023-24.

## 2. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We started by researching enrichment, its impacts on the student journey and whether a law society at a 16-19 college level was commonplace.

From the AOC blog on the impact of enrichment in FE, we found that enrichment had different meanings so what was an enrichment activity in one setting was not in another. The conclusion of the research stated that enrichment 'had clear positive effects in addressing social inequalities, supporting personal development as social members and facilitating the students' progress in employment, adulthood and work-related skills.' We used this research when forming the student law society to think about what the focus of the society would be.

We then looked at the Valuing Enrichment Project which was a joint initiative between the AoC and NCFE. From this we learnt that 'enrichment benefits students across many social and educational parameters, including reinforcing the values of citizenship and encouraging students to be part of collective engagement with their community… (and) had a positive impact upon retention, attendance and attainment across the study programme'. This helped us to decide on a law society committee which would have the aim of forming a collective community and in mooting forming a bar mock competition team and internal mooting team which was a new addition to last year.

Finally, we considered the research by the AOC regarding the different interpretation of enrichment. In the Curacubby enrichment resource for school we found that enrichment is one that allow students to acquire transferable skills that 'starts in their comfort zone and stretches them beyond those boundaries into academic fields'.

We decided that this would be a focus for both enrichments to help us understand the skills that students had identified and been able to take into their studies.

We also researched colleges that ran a law society and mooting but struggled to find examples of colleges that had a law society – this is normally run at universities. Mooting in many colleges seems to be a short-term enrichment for students in college specifically for the bar mock competition, therefore what we do is likely to lead the way.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

We tried to create an identify for the law society and mooting by developing a logo that allowed the students to feel a sense of community. This allowed us to advertise both enrichments, including in social media posts, and it gave the enrichment a sense of being central to the department and created longevity. We decided, based on student feedback at the beginning of the year, to promote our enrichment via freshers fair and the enrichment list in college making it registered and timetabled in 2 lunchtime slots to allow students to be able to attend both.



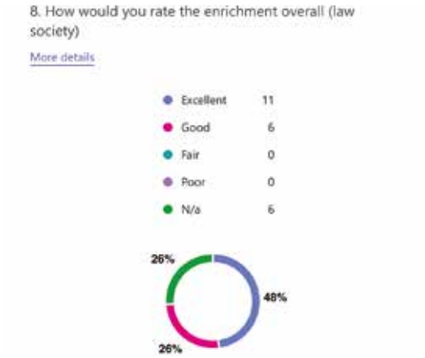
Data was collected from students after the enrichments has been running for 5 months to assessment the following:

*a) What skills students had developed that they can take into wider study programme:*

This was an open text question and so we were interested in what students felt they had learnt. These were the common identified skills. Many students also mentioned the ability to make friends which we did not foresee as being a skill they developed.


*b) How students rated the enrichment and whether they would continue to attend in future years:*

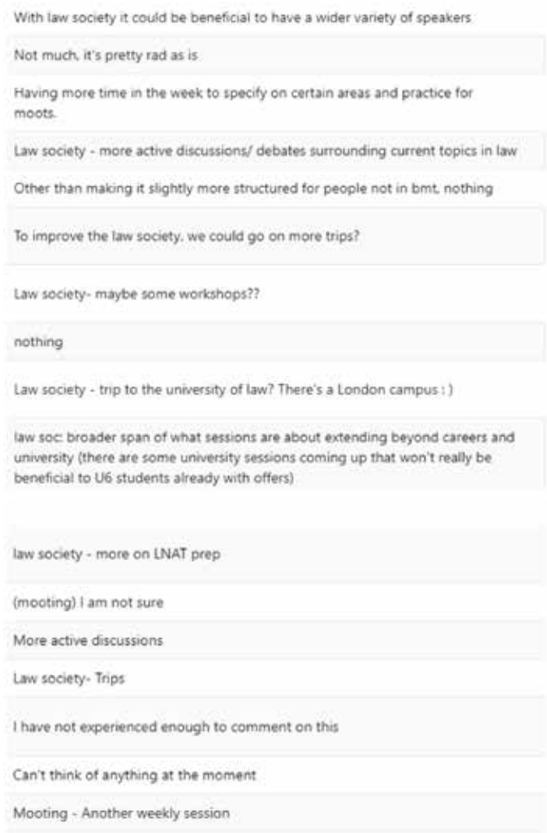
Students only used the 'excellent' and 'good' options to rate enrichment evidencing a high impact of the enrichment on students who attended regularly. This is a fantastic result and evidences the sense of community which was a primary aim of the enrichment development.


*c) What could be next steps for developing the enrichment further:*

The introduction of the law society and mooting in 2024-25 was new and seems to be unique for a sixth form college. This means that we had no template.

- Next steps for law society – develop committee to ensure they have clear direction for student led provision and introduce law enrichment passport
- Mooting based on feedback, develop academic scheme of work to develop skills and internal mooting programme




## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

Registers show a reduction in regular attendance from the beginning of the academic year to March 2025. However over 40 students regularly attend the law society and 30 mooting which is a significant number attending the provision. Data was collected through forms to identify feedback on our aims. This showed:

- Students state overwhelmingly they would attend either a law society or mooting in a second year at college or at higher education. 70% said definitely and 30% maybe – 0% opted for 'no'
- Data shows surprising impact on students' ability to meet other students and make new friends.
- Assessments for those in law enrichment show 85% of students attending law enrichment met or exceeded target grades and 15% were only 1 grade below. No student attending law enrichment got an E or U.

Overall law enrichment has been a successful introduction to the law provision and is impacting on the student journey.

*References:*

*Association of Colleges and NCFE. (2024). Valuing Enrichment: Final Report.*

*Curacubby. (2025). Curacubby Enrichment Resource for Schools.*

# CAREERS & PROGRESSION

*University Support*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

As a team, our primary goal was to better understand our students' attitudes and perceptions towards university to inform our practice when working with them. Additionally, we aimed to identify areas where our students' lacked knowledge, enabling us to develop targeted actions to support their progression. Our action research directly addresses our SAR to gain a deeper understanding of students views on progression options and the potential barriers that exist, with a focus on university education.

Prior to our investigation, we conducted background research to grasp the current attitudes towards university on a national scale. For instance, a survey by the Office for National Statistics revealed that 91% of students were concerned about the rising cost of living, and half of the students felt that they had financial difficulties (Office for National Statistics, 2022). We incorporated this research into our action research by developing focus questions addressing potential concerns, including how financial considerations might impact our students' decisions to attend university.

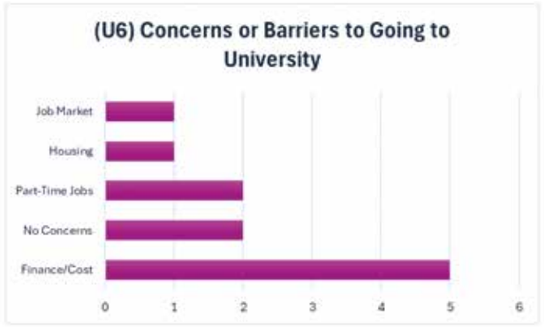
## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

For our action research, we organised focus groups for both Lower 6th and Upper 6th students. This required developing two sets of questions, as these groups are at different stages of their university application or planning process. For the Upper 6th focus groups, we concentrated on understanding their UCAS application experiences and whether they felt they needed more information or resources during this process. Conversely, the Lower 6th questions focused on their motivations to pursue university education and the support they need for their journey towards university.

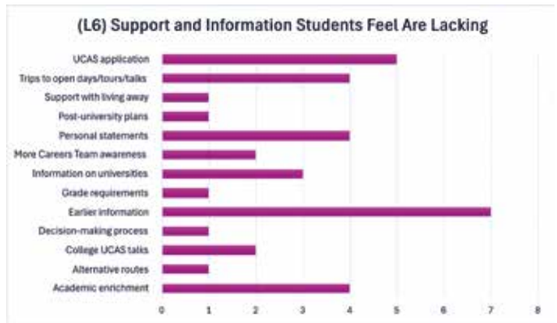
Each focus group session was conducted during tutor time, with approximately 4-6 students per group. Feedback was collected through discussions, allowing us to involve students as learning partners and gain valuable insights into their perspectives.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Our findings revealed several key insights relating to financial considerations and concerns. While students generally have concerns about finances, these do not ultimately deter them from attending university. Lower 6th students are particularly worried about the cost of living while studying at university, whereas Upper 6th students did not highlight this issue. Instead, Upper 6th students expressed concerns about balancing part-time jobs with their university workload.




In terms of areas where students require more support, we discovered that Lower 6th students desire information regarding their progression options and UCAS applications earlier in the academic year. Some students specifically suggested receiving this information right after the Christmas holidays. When Upper 6th students were asked a similar question, the majority appeared satisfied with the information provided to them, although a few individual areas of support were mentioned. This suggests that Lower 6th students currently feel they lack information but anticipate receiving more as they approach the end of their first year.




Another significant finding from our action research is that Lower 6th students feel they lack information on the UCAS application process. They specifically commented on wanting to know what to include in their applications and suggested the development of a mock-up form to guide them. This feedback highlights the need for more structured and detailed guidance on the UCAS application process for Lower 6th students.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The findings from our action research have provided valuable insights that will inform our long-term practice. Understanding the specific concerns and needs of both Lower 6th and Upper 6th students has highlighted areas where we can potentially enhance our support. These insights will help us refine our approach to student support, ensuring that we are responsive to their needs and helping them navigate the challenges of university life more effectively.

We plan to review how our students receive information regarding their progression options, specifically for university education and consider adjusting the volume they receive to prevent unnecessary stress. We also plan to develop a UCAS application guide for students to follow, providing a clear and practical guide to help demystify the application process.

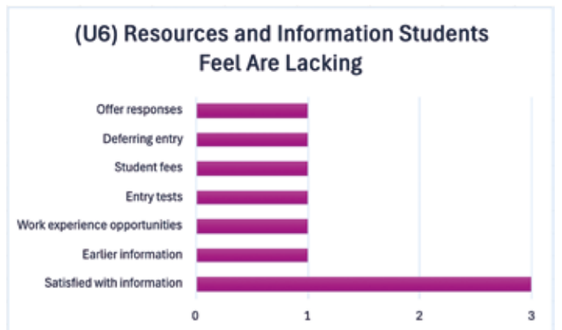
Furthermore, we aspire to enhance communication across various college teams, such as the progress tutors, to ensure that all staff members are well-informed and equipped to support students with their university applications. This collaborative approach will enable us to offer personalized support tailored to each students' needs.

### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Change your approach: Adapt your approach when speaking to different groups. Lower 6th students may require less encouragement as they are going through the process of considering university, whereas Upper 6th students might need follow-up questions to remind them of their application experience.
- Encourage students to share their personal experiences, as they may find common ground with their peers and present common themes.

*References:*

*Office for National Statistics (2022) Cost of Living and Higher Education Students, England: 24 October to 7 November 2022. Available at: Cost of living and higher education students, England - Office for National Statistics (Accessed: 14 October 2024).*




# CRIMINOLOGY

*Progression Readiness*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our action research project focussed on integrating 'progression readiness' into the Criminology course to better prepare our students for their next steps and increase their awareness of the possibilities associated with Criminology.

We selected this as our focus as it links to our QIP priorities – it is centred around our student survey results where progression readiness was identified as a priority for improvement.

As a subject, we have a diverse cross-section of learners with a broad range of strengths and skillsets – and so, a broad spectrum of options (both careers & higher education) should be integrated into our everyday learning to create high aspirations and ambition in our learners.

It is well researched that "students who are working towards a career in a field that excites them and brings personal satisfaction will have an easier time developing intrinsic motivation for completing their (college programme)" (OneGoal: 2024). By showing our students that there is something tangible to be gained at the end of the course, we hoped that it may inspire greater intrinsic motivation and thus, greater results/outcomes.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To establish exactly what strategy we should take to implement greater progression readiness, we decided to send out a student survey (via Microsoft Forms) to our (114) first-year students to find out what areas (careers/universities) they wanted to learn more about.

From these results, we planned and resourced three 'Progression Sessions' on the following topic areas 1) Studying Criminology at university 2) Careers related to Criminology and 3) Transferable skills. These were delivered to our Year 1 students as part of the academic tutorial programme.

- The 'Studying Criminology at University' session began with a teacher introduction with the aims of (all) the progression sessions laid out. The students were then guided towards subject specific university rankings to explore the different possibilities (course and location). Following this, the students were briefed on the different metrics on league tables (value added, retention, student experience etc.) and advised why each was important to consider.
- During the 'Careers Related to Criminology' session, the students were given a list of different careers directly related to Criminology, with resource links. This led them to the prospects.ac.uk website which gave them information on the career such as salary, day-to-day expectations, as well as some guidance on possible routes into each career.
- The final progression session centred around 'Transferable Skills'. This was a reflective session which involved the students being given a list of employability skills, which they then needed to link to areas of the Criminology course.

The first-year students completed questionnaires before and after the series of sessions to measure the impact/ effectiveness of the sessions on their progression readiness.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The responses were very mixed regarding how helpful students found the sessions, with a mean score of 3.73 out of 6 for helpfulness. The comments provided by learners were useful in identifying why some found the experience to be valuable, whilst others didn't feel that the sessions were particularly relevant to them.

Based on the qualitative responses, some students were unclear as to the purpose of the sessions and were hoping for more specific information about job roles and university courses. Several individuals asked for further information on apprenticeships and other routes.

*Examples:*

- 'Perhaps more in-depth information on other options rather than university.'
- 'Help to find where I can find apprenticeship or degree apprenticeship'

There were, however, many positive comments about how the sessions allowed them to consider career options that they hadn't necessarily associated with Criminology.

*Examples:*

- "I found them useful as they explained many aspects of the criminological field once we leave college. They made me feel clearer about what might be waiting for me after college."
- "They provided knowledge, on how to choose universities. The session where we looked at careers, helped to provide me with more information on different careers I would like to do in the future."
- "I found exploring universities that do certain courses I am interested in useful as I wasn't doing this in my own time before the sessions. This gave me a little push to start thinking about looking at courses and different universities."

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

For the current cohort, the department plans to recap the purpose of the sessions and what they can now do to help themselves with progression readiness and signpost students to careers team and further information on apprenticeships. For future cohorts and other departments, there should be clearer explanations of the purpose of sessions, closer grouping of sessions to maintain momentum and improve understanding of purpose and more range in variety of sessions by including apprenticeships.

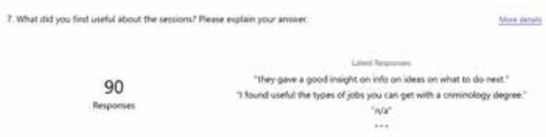
*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

If we were to repeat this research, we would ensure there is clarity amongst the students about what the sessions are for, and what the desired outcomes are. Furthermore, we would design both (before and after) questionnaires at the same time to ensure the validity of the results fully aligns with our research aims.

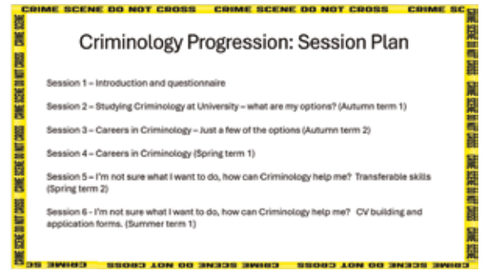
*References:*

OneGoal. (2024). Motivating Students in Their Postsecondary Path. Retrieved from OneGoal.

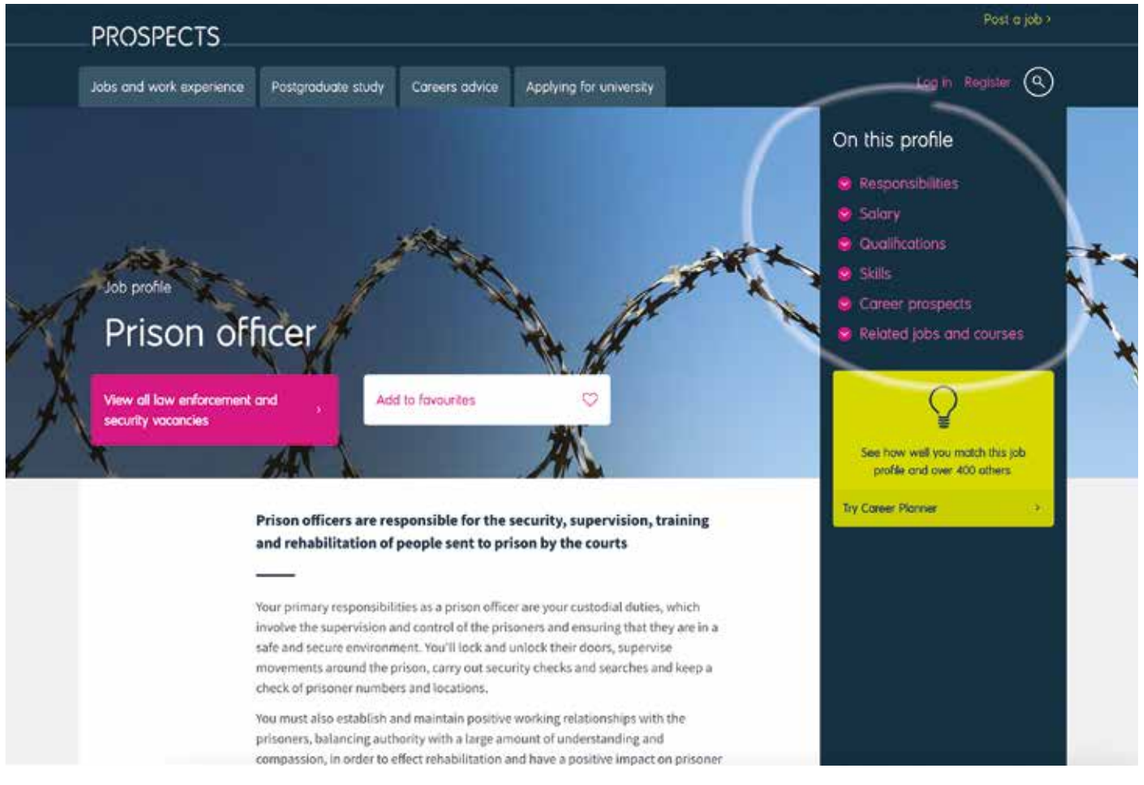
Prospects. (n.d.). What can I do with my degree? Criminology. Retrieved from Prospects.









# EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS & HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

*Work booklets for retrieval*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to find out how we can get better at using resources in the classroom, including booklets, to improve student engagement and achievement. We also wanted to find out how we can get better at engaging students in their own learning to improve attendance and retention. We can draw on current teaching resources to put together booklets which are appropriately pitched and curriculum specific to our learners needs. As a department, this is not a resource that we have previously employed. Booklets are used successfully by colleagues in other departments in the college, so we thought we would give it a try. This was of particular interest, as we moved from a coursework-based course, to an exam-based one. As a team, we conducted some initial research into the experiences of other teams using booklets in classrooms. The findings focused on scaffolding learning and reflected our aims, in what we hoped to gain from introducing booklets to our lessons.

Yaghobian M, Yaghobi T, Salmeh F, Golmohammadi F, Safari H, Savasari R, et al .(2010) Compared the Effect of Teaching Using Educational Booklets and Lecture on Nurses' Knowledge about Professional Laws and Regulations. There were 3 groups. Group 1 had the booklet and lecture, Group 2 only the booklet and Group 3 was the control group. After pre-test and post-test, the 1st group's mean score had the largest increase.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We created and provided booklets for each unit for each learner. Each booklet was made up of information to complement the lesson content along with activities for Huish 30 and revision.

*We are hoping that the impact will be:*

A. Learners are not passively copying down from the board in lessons.

B. Learners who are absent know exactly where they need to be before they return to the classroom.

We involved students in this research as we asked them to complete questionnaires about the booklets to give their honest feedback about whether they find them to be a useful tool.

Year 2 learners were asked to compare the use of booklets with their lessons without them in Year 1.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Student reported that the booklets were useful. Some positive responses can be seen in the chart below. They also shared how they liked to use the booklets in the visual below.

| Responses |
|---|
| it's all in one space |
| less writing |
| It's easy to follow and includes everything we need to know when it comes to completing a task in it. |
| Lots of information and spaces for answers and the help information on the back |
| Structure and lots of independent work |
| All our work for the booklet is in one place and it's easy to look back on |
| I like that we can look back in them for information and also it is all in one place. |


We also received some constructive feedback. Students found the booklets repetitive at times and space constricting. They would prefer more freedom in their booklets.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

Moving forward, we will continue to utilise booklets as a tool for retrieval and many other learning and studying opportunities.

We will further develop booklets for other teaching units and aim to refine the booklets to meet student needs, based on the feedback provided.

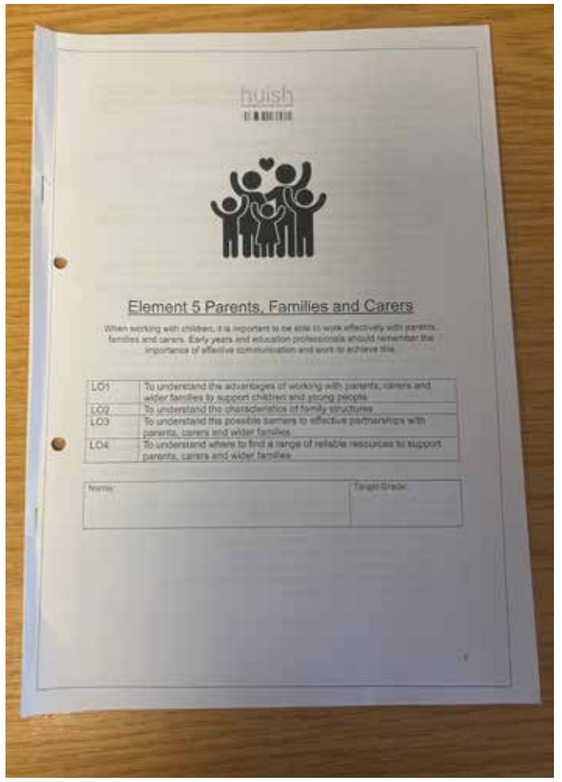
### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

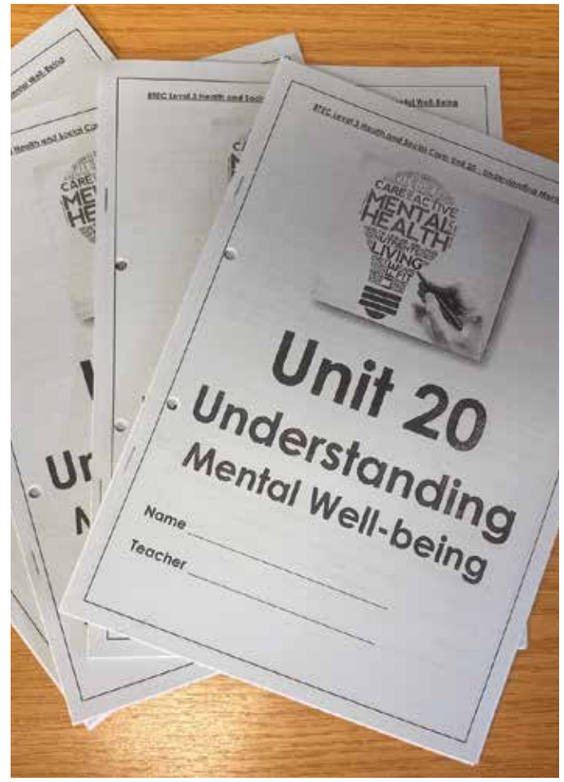
- If you haven't already, consider implementing booklets into your teaching and learning routine.
- Put page numbers on the booklets, so that students can easily refer to a page!
- Get colleagues to proofread your booklets before supplying them to students
- Ensure that you have some blank pages in your booklets. Students like these for overflow note taking and revision.
- Make your booklets engaging. Don't repeat the same format repeatedly, as students will find the booklet unattractive and boring.

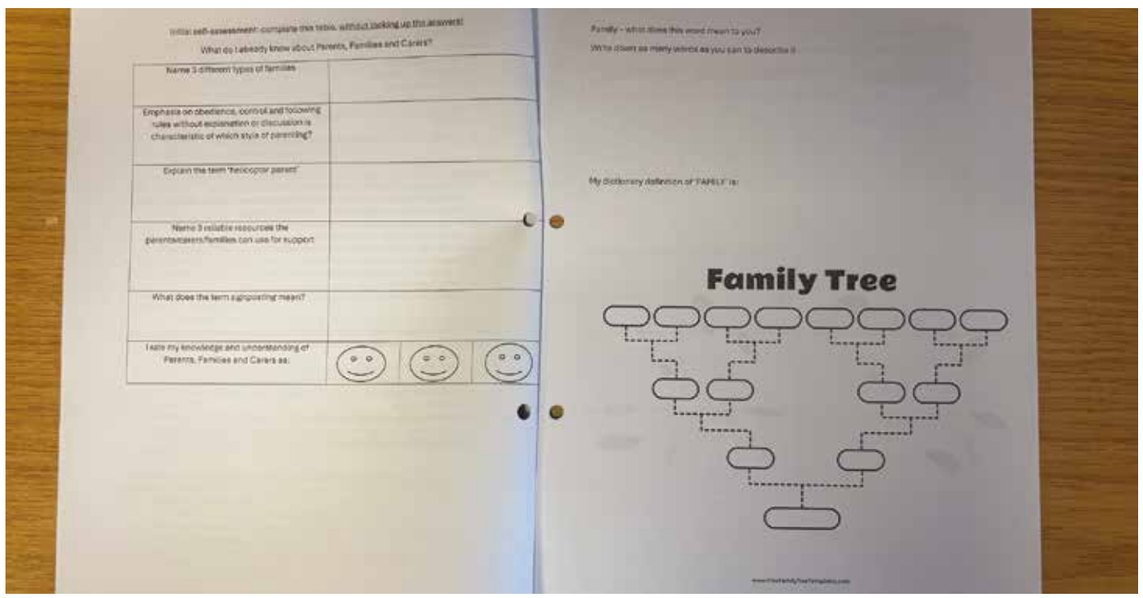


*References*

Yaghobian M, Yaghobi T, Salmeh F, Golmohammadi F, Safari H, Savasari R, et al . Comparing the Effect of Teaching Using Educational Booklets and Lecture along with Educational Booklets on Nurses' Knowledge about Professional Laws and Regulations. Iranian Journal of Medical Education. 2010; 9 (4) :372-380.

# GCSE ENGLISH

*Journal Writing to develop confidence*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The GCSE English cohort often lacks confidence in their writing due to various individual circumstances, including home schooling, EAL, SEND, and disruptions in their schooling. This project aimed to investigate methods to enhance their confidence.

This lack of confidence leads to underperformance in the two writing tasks of the GCSE English paper. Despite Huish students being part of one of the best-performing GCSE retake departments in the country, they averaged 16 out of 40 in their exams last year.

Our research project focused on the benefits of journaling, inspired by Andrew Otty's article in TES, "Getting students to write journals leaves them glowing with pride." Otty advocates for 'Low Stakes' writing, which is not assessed, thereby eliminating the fear of assessment and failure.

Johnathan Kay, AQA's post-16 GCSE English specialist, also discusses the advantages of writing in his book "Improving Math and English in Further Education." He explains that he begins his English retake lessons with journaling, allowing students a set period to write freely without assessment, with feedback provided only upon request. Kay argues that this approach builds confidence by removing the stigma of failure from the writing task. He claims that journaling has been shown to improve results by 25%. Further research traced this statistic to "Improving engagement and attainment in maths and English courses: insights from behavioural research" (publishing.service.gov.uk), where a school's pass rate improved from 16% to 20% after implementing journaling.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We implemented a journaling initiative for an initial eight-week period for 47 students across three classes, commencing after the students had completed their November examinations and while they awaited their results. The project was introduced by sharing quotations from our readings and highlighting a key statistic indicating a 25% improvement in results, to encourage student participation.

To distinguish journaling from other classroom activities, we provided students with new exercise books for their journal entries and allocated time for them to personalise their journals with stickers and drawings, thereby fostering a sense of ownership over their writing.

*We established clear guidelines for the journaling activity:*

- We would review the entries only if the student requested feedback.
- The journaling could encompass any topic of the student's choice, provided it remained respectful and non-discriminatory.
- Journaling would be conducted for 10 minutes at the beginning of each Tuesday lesson.
- Extracts from the journals would be used in our summary report only after obtaining the students' permission.

Prior to the commencement of the project, we conducted a survey to assess the students' confidence in their writing, which was repeated at the conclusion of the eight-week period. Additionally, we conducted a focus group with the students to gain deeper insights into their attitudes towards journaling.

At the start of each journaling session, students were shown a slide reminding them of the research project's purpose and providing a prompt to assist those struggling with ideas, such as "Write about your hopes for the next academic year," followed by questions like "What courses will you be taking?" and "Will you attempt any new hobbies?"

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Students quickly established a routine of retrieving their journals and commencing their writing. Approximately half of the cohort chose to write freely, often composing diary-style entries about their weekly experiences, while the other half adhered to the provided prompts. The more confident students typically wrote independently, whereas the less confident students, often those with EAL or SEND, tended to utilize the suggested prompts.

As the project progressed, a decline in engagement was observed among some students, predominantly white English male students. Despite prompts to encourage their participation, these students remained reluctant throughout the project. Conversely, EAL, homeschooled, and SEND students maintained full engagement and have requested the continuation of journaling, which has now become a regular activity at the beginning of lessons.

The survey conducted at the conclusion of the eight-week period revealed a decline in writing confidence, from an average of 3.4 out of 5 to 3.0 out of 5. However, it is important to note that the cohort composition changed during this period due to timetabling adjustments. Of the eight students who responded to the final survey, seven reported that journaling had helped them develop their writing skills. The focus group feedback indicated that journaling "helped get feelings off my chest," "calmed them down" at the beginning of lessons, and "warmed up my brain."

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

We will continue to implement journaling at least once a week at the beginning of the first lesson. The consensus among students and educators was that journaling had a positive effect on the start of lessons, providing a calming period during which students could engage in mindful reflection before commencing their academic activities. The time allocated to journaling was compensated for by the increased focus and productivity observed during the subsequent lesson.

Moving forward, it is essential to consider strategies for engaging the reluctant male students in the journaling process.

### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

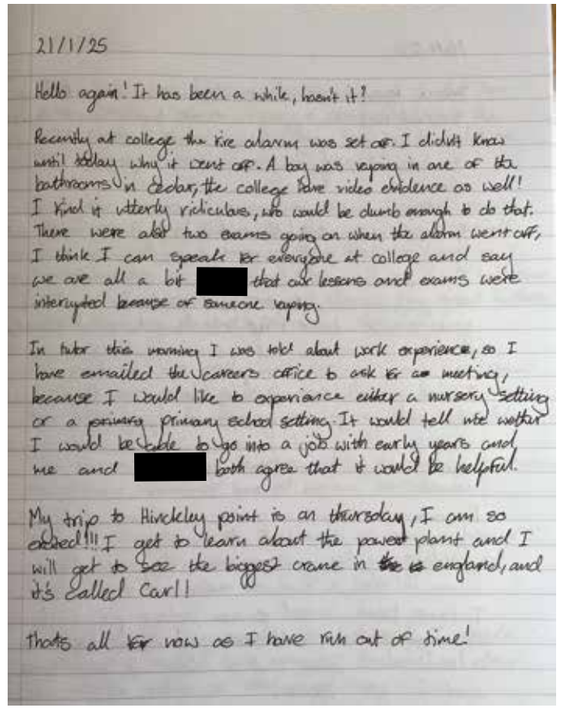
- Be consistent- journal at a regular time each week.
- Encourage students to take ownership of their writing by writing about how they are feeling. Only use the suggested prompt as a last option.
- Resist the urge to offer feedback. Journalling is about regaining the enjoyment of writing lost due to over assessment in primary and secondary schools.

*References*

Education, D. for (2018) Improving engagement and attainment in maths and English courses, GOV.UK. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-engagement-and-attainment-in-maths-and-english-courses.

Otty, A. (2022) 'getting students to write journals leaves them glowing with pride', Tes Magazine. Available at: https://www.tes.com/magazine/archive/getting-students-write-journals-leaves-them-glowing-pride .

Kay, J. (2021) Improving maths and English in further education. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

21/1/25

Hello again! It has been a while, hasn't it?

Recently at college the fire alarm was set off. I didn't know until today why it went off. A boy was vaping in one of the bathrooms in block, the college have video evidence as well! I find it utterly ridiculous, who would be dumb enough to do that. There were also two exams going on when the alarm went off, I think I can speak for everyone at college and say we are all a bit [redacted] that our lessons and exams were interrupted because of someone vaping.

In tutor this morning I was told about work experience, so I have emailed the Careers office to ask for a meeting, because I would like to experience either a nursery setting or a primary primary school setting. It would tell me whether I would be able to go into a job with early years and me and [redacted] both agree that it would be helpful.

My trip to Hinckley point is on thursday, I am so excited!!! I get to learn about the power plant and I will get to see the biggest crane in the is england, and it's called Carl!

Thats all for now as I have run out of time!

**Journal Writing – 10 minutes**

- Write a journal entry – 26/11/24
- Write about whatever you want

Or

- Write about your thoughts/hopes for the Christmas holiday.

# GCSE SOCIOLOGY

*Oracy*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We aimed to research the impact of oracy on classroom behaviour and relationships to foster a positive learning culture and enhance effective learning. Initially, we wanted to focus on improving behaviour and relationships to develop oracy in the classroom in line with the college QIP priorities. However, as the project developed, it naturally leant towards us focusing more on confidence in the classroom and how improving this could be impactful on academic achievement. The reason this had been identified as a priority was due to the challenging nature of teaching the GCSE Sociology course in a post-16 setting. Students are required to finish a two-year course within 9 months and begin learning a new curriculum alongside new peers from various secondary schools. Since students often enrol onto a level 2 programme, due to insufficient GCSEs for Level 3 qualifications, their confidence is already affected before starting college. These factors collectively make GCSE Sociology challenging, highlighting the importance of boosting confidence early on.

A study by the University of Cambridge involving over 600 teenagers found that students with stronger self-awareness and a sense of purpose, referred to as eudaimonia, consistently outperformed their peers in GCSE-level assessments. Encouraging adolescents to feel capable and purposeful – rather than just happy – could improve their academic results as well as their mental health. This underscores the need to move beyond simply boosting happiness and towards deeper engagement, helping students realise their unique talents and aspirations. This aligns with our aim to research the impact of oracy on classroom behaviour and relationships to foster a positive learning culture and enhance effective learning.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We assessed the confidence levels of our GCSE Sociology students using a "Where am I at" activity, which involved students reflecting their confidence on a worksheet three times across the year. The worksheet depicted the outline of a tree with characters at different stages of their learning journey. We focused on knowledge and understanding, confidence in the classroom and confidence with your peer group/teacher.

The students were encouraged to colour code each of these focuses (or write a description) based on these four questions:

1. Am I understanding key concepts and ideas?
2. Do I feel like I can ask my teacher for help?
3. Do I feel confident putting my hand up to answer questions?
4. Do I feel comfortable having discussions with other students in the classroom?

Our plan was to get students to complete this activity at the beginning of each term with the same set of questions. We would then track their progress in these areas. Whilst the students responded well to the visual reflections, we realised we needed to quantify their progress to ensure our teaching was effective in these areas and to inform our planning for next academic year. As a result, we asked students to complete a Microsoft Form which not only asked them to identify if their confidence had improved between the first and second completion of the activity, but it also asked them to rank their improved confidence out of five (or tell us why their confidence hadn't improved).

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The data collected from students via Microsoft Form reveals significant improvements in confidence since September. This feedback comes from two-thirds of the GCSE cohort. Specifically, 69.6% of students reported increased confidence in understanding key concepts and ideas. Additionally, 78.3% of students felt more confident asking teachers for help, and 65.2% felt more comfortable raising their hand to answer questions. However, only 43.5% of students felt more at ease engaging in discussions with their peers. Overall, these results indicate notable progress in several areas of student confidence, although peer discussions remain a challenge.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

We feel that there have been many positives from our research that we will continue to embed and develop. This includes the development of a Huish 30 revision booklet which was created to help build confidence in knowledge. From our research, we can now include specific activities aimed at developing confidence that students have working with peers in the group. This will include activities that encourage discussion, interaction and collaboration. As a University of Cambridge study suggested that fostering a sense of competence and purpose in adolescents can improve their academic performance, this feels like an appropriate extension of our research.

We are also considering completing the 'Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE)' course to help students develop teamwork, independent learning, problem solving, research, discussion & oral presentation skills in the future (Veale, 2019).

### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- When measuring concepts in a visual way, ensure you have a coding system to quantify the measure from the beginning of the study.

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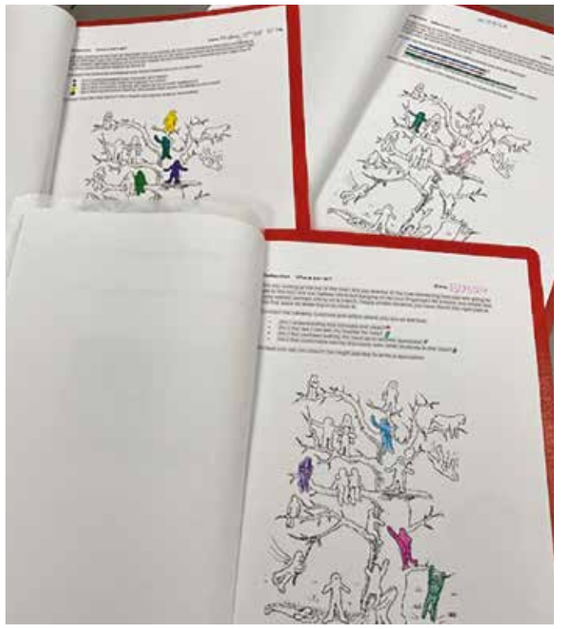
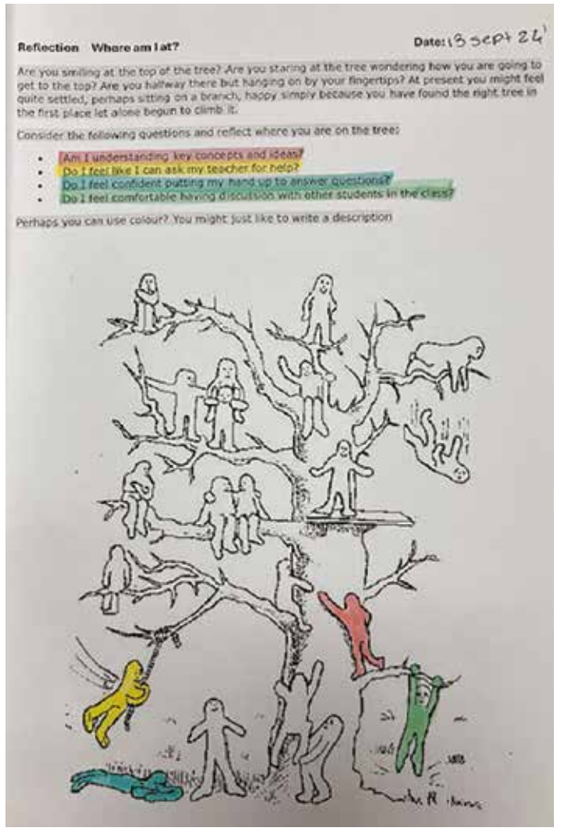
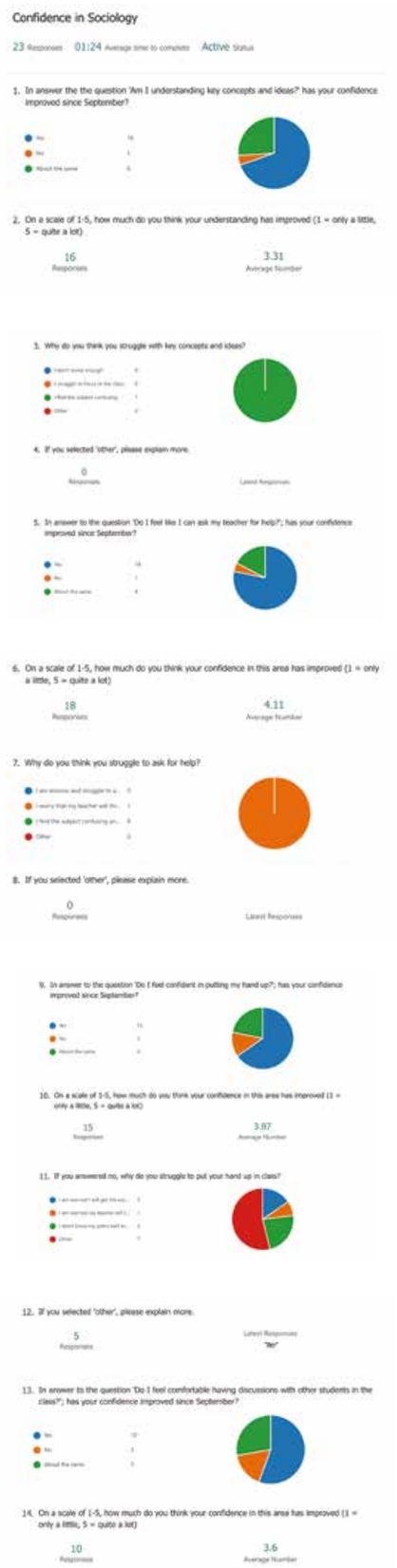




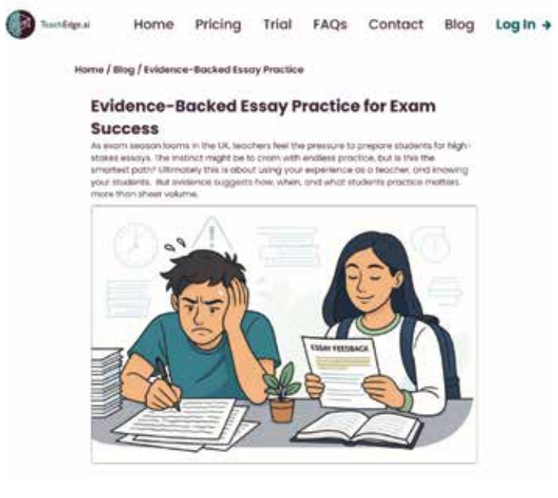



# HISTORY

*AI in Feedback and Assessment*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our research aimed to explore the effectiveness of AI essay feedback tools in improving student outcomes and understanding in A-Level History. With the increasing integration of technology in education, we were particularly interested in how AI could enhance the feedback process, making it more timely, detailed, and actionable. The motivation behind this research was to address the challenges of providing consistent and high-quality feedback to students, which is crucial for their academic development and engagement.



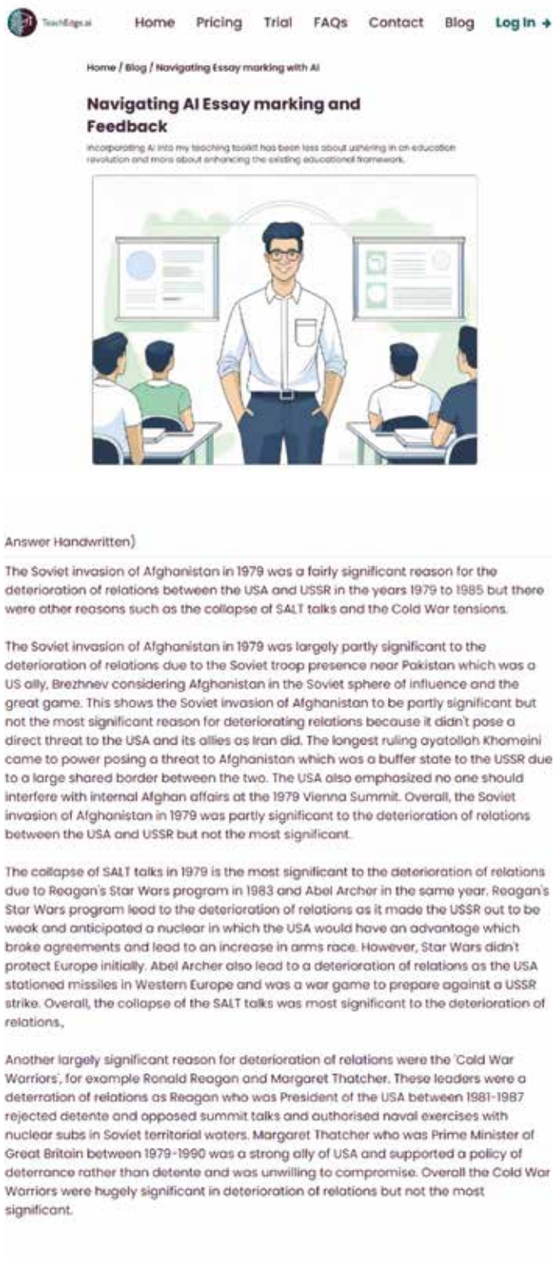

We wanted to find out how we can improve our assessment and feedback practices to enhance exam technique and outcomes. AI is increasingly being used by students and teachers, and we believe that our assessment and feedback can leverage the opportunities that AI provides. AI can support us in providing feedback that is timely, specific, actionable, and individualized. It enables the creation of low-stakes testing and formative assessments, allowing students to identify areas to target for improvement. Our aim is to foster intrinsic motivation and encourage students to engage with feedback and take ownership of their progress.

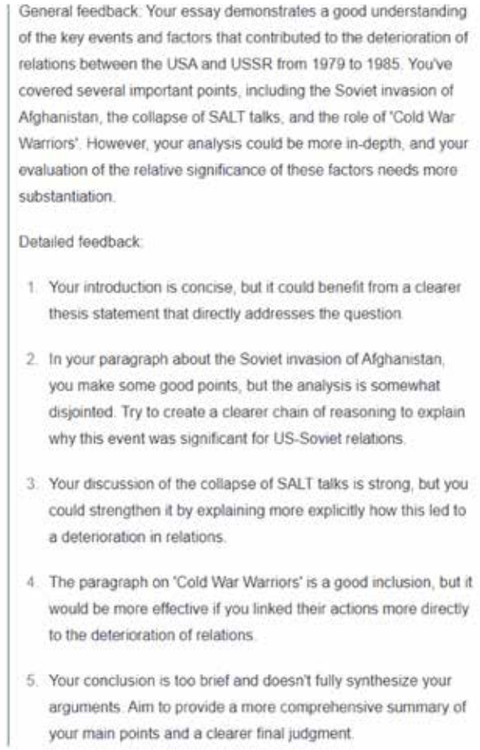
## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

For our action research, we initially experimented with the AI feedback tool TeachEdge.ai by using it to second mark a set of example essays that had already been manually assessed by teachers. This allowed us to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of the AI-generated marks. Following this, we extended the trial to involve students. Twenty volunteer students submitted their essays to TeachEdge.ai and received AI-generated feedback. We then collected their feedback on the process, focusing on the usability, clarity, and helpfulness of the AI feedback.

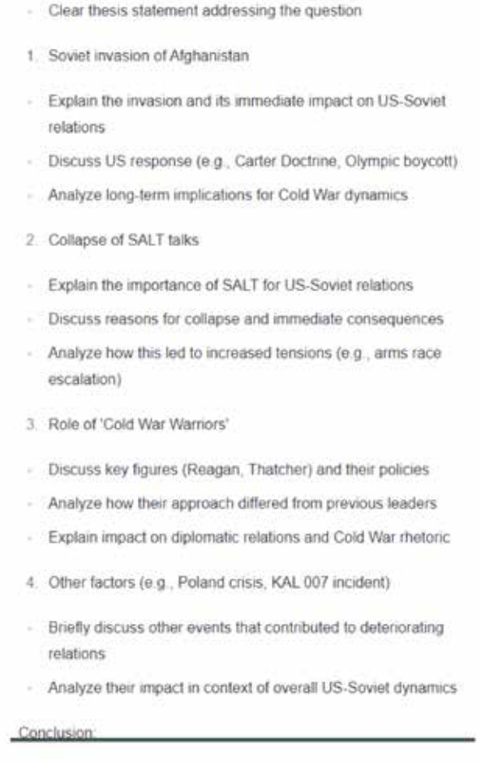
## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Our findings were promising. The AI tool provided accurate marks that aligned well with our manual assessments, confirming its reliability. Students found the feedback actionable and helpful, appreciating the quick turnaround time. They reported that the feedback helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses better, allowing them to make targeted improvements. However, some students noted that reading feedback on mobile devices was challenging, highlighting a need for improved accessibility.




Students offered a skeleton essay plan (below) and also a rewrite (above right), both can be a useful tool for further discussion:




The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was ~~largely partly~~ **undoubtedly** significant to the deterioration of relations due to the Soviet troop presence near Pakistan, which was a US ally, **and the broader implications for Cold War geopolitics**. Brezhnev considered Afghanistan within the Soviet sphere of influence, **which directly challenged US interests in the region**. ~~This shows the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to be partly significant but not the most significant reason for deteriorating relations because it didn't pose a direct threat to the USA and its allies as Iran did.~~ **The US response was swift and severe, with President Carter announcing the Carter Doctrine, which stated that any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region would be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. Additionally, the US led a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics, further straining diplomatic ties.** [*This additional context helps to clarify the significance of the Afghanistan invasion*] ~~The longest ruling ayatollah Khomeini came to power posing a threat to Afghanistan which was a buffer state to the USSR due to a large shared border between the two. The USA also emphasized no one should interfere with internal Afghan affairs at the 1979 Vienna Summit.~~ **However, while the invasion was a major blow to détente, other factors would prove equally damaging to US-Soviet relations in the following years.**

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The positive results from our research have inspired us to consider integrating AI feedback tools more broadly into our assessment practices. The quick and detailed feedback provided by TeachEdge.ai can significantly enhance the learning experience for students, making the feedback process more efficient and effective. However, we also recognize the importance of addressing usability issues and ensuring compliance with GDPR regulations. Engaging with the college's AI working group will be crucial in navigating these challenges and developing a robust framework for the use of AI tools in education.

### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Start Small: Begin with a pilot program to evaluate the effectiveness of AI tools before scaling up. This allows for initial insights and adjustments based on real-world feedback.
- Combine Feedback: Use a blended approach by combining AI-generated feedback with traditional teacher feedback. This ensures a comprehensive support system for students.
- Ensure Accessibility: Make sure that feedback is easily accessible on all devices, including mobile phones. This enhances the usability and effectiveness of the feedback process.
- Address GDPR Concerns: Ensure that any AI tools used comply with GDPR regulations to protect student data and maintain trust.
- Engage Stakeholders: Involve students, teachers, and senior management in the process to gather diverse perspectives and ensure successful implementation.

By following these tips, educators can effectively integrate AI feedback tools into their teaching practices, enhancing the quality and efficiency of student assessments.

# LEARNING CENTRE

*Learning Centre usage*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The Learning Centre (LC) team decided to research how the LC is used over the course of an academic year. This would then inform our planning.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We used a sampling methodology and recorded data across each college day for the first, full, term-time week of each month, beginning in September 2024 and ending in March 2025.

We recorded gate count figures to measure footfall through the morning, over lunch, to the end of lessons and then from the end of lessons to closing time. Over the course of a week this would provide a snapshot of the number of people entering the LC and highlight the busiest times.

To measure usage of the LC space, we focused on the desks with networked PCs, and the Silent Zone study area. We devised a headcount data collection sheet to record the number of PC desks in use and the number of students using the silent area at four separate times throughout the day.

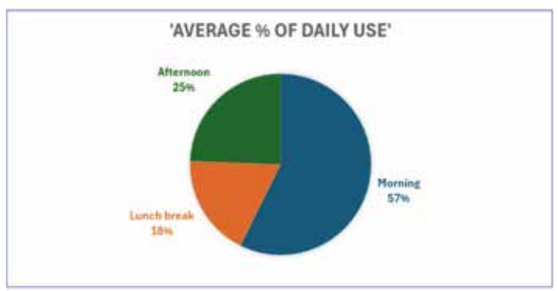
We were also interested in walk-up enquiries, i.e. not email or phone enquiries, received at the desk. We devised a tally sheet to record the number and type of enquiries.

Lastly, we surveyed U6th tutor groups to find out about their usage of the LC.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

*Daily visits**

On average, there were 900 visits to the LC each day. The majority of visits occurred before the lunch break, representing 57% of all visits to the LC. The lunch break was the busiest overall period with an average of 18% of the total number of visits per day happening at lunchtime (Chart 1). Monday and Tuesday were the busiest days with an average of over 1000 visits per day. Mondays were the busiest, 15% higher than the other days.

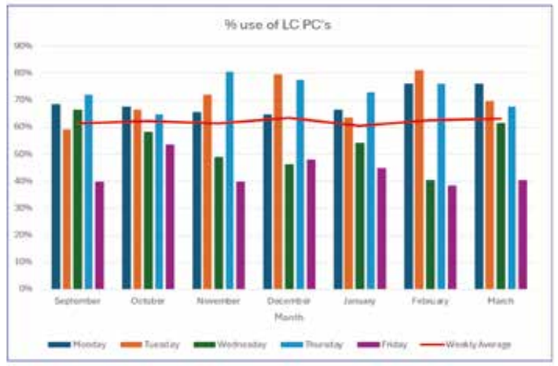



*Weekly visits*

The average number of visits in one week was 4,500. The busiest week was September (9th – 13th 2024) which was 20% higher than the average, with a total of 5,398 visits. This reflects class textbook issues and induction activities. March had the fewest number of visits in the reported week with just under 4,000, due to the number of trips occurring that week (Chart 2).


*PC Usage*

During the counts, on average 62% of the PCs were in use. On a Monday, Tuesday and Thursday the average PC use at specific times varied between 76% and 81% (Chart 3). It is not unusual for students to be unable to find a PC at busy times. Some students used the PC desks for their own devices or as study spaces (1% and 5%, respectively each sampled week). Fridays had the lowest usage.




*Walk-up Issue Desk enquiries*

Most desk enquiries were from students, with the majority of those being the issue and return of mobile phone chargers, 34% on average of all enquiries. Staff enquiries were mainly concerned with the hire of equipment. The greatest number of enquiries correlate with the busiest times recorded for visits.

*Silent Zone*

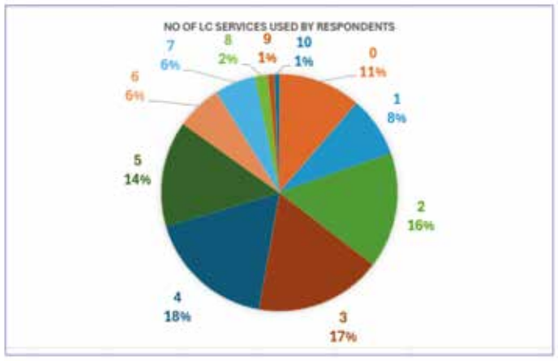
On average, 20% of the Silent Zone was used, rising to 25% on the busiest days, but this varies enormously over the week and during the year. The percentage usage was increasing month on month but unfortunately, we could not continue the count into April and May which from experience, we know would show higher usage rates. The PCs in the Silent Zone were used on average 41% of the time, rising to over 50% on Tuesdays. This data is affected by the fact that we moved four PCs into to the Silent Zone over the Xmas break, after noticing an increasing demand.

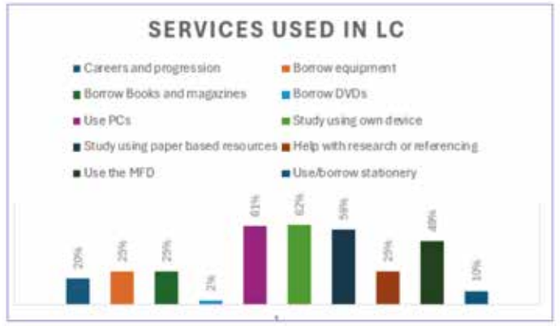
*Survey*

There were 450 responses to the survey of U6th students. 52% (233 respondents) used the LC at least once a week whilst 11% (49 respondents) said they had never used the Learning Centre (Chart 4). 67% of respondents had used the LC for the first time in the Autumn term of their first year, with 9% using it for the first time in the Spring term of their second year (Chart 5). In terms of services used, most respondents (over 80%) used more than one of the services on offer and three people used all ten services listed on the survey (Chart 6).

Overall, this data presents a picture of a well-used service, with most students using the LC and finding it early on in their Huish experience.






## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

We need to consider our busiest times when planning staffing levels. We are working on an alternative solution for the provision of phone chargers to students, as this takes up a disproportionate amount of our time. Space to study is the most common use of our provision (Chart 7) and must be managed appropriately. There is further research to do regarding the students who have never used the LC service.

*Visits represent footfall count, not the number of unique visitors.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

Perform a test collection of data if using tally sheets or other quantitative collection methods. We conducted a trial in June 2024 which helped clarify our data collection categories and definitions.

# LEARNING SUPPORT

*Special Educational Needs and Disabilities*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our primary research focus was to explore and enhance college-wide awareness of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) provision, with a particular emphasis on identifying and implementing strategic, high-quality support approaches for students with SEND. We recognised that while pockets of excellent practice existed, the consistency and visibility of SEND support across departments varied. This inconsistency impacted how well students with SEND could access learning and receive tailored support.

We wanted to understand staff confidence and knowledge in identifying, responding to, and supporting SEND needs within a mainstream FE (Further Education) environment. Additionally, we aimed to explore how visible SEND was around the college–both physically (through signage, displays, and resources) and within professional dialogue. Our rationale was simple: if all college staff are equipped, confident, and aware of SEND needs and strategies, the overall quality of provision will improve, benefitting not just SEND learners but the entire student body.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To conduct this action research, we adopted a multi-pronged approach, combining practical interventions with observation, feedback, and data collection.

Improved Graduated Response for Students: We streamlined our approach to the graduated response (assess, plan, do, review) by developing clearer guidance and resources for teaching staff. We aim to deliver training sessions and work with teams to embed this process into everyday teaching practice.

SEND Visibility Around the College Site: We developed and distributed informative posters that detailed key SEND terminology, types of need, and support strategies. These were displayed in classrooms, staff areas, and student support zones to raise awareness and normalise SEND discussions.

Staff CPD Opportunities: Throughout the 2024/25 academic year, we coordinated an expanded CPD programme focused on SEND. This included targeted 'Quick-Wins' workshops, drop-in sessions with the Learning Support team. These sessions covered areas such as neurodiversity, executive functioning, emotional regulation strategies, and understanding EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans).

Collaboration with Local Authority: We continued to strengthen ties with the Local Authority, ensuring that our support structures remained aligned with external expectations. Regular meetings facilitated updates around EHCP processes, statutory responsibilities, and local service changes.

EHCP & CLA Information Sharing: We ran regular briefings for curriculum staff on EHCP and Children Looked After (CLA) students, ensuring that all relevant information was accessible and up to date. We also provided quick-reference student profiles and improved the digital access to support documents.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Awareness Has Increased: The visibility campaign and CPD sessions significantly improved staff awareness of SEND categories and student-specific needs.

Consistency Is Still Developing: While some departments quickly embraced the changes, others needed more targeted support. This highlighted the need for differentiated CPD and more departmental-level discussions around SEND strategies.

Staff Value Accessible Resources: Posters and quick-reference tools were particularly well received. Staff feedback was positive following our neurodiversity week information emails, quick-wins and neurodiversity podcast.

Communication Is Key: The EHCP and CLA briefing sessions created more cohesive, timely, and sensitive support around individual learners.

Ongoing CPD Is Essential: SEND knowledge isn't static. The needs of students evolve, and staff development needs to be ongoing and embedded within whole-college priorities.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The findings have significantly influenced our strategic planning for SEND across the college. Firstly, we've committed to making SEND visibility a permanent feature of our college environment, regularly updating displays and resources. Our provision is now structured into tiered levels to ensure all staff–from new teachers to experienced managers–have access to relevant, ongoing development opportunities.

The continued collaboration with the Local Authority is becoming more strategic, with joint reviews of complex cases and shared development goals.

Long-term, we are developing our own team awareness and knowledge of SEND so we can act as champions within the college community, share good practice, and support inclusivity.

### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Make SEND Visible: Use posters, classroom displays, and accessible resources to normalise SEND discussions and keep inclusive practice front of mind.
- Prioritise Staff CPD: Provide regular, varied, and practical CPD sessions that relate directly to classroom and support work. Include opportunities for peer learning and case study reviews.
- Foster Strong Partnerships: Maintain open, regular communication with the Local Authority and external professionals. This ensures consistent, up-to-date practices.
- Share Information Effectively: Use short, clear EHCP/CLA updates to keep staff informed without overwhelming them. Digital access to support plans ensures everyone is working from the same page. We do this using Pen Portraits, Learning Support Plans (via the hub), providing summaries of relevant student SEND documentation from advisory services.

# MARKETING AND SCHOOL LIAISON

*Branding*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We want to find out how we can get better at applying our brand rules in order to improve the consistency of Huish's image (internal, external and digital).

To do this we worked alongside students to establish whether our branding was recognisable and effective. This was to ensure that we were reaching our intended audience and that the materials we were investing in were beneficial to recruiting students.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We worked with students in a Marketing EnRICH group to run ideas and designs past them and gage whether the branding and promotional campaigns appealed to their age group. There was also a project to increase applications from Monkton Wood Academy where we asked previous pupils of MWA to complete a questionnaire that included questions based around their transition from secondary education to college.

We have also changed from A5 course information leaflets to A6 postcards, this was to work within the college's sustainability values, but also by including a QR Code, would direct potential students to the website to read the full details of the course, and hopefully encourage them to explore other course options. This has been trialled at Open Events and by the School Liaison Team in secondary schools.

We recognised that there was a lot of attention to external branding, but it didn't continue into the buildings. Therefore, we initially worked with students to rebrand the boards on 'the bridge' asking students what information they would find useful. This was then carried forward to the rest of the boards around campus after messaging and speaking in a group session to request teachers and tutors to review the content of their boards and update where appropriate, while the Marketing department offered advice and re-backed the boards to make them more uniform.

Marketing also created a SharePoint to host the college's brand guidelines for all colleagues to access and use. Including logos (which ones to use and how to use them), the full colour palette (giving CMYK, RGB and HEX colour values/ breakdowns), the preferred font (and it's extensive family of styles and weights), stationery, livery, signage as well as a large selection of Powerpoint slides and elements (available in standard, widescreen as well as accessibilty versions).

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The course information postcards have been well received, with potential students taking them home after events, which can be attributed to the size, design, and simplicity of the wording. One tutor commented favourably saying *"Postcards looked great. The event was really well organised. I'm so impressed with the machine and the united front presented on these occasions e.g. the Huish branding colours being everywhere."*

The targeted postcards for Monkton Wood Academy have also had a positive impact, with secondary students and their parents recognising the profiled students who currently study with us. This has also benefited our relationship with MWA.

While we are currently unable to measure the number of staff using the branding files from the SharePoint, we are encouraged that they know where to find the content as they have been using the Marketing job form more frequently.

Re-branding the display boards around campus has proven to be a good collaborative process. The boards look tidier, have the latest branded borders, carry through the external branding into the buildings, created a clear understanding with students that they are information boards, and also allowed staff to review and update information that had become redundant. We have also seen first-hand that students are showing an increased interest in boards featuring student life/events, for example, Halloween at Huish.

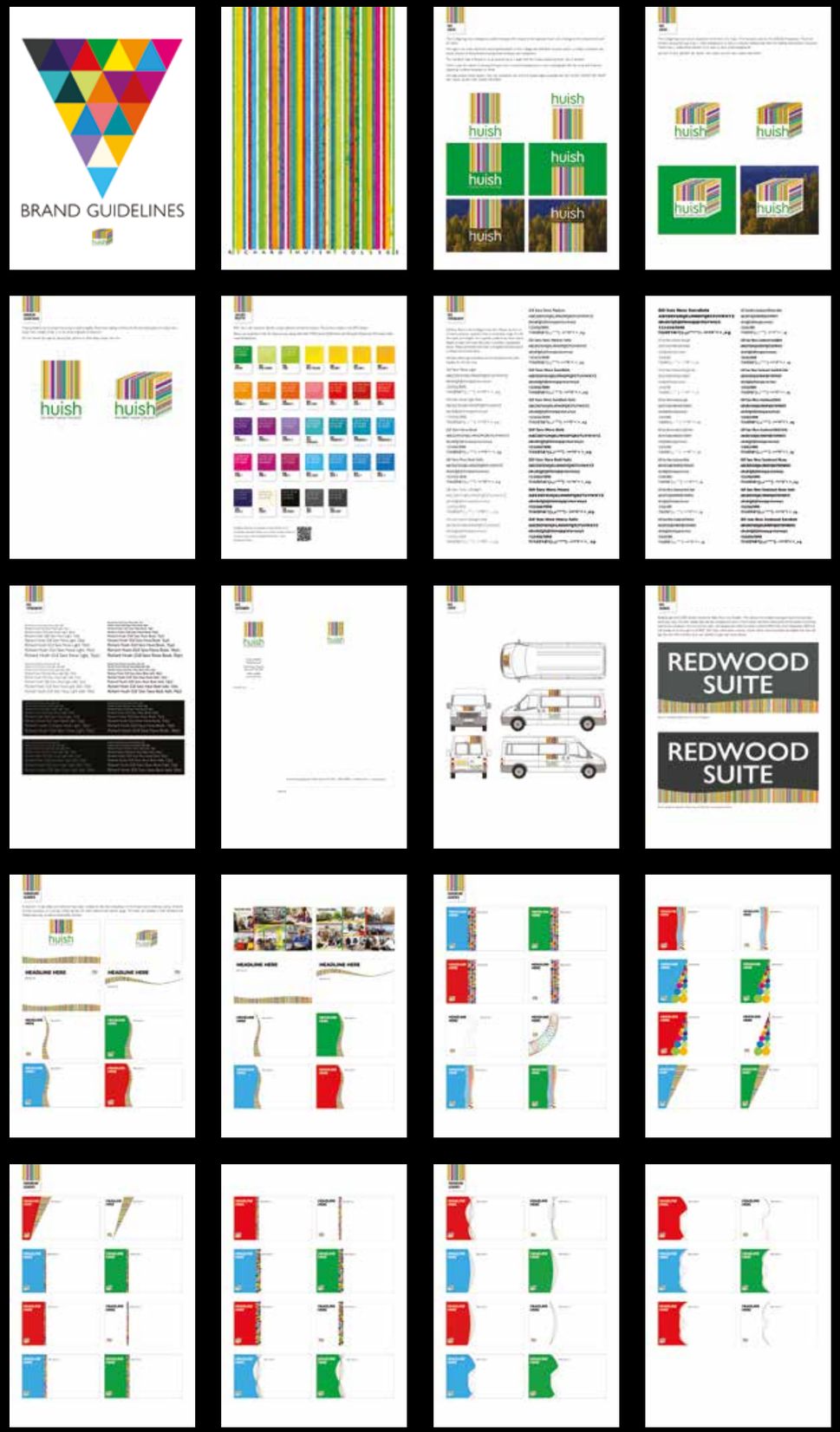
## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

We have learnt good branding can reinforce pride in Huish and inspire people to aim high. This has been through student and staff feedback and a general observation that displays are better preserved when there is a sense of purpose. Some staff have approached us for advice on how to improve their departments practices when they have observed others with successful branding (for example, Law).

There has been great progression on the brand consistency and identity which we will continue to push going forward.

Branding provides a consistent, coherent language, providing the most prominent visual representation of our college and we need to ensure it is used correctly by everyone to the exact same strategies, thereby creating a strong, unified identity.

We'll be looking at expanding our branding further into video content, either with social media or a new college video, and exploring additional avenues.



# MEDIA AND FILM

*Creativity*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to research ways to better enable a more rapid acquisition of creative skills and abilities for our students, so they may thrive on the Media and Film courses.

"Students arrive after their gruelling GCSE-fixated secondary experience with an almost entirely prescriptive understanding of what education can be. With most of the coursework stripped away from the majority of GCSE subjects, many students are then ill-equipped to cope with the independence needed to commit to the creative process, often frozen by the freedom offered them." John Panton outlines some of the barriers to creativity here: White holes, icebergs and Ukraine – a convoluted path to creativity - D&CFilm.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

Our research had four different strands:

*Creativity questionnaire for students.* We wanted to gain an understanding of "what creativity means" to the young people we teach. We presented a survey to all students currently on a media or film course at Huish – 53 students responded

*Creative oracy within Film Studies.* At the start of the autumn term, the Film Studies students had strong Filmic Literacy but lacked the confidence and vocabulary to verbalise their opinions. Therefore we started a Monday club to develop creativity through oracy. Each Monday, a student would write on a Q card the films they watched over the weekend and three words to describe the plot, film form, or their feelings.

*Theory to Creative Practice sessions.* This involved a 'Film in a Day Task' with Year 2 Extended Diplomas

*Making Mistakes Ethos for Extended Diploma Students.* A no-stakes practice unit was introduced to the year 1 extended diploma cohort, encouraging experimentation over perfection.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

*Student Questionnaire:* An overwhelming majority of students responded "yes" to the question "do you think you are creative?" with only one participant not thinking of themselves as creative. 60% of students feel that creativity is something which can be learnt with the remainder feeling creativity is an innate talent. Students appear to most confidently define creative work as something that demonstrates "a unique style or approach", favouring this definition over work which is "innovative & original", has "entertainment value" or conveys an "emotional connection". Favoured the least, was the definition of creative work as "something that challenges norms and conventions". Alongside music, social media is the most accessed creative content amongst those who took the survey. Interestingly, participants considered this the least creative media form of all the options with film & TV considered to be the most creative.

*Creative oracy within Film Studies:* Involvement in the Monday Club helped to scaffold the students' engagement by providing security. Each week, students used different descriptive words to broaden their vocabulary.

*Theory to Practice Sessions:* Film in a Day Tasks with Year 2 Extended Diplomas showed creative potential. Removing constraints facilitated creativity, and using different theorists each week strengthened curriculum grasp. However, enthusiasm was lacking, challenging technical execution. Motivation increased with a friendly-competitive environment, and social learning ensured task success.

*Making Mistakes Ethos:* Despite low stakes, students saw mistakes as stunting creativity rather than driving it. Problem-solving is crucial for qualifications and creative industries, yet it remains a significant hurdle for students' progression to become resilient practitioners.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

*Student Questionnaire:* Reflecting on Ken Robinson's argument that the education system is killing creativity, it could also be investigated as to whether popular culture consumption restricts their access to a wide range of original and creative content.

*Creative oracy within Film Studies:* As the weeks continued students relied less and less on the Q cards for their confidence and vocab, allowing a more natural engagement in Monday Club and a more developed and mature oracy.

*Theory to Practice Sessions:* Learners developed an appreciation for theory to practice sessions, and there was a small, positive shift in attitude to learning. While a majority of the cohort were eager to develop ideas pertaining to a weekly theory, some learners were still reluctant to participate in collaboration with others.

*Making Mistakes:* We have considered the approach to the Extended Diploma cohort; sequencing of activities in the first half term should offer a greater exposure to creative practice rather than emphasis on industry practice. Reflecting on the academic year, the Pearson course is based on an art course, with most students lacking previous experience – at times too much of a step-up to higher level creativity. Whilst we wait for governmental decisions regarding vocational courses, we'll use the OCR course for a more scaffolded approach.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Scaffolding using Q cards develops students' confidence within their oracy allowing for autonomy when they feel ready to be more independent.
- Friendly competition encouraged for short theory-based practical tasks – completed and showcased within a lesson.
- For creative projects, embed the 'making mistakes' approach to creativity as a central pillar of the process.

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# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

*Enrichment*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The importance of oracy, confidence, and wellbeing in students cannot be overstated; these elements are crucial for academic success and personal development. The Wellbeing Team wanted to research whether a volunteering enrichment programme of more than 2 weeks could positively impact these areas. Volunteering provides students with opportunities to engage with their community, develop new skills, and build relationships. We chose to explore this topic as our new cohort of students were particularly lacking in basic social skills such as holding eye-contact, holding conversations, speaking with adults and coping with change. We aimed to understand if structured volunteering activities could address these issues and foster a more holistic educational experience.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

For our action research project we designed and implemented a volunteering enrichment programme for students throughout the academic year. The programme included various activities such as working with a local homeless community centre, stitching groups and charity shop work. Students participated in 5 weeks work of volunteering once a week with students and staff they had never met. Students were encouraged to take on leadership roles and collaborate with others. We collected data through pre and post questionnaires as well as observations. The surveys measured changes in oracy skills, confidence levels, and overall wellbeing. Interviews provided qualitative insights into students' experiences and perceptions. Observations allowed us to assess behavioural changes and engagement during the programme. Students also met with our Principal Emma Fielding to present their experiences of the project as well as enquire about more volunteering opportunities at the college.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The findings from our action research were exciting. The volunteering enrichment programme had a noticeable positive impact on students' oracy skills. Many students who initially struggled with general social and conversational skills showed significant improvement in their ability to articulate thoughts and engage in discussions. Students were able to converse with peers as well as college staff and organisational staff. Confidence levels also increased, with students expressing greater self-assurance in social settings. Additionally, the programme contributed to enhanced wellbeing. Students reported feeling more connected to their community, experiencing a sense of accomplishment and having reduced stress levels. The qualitative data highlighted that students valued the opportunity to make a difference. We faced some challenges during our time running the programme with timetabling, academic commitments and illness impacting participation.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The insights gained from the project have cemented our thoughts about volunteering and the impact not only on a students' social skills but general wellbeing too. We recognise the value of integrating volunteering opportunities into the college enrichment programme but also as an intervention strand of our wellbeing support offer to help nurture essential life skills. Timetables became an issue however, it was good exposure for the team to work with a greater variety of students.

We plan to continue offering volunteering enrichment programmes and explore ways to expand them over the coming years. This includes collaborating with local organisations to provide diverse and meaningful volunteering experiences.

### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

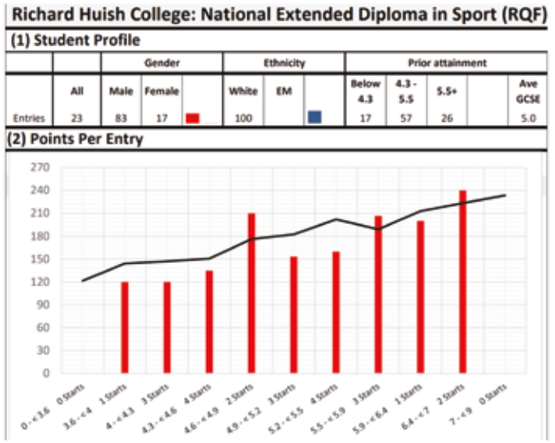
- *Start Small:* Begin with manageable volunteering activities that align with students' interests and abilities. Gradually expand the programme as students become more comfortable and engaged. At the start of the academic year it was helpful to have an onsite activity in a safe environment to help students feel safe and secure.
- *Encourage Leadership:* Provide students with opportunities to take on leadership roles within the volunteering programme. This helps build confidence and develops essential leadership skills.
- *Collaborate with Community:* Partner with local organisations to offer diverse volunteering experiences. This enhances the programme's impact and provides students with real-world connections.
- *Reflect and Celebrate:* Encourage students to reflect on their volunteering experiences and celebrate their achievements. This reinforces the positive impact and motivates continued participation.

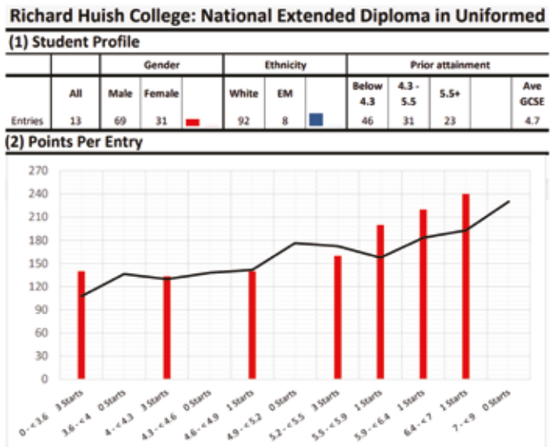
# P.E, SPORT & UNIFORMED PROTECTIVE SERVICES

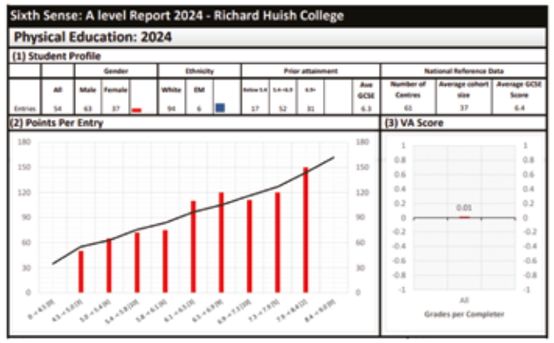
*Underachieving Males*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The value added (evidence ALPS/6DD) for Vocational Sport, A Level PE and Uniformed Protective Services is impacted by the underachievement of male lower prior attainment students. We wanted to research which support mechanisms have been used successfully in other subjects where positive value added is present and attempt to integrate them into our courses.




## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

*Primary Research* - Good Practice meetings. Four subject areas were identified as having more positive value added (Evidence ALPS) for their male students. Meetings were held with the course managers from Vocational Business, Psychology, Health and Social Care and A Level Business. Sport/PE and UPS course teams discussed outcomes, common themes and any practices that we felt could be transferrable and successful in our areas.

Secondary Research – previous academic research in the area of underachieving males was reviewed and cross related with the primary research findings.

In summary, the key consistent themes were the importance of:

- Having high expectations from the outset.
- Setting targets/performance goals.
- Parental engagement.
- Interventions such as (at Huish) support plans and contracts at teacher, course manager and AP level.

2024-25 implemented actions:

*A-Level PE*

- Formally introduced an improved progress checking system via existing booklets.
- Improved, earlier and more consistent use of college interventions (as above).
- Academic tutoring used primarily to follow up on students who have not completed Huish 30 tasks (often under achieving males).
- Preparation for 2025-26 to introduce a welcome to the course pack for parents to highlight expectations, key dates and course overview. (As used effectively in Psychology).

*Sport and UPS*

- Organised Academic tutoring groups by social groups and prior attainment.
- Consistent use of Teams for Huish 30.
- Concerted effort to report via the Hub.
- Improved, earlier and more consistent use of college interventions (as above).
- Parental contact (even though a support plan not required).
- Use of performance goals through progress reviews.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Our work makes a clear link between setting high expectations, levels of student motivation and outcomes. There must be a clear plan to incorporate the above.

We must focus on motivating boys. Evidence suggests that boys are more extrinsically motivated than girls and the use of performance goals can be advantageous.

Learners are very used to structure and detailed guidance and when given more autonomy struggle to complete tasks. When monitored more closely and initially given more structure we would hope that during the two years we can remove the scaffolding to allow more independence.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

It is clear that when students join college from school, they have experienced high levels of structure and guidance led by their teachers. Our greatest challenge is to try and give them something similar to this, ensuring work set is clearly structured, monitored and assessed, but in a way that eventually, during the 2 years they are with us, we can eventually reduce these levels of support to ensure they can leave us better equipped for the world outside of college.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Another method to motivate – practical tips shared in literature How to Teach Boys. 'Let them write like you' Greater use of the visualiser in lessons to model what excellent looks like, especially with longer answers questions e.g. 6 & 8 marker.
- Use of WAGOLL (what a good one looks like) to model exemplar coursework specially targeted at merit and distinction standard. Use assessment criteria.

*References:*

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# PHYSICS

*Student AI use*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to analyse Student use of AI in A-Level Physics Problem-Solving because of its rapidly growing use and potential benefits for learning.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

A survey was conducted among 87 A level Physics students about their perceptions, attitudes, and usage patterns concerning artificial intelligence (AI) in physics problem-solving. This was then analysed and compared to broader educational research into AI usage amongst students.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

*Usage Patterns and Preferences*

The survey revealed that most students either never or rarely use AI tools for physics problem-solving, highlighting a cautious or conservative approach towards integrating AI into their studies. Among the minority who utilize AI, tools like ChatGPT emerged as popular choices. This aligns with broader trends observed in educational research, indicating growing popularity yet cautious integration of AI-driven tools like ChatGPT among students due to uncertainties surrounding their reliability (Hew & Cheung, 2023).

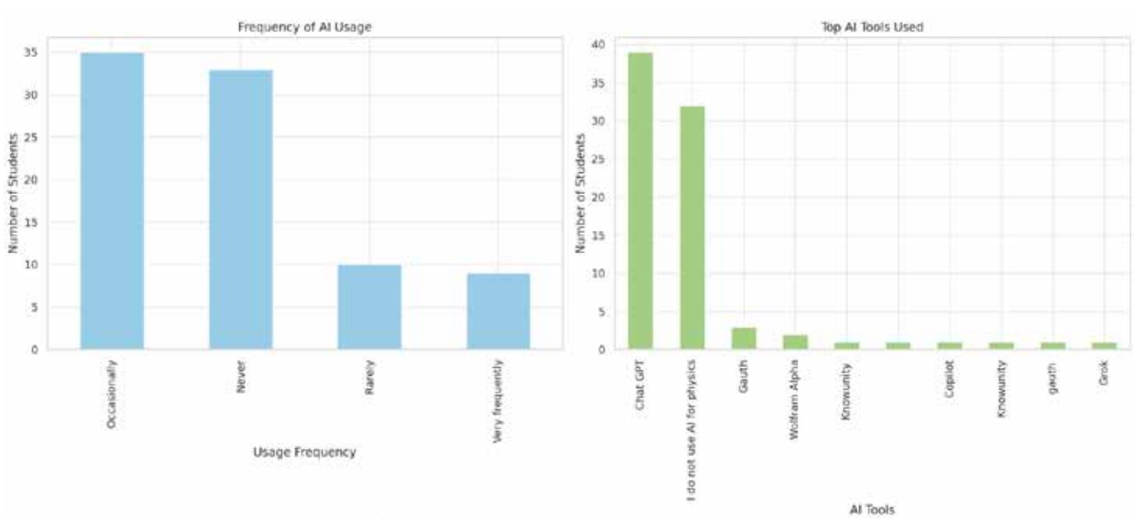
Verbal responses underscored reasons for limited usage, including concerns about the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated solutions. Several students explicitly mentioned experiencing incorrect or misleading answers. This concern aligns with findings by Hattie and Timperley (2007), who emphasize the criticality of accurate feedback in learning environments. Students' hesitance to rely extensively on AI could stem from uncertainty about the validity of feedback provided by these tools.

*Perceived Usefulness and Effectiveness*

Students expressed ambivalence about AI's effectiveness compared to traditional methods like teacher instruction and textbooks. A significant proportion rated AI tools as neutral or slightly less effective. This reflects research by Means et al. (2010), which suggests that while technology can enhance learning experiences, it is rarely perceived by students as superior to direct, interactive educational methods.

Verbal responses indicated that students value AI for clarifying challenging concepts when traditional resources fail. This duality—scepticism towards problem-solving accur acy but openness to explanatory assistance—mirrors the concept of "augmentation" in the SAMR (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition) model, where technology acts as an enhancer rather than a transformer of educational practice (Puentedura, 2013).

*Confidence and Dependency Concerns*






The survey revealed a correlation between students' confidence in their physics problem-solving abilities and their likelihood of using AI tools. Lower confidence levels typically correlated with greater openness or curiosity towards AI usage. Educational psychology literature supports this phenomenon; learners with lower self-efficacy are often more willing to explore technological aids to bolster their learning confidence (Bandura, 1997).

Yet, this openness is tempered by concerns about dependency. A notable percentage of students expressed concerns that reliance on AI could diminish their independent thinking capabilities. This resonates with arguments presented in literature cautioning against excessive technological reliance, potentially undermining students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Selwyn, 2016). One student's verbal response succinctly captured this sentiment, stating, "People can become too reliant on AI," highlighting broader anxieties about technology-induced cognitive dependency.

*Ethical Considerations: Cheating and Exam Usage*

The survey responses revealed significant division regarding whether using AI constitutes cheating. A notable minority viewed AI usage as dishonest, especially in exam contexts. This debate is reflected extensively in educational ethics literature, emphasizing the fine line between using technology for educational assistance versus gaining unfair advantages (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016).

Furthermore, the majority of respondents opposed allowing AI tools in examinations. Verbal responses indicated concerns about fairness and equity, asserting that AI could provide unfair advantages and potentially compromise the integrity of assessments. Such findings echo broader academic concerns about academic integrity in the digital age, with scholars advocating for clear, consistent guidelines and frameworks for technology usage in educational assessments (Newton, 2018).

*Teacher Guidance and Institutional Support*

A significant number of students expressed a desire for clearer teacher guidance on how to use AI effectively and ethically in physics studies. This highlights a critical gap identified in educational technology literature: the lack of structured frameworks guiding students in integrating emerging technologies into their learning practices (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). Respondents explicitly requested targeted instructional support to maximize AI's educational potential while mitigating risks associated with misuse or dependency.

*Students' Desired Improvements in AI Tools*

Respondents provided practical suggestions for AI tool improvements, notably requesting increased accuracy, better formatting, and clearer solution methodologies. These preferences align with principles outlined by Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2009), which emphasizes the necessity for clarity, accuracy, and coherent presentation of educational materials to optimize cognitive processing and learning outcomes.

*Recommendations to Peers*

Interestingly, despite ambivalence or caution towards personal

AI usage, many students were open to recommending AI tools to peers under specific circumstances, such as clarifying difficult concepts or as a resource of last resort.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The analysis of the survey data highlights nuanced student perceptions and cautious integration of AI tools in physics problem-solving which may be applied to other subjects. While recognizing AI's potential to enhance conceptual understanding, students remain wary of its reliability, concerned about dependency, and divided on ethical implications.

Educational institutions should address these concerns by providing structured guidance and clear ethical frameworks for AI usage. Moreover, AI tools themselves require enhancements in accuracy and pedagogical effectiveness to align with educational standards and cognitive learning theories.

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# PROGRESS TUTORS – YEAR 1

*Consistent meaningful 1:1s*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The primary objective of our research was to establish consistency in the questions posed during one-to-one meetings with students. These meetings, held once per term, are designed to monitor the progress of students throughout their first year, encompassing not only academic achievements but also their wellbeing and overall development. Our preliminary project analysis revealed significant variations across the team, attributable to differences in experience and individual strengths. This inconsistency had not been addressed previously, as the team is relatively new, being only in its fifth year of operation.

Given staff turnover, there was a need to develop a structured framework that could be utilised during induction and included in the 'Tutor Handbook' that would standardise the progress review process and ensure that all tutors follow a consistent approach. By implementing these changes, we hope to enhance the effectiveness of our progress reviews, providing a more reliable measure of student development and wellbeing. This initiative is expected to facilitate better communication and understanding among tutors, ultimately leading to improved support for students as "research in psychology, linguistics and neuroscience now encourages the view that human intelligence is distinctively collective… (and stems) from effective collaboration and communication in small groups." (Oracy Cambridge).

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We developed a baseline trial of student-led one-to-one meetings with five students each whose focus was on the four pastoral curriculum symbols, provided to the students one week in advance to allow for reflection. It was observed that girls engaged more thoroughly in this preparatory reflection when compared to boys.

To ensure more effective self-monitoring and reflection from the whole cohort, we developed a Microsoft form that several student groups completed prior to the next meetings. The questions in the form were designed to guide students through the Huish Hub, thereby developing their awareness of their own progress. These responses served as a template for the next round of one-to-one meetings, ensuring that the discussions were more relevant to each student's individual experiences and reflections.

This approach aimed to empower students by giving them a more active role in their progress reviews, fostering a sense of ownership and self-awareness and helping students develop their social and emotional oracy skills by building their verbal contributions as they move from the pedagogical approach of secondary education to the andragogical approach of tertiary education (and beyond). The trial provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of student-led meetings and highlighted areas for further improvement in our pastoral care framework.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Our research revealed several key insights. Firstly, the team found it significantly easier to conduct one-to-one meetings when using the structured focus provided by the Microsoft form. The pre-meeting reflection by students allowed us to prioritise issues that were previously unknown to us. Students responded positively to the questions, as completing them independently rather than face-to-face initially seemed to encourage more honest and thoughtful reflections. This approach proved to be more successful, as the form was designed to require responses to each question, ensuring comprehensive feedback.

We also learned that better preparation for using the form was necessary. In the upcoming summer term, we plan to guide students more thoroughly through the form to enhance its effectiveness. Additionally, the Microsoft form proved useful when introducing new tutors to a group. By having the group complete the form for the new tutor, the tutor could review the responses to understand the students' progress and identify any issues or problems.

Overall, the use of the Microsoft form facilitated more focused and productive one-to-one meetings, improved our ability to address student issues, and provided a valuable tool for new tutors to quickly acclimate to their groups.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The implementation of the Microsoft form is set to have a significant long-term impact on our practice. Starting next academic year, we plan to roll out the form for all Year 1 students, with subsequent expansion to Level 2 and Year 2 students. This initiative has already encouraged students to become more self-reflective in their learning, a skill that will be invaluable as they progress to higher education and beyond.

The use of the form will provide consistency across the tutor team, ensuring that all tutors follow a standardised approach to student progress reviews. This consistency will be particularly beneficial during the induction of new members to the tutor team, as it will offer a clear framework for conducting one-to-one meetings. Additionally, the form will serve as a baseline framework for delivering consistent pastoral care to all students.

Furthermore, the Microsoft form will be a useful tool for tutors when covering or replacing colleagues. By reviewing the completed forms, new tutors can quickly get to know their groups, understand their progress, and identify any issues that need addressing. Overall, the long-term impact of this initiative will be a more structured, consistent, and effective approach to student support and development.

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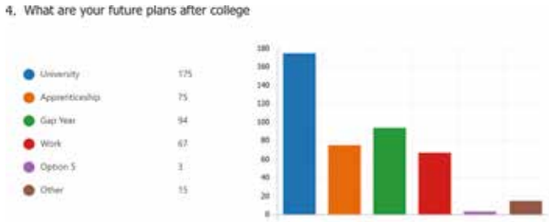


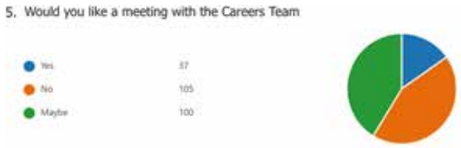










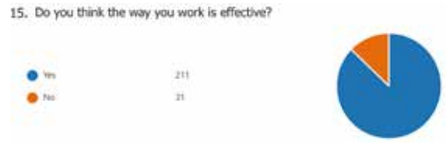



# PROGRESS TUTORS – YEAR 2

*Oracy – Starter Activity*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our starting point was to continue to build on the action research of last year which was to increase engagement in tutorials through oracy. We were influenced by the Cambridge Oracy Skills Framework, as we felt tutorials were ideally placed to deliver impact in this area. We also felt a moral imperative to develop tools to use in tutorial groups, with their unique composition of students, to try and address the (lower) perceptions of level 2 and female students around their oracy ability.

This year we decided to concentrate on one of our QIPs which was, 'To enhance student learning and empower them to express themselves confidently through developing their oracy'. We felt this was the right ethical focus, but also a pragmatic one that addressed our core role as a Pastoral team, best expressed by the Oracy All Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry – "The connection between oracy and well-being is crucial and while there are many other risk factors that can impact on a child and young person's well-being, oracy is one that we can turn into a protective factor." As a product, we wanted to create (and moving on, curate) a set of principles for effective starters, that generate good oracy in tutorials.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We researched and developed a bank of discussive starter activities for tutorial sessions which have been linked into the tutorial curriculum topics that are being covered. We decided to use image based open-ended activities which help to develop the students' social and emotional capabilities using the Voice 21 oracy framework. Image based starters were raised in the Oracy CPD day as effective and engaging, as opposed to simply, worded questioning. It was recommended that students do not want to reflect on own experiences as this is too personal and relationships are not yet formed.

These discursive starters were shared with the whole pastoral tutor team. Four tutors 'deep dived' the issues with their tutors, doing questionnaires (around perception) to provide a baseline against which to measure impact.

At the end of the project, we interviewed four members from four different tutor groups about the efficacy of different principles, topics and presentations towards generating good oracy. Each group was presented with the same five images (of slides used in tutorials). They were interviewed, as a group, using a pre-determined script. The same interviewer talked to all groups, to generate consistency. The conversation was recorded and then transcribed – using AI.

We attended:

- The whole college Oracy CPD session (September 2024) which gave an overview of the Voice21 Strands of Oracy Development.
- The oracy focused Quick Wins sessions from the 14th October 2024 CPD day.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Some topics, questions and discussion starters have been more successful and engaging than others. Equally, the variety in response from pupils has suggested that a variety of approaches is needed to meet all students' preferences and there is no single format that will work for all pupils, all the time.

General feedback: starters must be challenging enough to stimulate discussion, but not so challenging that they don't know the answers or feel unable to have a guess. Some group dynamics in classes mean that they still need to be reminded to talk and that it's the process of decision making and how they communicate and listen to others' opinions, not the answers that really matter. Overall, we feel it's been a successful experience, and we are keen to continue and develop this practice further. The survey we carried out proves that this has been a beneficial practice in developing the students' understanding and application of oracy.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

As well as developing a 'bank' of starters that can be used again, next year, we were also able to find several principles that pupils agreed were effective in promoting good literacy:

- All groups agreed that controversial topics promoted good oracy.
- Choose impactful, current and contextually relevant topics.
- Use strategies to increase confidence / through scaffolded participation – smaller group practice before sharing with larger groups.
- Consider groupings – having at least one friend in tutorial was mentioned by all groups.
- Utilise competition (e.g. cheapest shopping). They enjoyed an element of competition between groups.
- Specific, explicit work on oracy e.g. chemistry oracy assessment is beneficial. Some students struggled to link the idea of oracy to activities they'd been involved in.
- Tutors need to lead through nominating tutees to answer questions – pupils didn't like this but felt it was necessary!
- Practice – several students said they had been nervous when starting college but had improved and developed more confidence through tutorials, lessons and enrichments.

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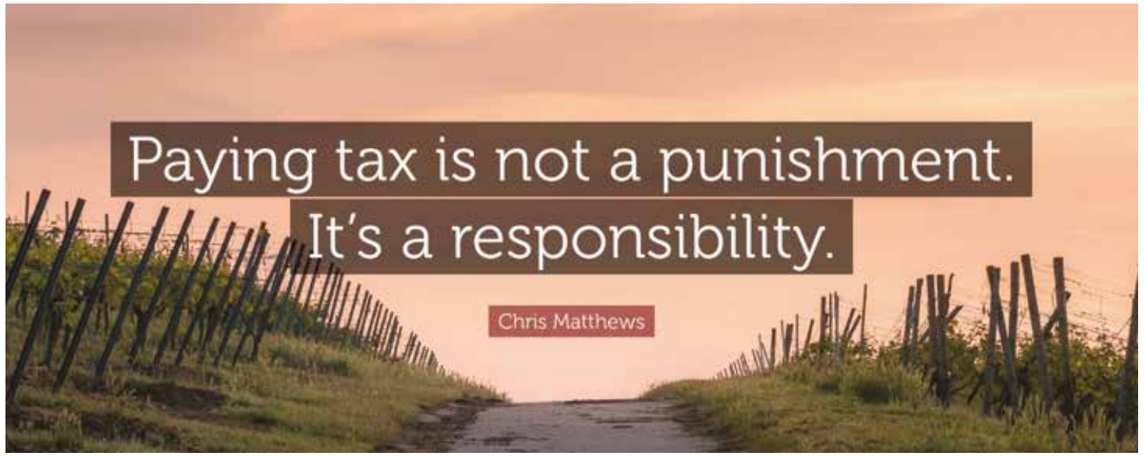
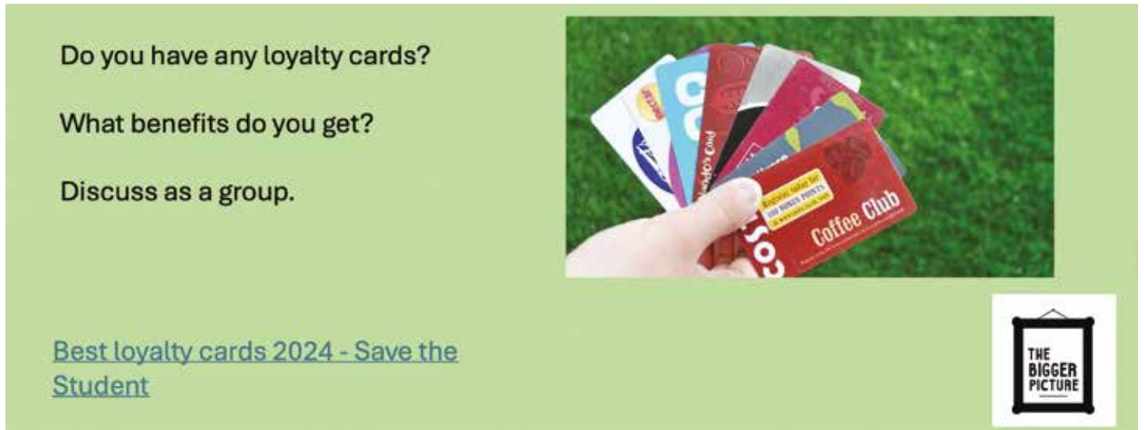



# PROGRESS TUTORS – LEVEL 2

*Academic motivation*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We aimed to investigate how we can better assist students in deciding their future progression routes, as we believe this can significantly enhance their academic motivation. Understanding the factors that influence students' motivation and identifying effective support mechanisms are crucial for fostering a positive educational environment and improving academic outcomes.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We conducted two surveys at different points in the academic year to gather data on students' academic motivation, challenges, and support needs. The first survey focused on general academic motivation and challenges, while the second survey included additional questions about career activities and future plans. We analysed the responses to identify common themes and areas for improvement.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

From the surveys, we identified several key findings:

- Motivation Factors: Students are primarily motivated by future career prospects, achieving good grades, and making their families proud. Personal goals and the desire to succeed also play a significant role. Below are a selection of comments from the students on what motivates them:

"The fact that if I do, I can get a good job. It also gives me more options for the future"

"The support from teachers and other students allow me to feel as if I can do anything in the world"

"I think what motivates me most is the idea of having more opportunities in the future. Good grades can help open doors for university and scholarships, and I want to keep my options wide open. I also want to make my family proud, especially since they've always supported me and encouraged me to do my best. Knowing that my efforts now can lead to a stable career and independence later on is a huge motivator."

- Challenges: Common challenges include balancing college work with other responsibilities, lack of motivation, procrastination, tiredness, and personal issues like mental health and dyslexia.
- Support Needs: Students suggest more personalised academic counselling, stress management workshops, career guidance sessions, and organising talks with professionals. Providing more hands-on experiences and career options were also highlighted. Below is some of the comments the students made about their support needs:

"The college could bring in more guest speakers from different careers or organize trips to see real workplaces"

"I feel like the college is already doing enough."

"Organising talks with people of different jobs"

"Teach me more about workplaces and universities possibly."
"The college could bring in more guest speakers from different careers or organize trips to see real workplaces"

"I feel like the college is already doing enough."

"Organising talks with people of different jobs"

"Teach me more about workplaces and universities possibly."

- Career Activities: Activities like career fairs, progression talks, work experience, CV writing, and career quizzes have been helpful for students in deciding their future paths. Below are the career-based presentations that students preferred the most (at the top) and the least (bottom).
- Future Plans: Some students had a rough idea of their future plans before college, and college activities have helped them refine these plans. However, some students are still undecided but feel closer to knowing what they want to do.

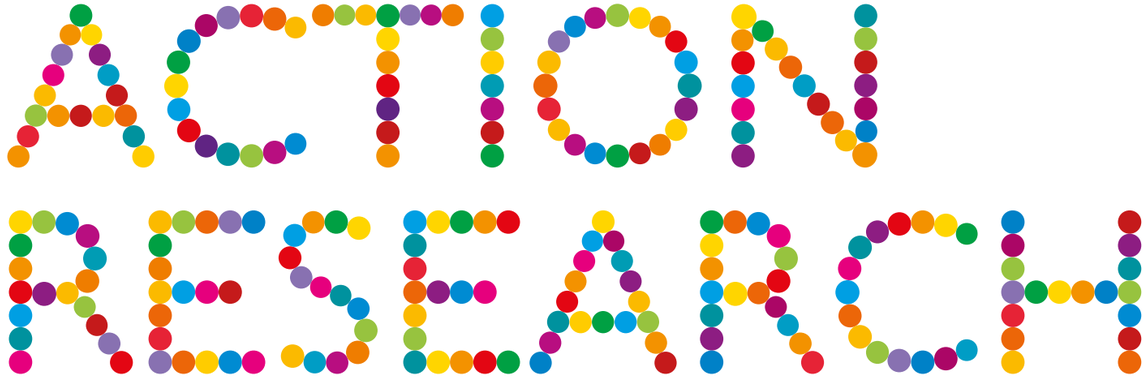
## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The findings from our research will inform our long-term practice by emphasising the importance of personalised support and career guidance in enhancing students' academic motivation. We will focus on implementing more targeted interventions, such as:

- PowerPoint evaluation: We will look at either improving or removing the PowerPoints the students found these least effective. For example, Five Roads and Unifrog– although a useful tool we do have several sessions that use it, so may reduce the number of sessions.
- Career Guidance Sessions: Organising regular session with professionals from various fields to provide insights and inspiration.
- Hands-on Experiences: Facilitating more opportunities for students to gain practical experience through internships, work placements, and career fairs.

By addressing these areas, we aim to create a supportive and motivating educational environment that helps students achieve their academic and career goals.



# PSYCHOLOGY

*Confidence / Self-belief*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our primary goal was to investigate methods to build a culture of resilience in the classroom to improve student self-belief and confidence. We recognised that enhancing self-belief and confidence is crucial for students' work readiness and in-year progress. Feedback from students indicated a lack of academic confidence in social situations, such as asking questions in class and sharing ideas in front of peers. In contrast, students exhibited more confidence in independent work. Therefore, we aimed to focus on improving academic confidence in social situations and understanding the usefulness of mistakes in these contexts.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To address the identified areas of low confidence, we involved students from the classes of two teachers who completed a questionnaire about self-belief and confidence. The questionnaire revealed that students felt least confident in asking questions in class and sharing ideas and answers in front of the class. To make students more comfortable with sharing ideas, we researched elaborative interrogation—a method that encourages students to explore their understanding of a topic by responding to 'why' and 'how' questions posed by the teacher. This technique allows students to provide their own answers and encourages others to build on or elaborate further.

In our action research, we implemented collaborative tasks to encourage students to interact and build confidence in social situations. Activities included hands-on projects like building neurons, which fostered teamwork and engagement. We also changed the seating plan to mix students and promote new interactions. Additionally, we introduced resilience scenarios that depicted students struggling in the classroom. Our students were asked to provide three pieces of advice to help these fictional students improve their self-belief. They then reflected on which piece of advice they would apply in their own practice. This approach aimed to enhance students' academic confidence and resilience by encouraging them to think critically about overcoming challenges and supporting their peers. Through these methods, we observed growth in students' confidence and their ability to adapt and recover from difficulties.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Our results revealed that the biggest issue affecting student confidence was the fear of getting things wrong in front of the class due to fear of judgment. We administered a set of eight questions related to confidence and self-belief in the classroom before and after the collaborative activities and resilience scenarios. Through this process, we learned that there are too many extraneous variables to pinpoint a single factor impacting their confidence, such as friendships, feedback in mocks and assessments, and stressful life events. Additionally, we found that students were more adept at giving advice in the resilience scenarios than receiving and applying feedback themselves. This insight highlights the complexity of building academic confidence and the need for a multifaceted approach to address various influencing factors.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The observation that students are better at giving advice than receiving it highlights the potential benefits of peer mentoring programs. These programs can foster a supportive environment where students help each other, building a stronger sense of community and resilience. Research shows that peer mentoring can significantly enhance academic performance, retention rates, emotional and psychological well-being, and social integration (Le, Sok, & Heng, 2024).

Peer mentoring programs leverage the shared experiences of students, making advice and support more relatable and credible (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). This approach can help mentees feel more comfortable and understood, encouraging them to apply the advice they receive. Additionally, peer mentors develop leadership and communication skills, further enhancing their own confidence and resilience (Education Northwest, 2023).

Implementing peer mentoring programs in sixth form education can create a culture of mutual support, where students learn to navigate challenges together. This collaborative approach not only improves individual self-belief but also strengthens the overall learning community.

### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- *Implement Peer Mentoring:* Peer mentors can help their classmates navigate challenges, build confidence, and develop resilience. This approach not only enhances individual self-belief but also strengthens the overall learning environment.
- *Use Collaborative Tasks:* Collaborative tasks, such as hands-on projects, encourage students to interact and learn from each other. This method helps students build social skills, develop a sense of belonging, and become more comfortable sharing ideas in front of their peers.

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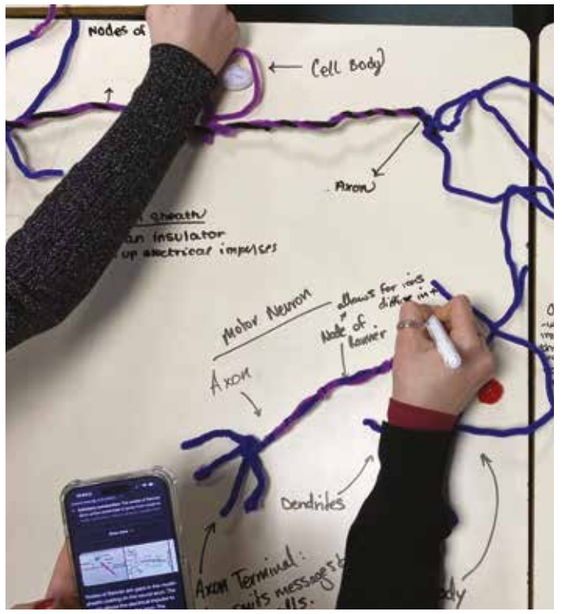


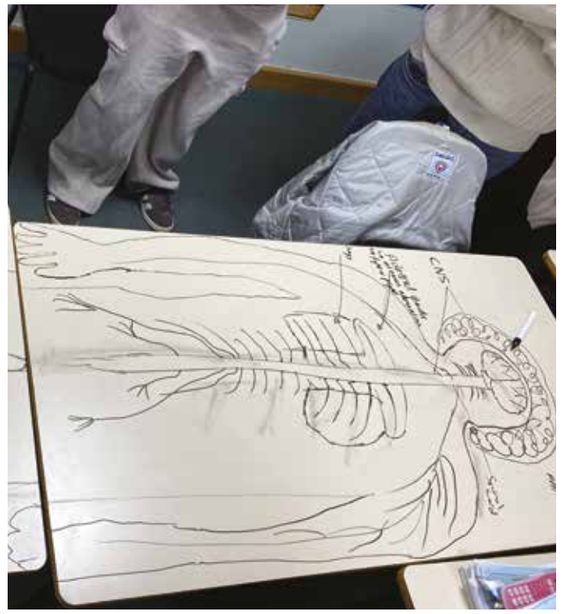

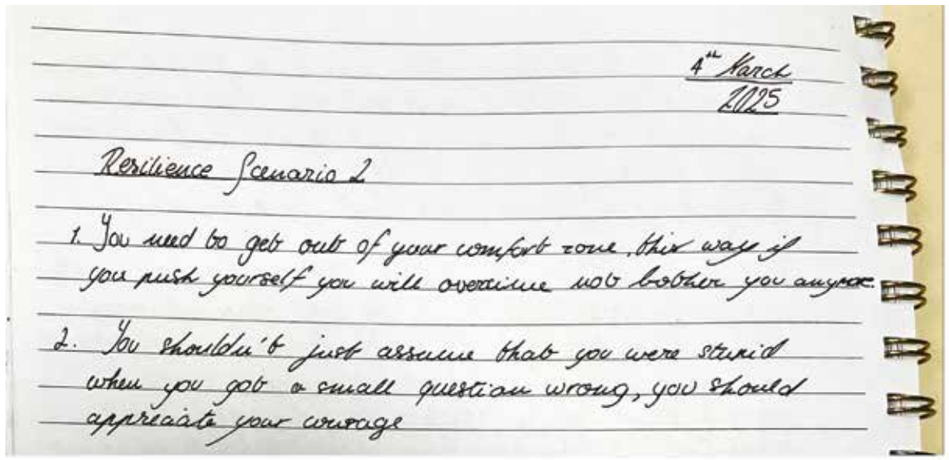


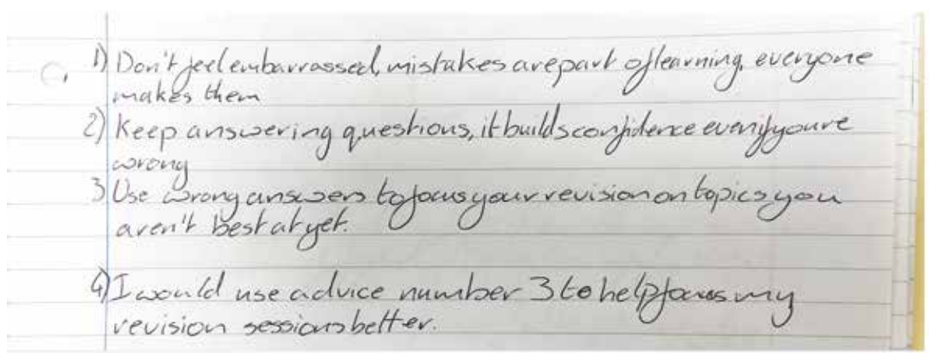

# VOCATIONAL DRAMA

*Adaptive Learning via Building Confidence*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

I aimed to explore ways to better support my learners, who display a diverse range of abilities. This diversity brings both challenges and opportunities. My objective was to customise my teaching methods to bridge the gap between different learners and ensure each student receives the necessary support to succeed.

Understanding the varied needs of my students is crucial. By researching best practices in differentiated instruction such as those explored by Martin, Chen, Moore & Westine (2020), Fadieieva (2022) and Mirata, Hirt, Bergamine & van der Westhuizen (2020), I aimed to develop strategies that cater to individual learning styles and abilities. This includes personalised learning plans, adaptive assessments, and the use of technology. Ultimately, my research was driven by a commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment where every student can thrive.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

For my Action Research, I focused on implementing adaptive learning strategies to better support my learners, who have a wide range of abilities. Adaptive learning is crucial because it tailors educational experiences to meet the unique needs, skills, and pace of individual learners, thereby improving learning outcomes and engagement.

*Personalised Learning*

I integrated adaptive learning technologies that assess each learner's current knowledge and skills. These technologies customise content, feedback, and pacing to suit the specific needs of each student such as feedback sheets, 1:1's, Teams folders to store rehearsal and group discussion footage.

*Increased Engagement*

Learners stay more engaged when the material is appropriately challenging. Adaptive systems dynamically adjust to provide tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult, keeping learners motivated. I created a variety of exercises of varying difficulty and moved through the exercises at a pace, this kept learners motivated throughout.

*Support for Diverse Learning Styles*

Students learn in different ways—visually, audibly, or kinaesthetically. Drama lends itself to this, often a lesson is a combination of the above learning styles allowing all learners to explore topics proactively.

These approaches were implemented across upper and lower sixth students. Upper sixth students were able to vocalise the impact more in-depth due do experiencing more of the course.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Through my Action Research, I discovered that confidence plays a crucial role in learning by influencing how learners approach challenges, process information, and persist through difficulties. Adaptive learning enhances the educational experience by meeting learners where they are and guiding them toward their goals more effectively. It fosters deeper understanding, builds confidence, and prepares students for success in a world that increasingly values personalised and continuous learning.

Questionnaire results

Most students feel they have progressed in drama since starting in September. They report increased confidence in their abilities and a greater willingness to participate and try new things. Many students are confident in their ability to do well in drama, attributing their success to the encouragement and training provided by their teacher. Students feel they have personally developed in drama, particularly in terms of confidence. They appreciate the safe and encouraging environment, which has helped them become more confident performers. Taking drama has also improved students' confidence outside the classroom, enhancing their social skills and confidence in other lessons.



*Qualitative feedback on the questionnaire:*

- I feel like I have gained more confidence due to the confidence that my teacher and my friends in my class have within me.
- I have definitely improved with my confidence: At the start of September, I was really shy and didn't know how to start a conversation with people I didn't know: Now I've made lots of friends and I feel much more comfortable with asking questions and engaging in the classroom.
- I have had to evolve and adapt my work ethic to drama. Now I feel that I completely understand the college's approach to the performing arts, I am now prepared to excel.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The findings from my Action Research have significantly impacted my long-term practice. Understanding the crucial role of confidence in learning has led me to prioritise building a supportive and encouraging classroom environment. By fostering confidence, students are more likely to engage actively, take risks, and persist through challenges, which enhances their overall learning experience.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Encourage Risk-Taking: Create a safe environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them.
- Celebrate Small Successes: Recognise and reward achievements to build confidence and motivate continued effort.
- Foster Collaboration: Encourage group work and peer support to enhance learning and boost confidence through shared experiences.

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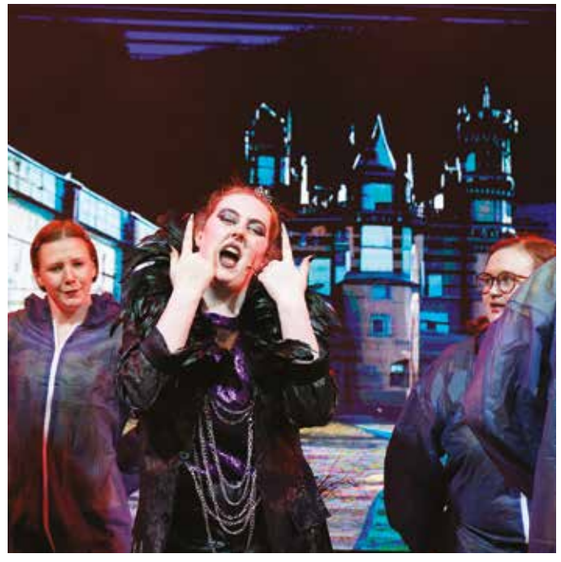

# W22 SINGLE COURSE MANAGERS

*Socratic Circles*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

As a research focus we wanted to extend the use of Socratic Circles in several curriculum areas, in order to encourage oracy, critical thinking and deeper understanding of sophisticated texts. These took the forms for example of extracts (Politics), literary texts (French) and short stories (Philosophy and Ethics). All practitioners were aiming to use Socratic Circles to support their CQIP of focussing on oracy in the classroom.

Alma Piric (2022) maintains that "This disciplined dialogue, the Socratic Circle approach, is a pedagogical approach that encourages the participants to seek deeper understanding of concepts through dialogues and draw conclusions using the thoughtful responses of their peers".

Information from the charity Voice 21 website also supported the research. One of the objectives of this charity being "…developing learners who think critically, reason together and have the vocabulary to express their knowledge and understanding."

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

Initially, teachers from other curriculum areas observed a Socratic Circle in French to understand the process, rationale, and potential outcomes. Practitioners discussed the Socratic method and adaptations for their groups and subjects. A Microsoft Forms activity was prepared to gather student feedback.

We explained to students the rationale for our research thus involving them as learning partners in our research. Students were given a text to prepare prior to the lesson and were then separated into 2 equally sized groups to discuss the text. The main objective of a Socratic method is to enable open discussion between students by allowing them to lead their own dialogue on open-ended questions selected by the practitioner. The inner circle discusses the questions by sharing ideas, inviting others into the discussion and building on others' opinions. The outer circle listens and takes notes on a chart prepared by the practitioner. The groups then swap positions and roles and the process is repeated. Subsequently students feedback their findings and if appropriate complete a written question based on the notes they have taken (Extract question – Politics, essay – French). In some subjects the process was carried out at least twice to build students' confidence.

Research by Alma Piric (2022) claims that "The most important benefit of the Socratic Circle approach is the full participation of each student." Although some students struggle with oracy in class situations in front of other students, everyone is encouraged to contribute to the discussion and there is a lack of judgement in the Socratic model, where students are encouraged to dialogue rather than debate.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

In French, 10 out of 18 students disliked being judged on their performance, leading to the discontinuation of this practice. In Politics, 15 out of 21 students reported improved understanding, and 7 out of 21 felt more confident speaking in class. French students appreciated sharing ideas and hearing everyone's opinions, gaining confidence quickly. 92% of Philosophy students found Socratic Circles effective in clarifying ideas through discussion.

As practitioners we had expected that students' understanding would improve through Socratic Circle dialogue, as other research has indicated this. We were impressed by students' participation, which reminded us that class discussion does not always have to go through the teacher and may be more natural if conducted as a dialogue. It did not surprise us that some students were reluctant to participate in a Socratic Circle, but it was rewarding to see students who might not normally volunteer answers contributing to the discussion, especially when invited to by another student.

We discovered that the optimum group size for a Socratic Circle is between 14 and 22. Students in small groups (French B-9 students) feel exposed and are reluctant to contribute. With larger groups (Classical Civilization –25-27) the group is ungainly and student contribution becomes limited.

The majority of students who participated in Socratic Circles said that they would be happy to repeat the Socratic method in subsequent lessons.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

As practitioners we consider that Socratic Circles are a productive and valuable form of conducting discussion and dialogue in class. The discussion is most fruitful when students use a source (text, extract, film, song) to reflect on the topic prior to the lesson.

We will certainly use Socratic Circles in the future to encourage critical thinking and depth of understanding.

Socratic Circles can also be adapted to the group size or composition, for example with EPQ, working in pairs to encourage a deeper dive into the rationale for students' projects or using mini Socratic Circles where student work in groups of 3/4, 2 dialoguing and 1 or 2 taking notes and giving feedback. This worked well with a small group of 9 students in French.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Don't be afraid to have a go – the worst that can happen is complete silence!

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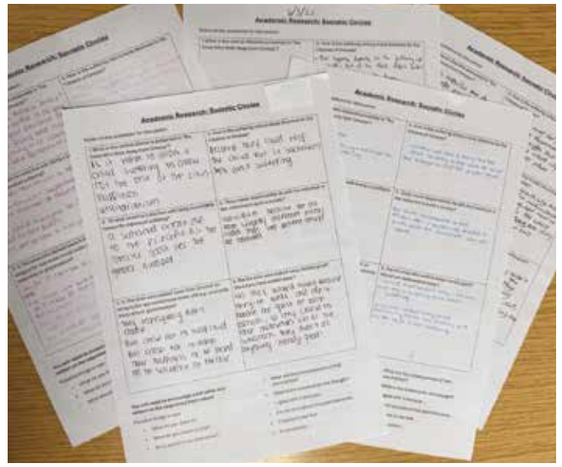

# BIOLOGY

*Academic Tutoring*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our research aimed to enhance the effectiveness of Academic Tutoring (AT) time by improving students' exam techniques, particularly in tackling challenging application questions. We sought to design and trial oracy-based activities to facilitate retrieval practice and develop skills for answering practical application and Levels of Response 6-mark questions.

This initiative was motivated by feedback from the previous year's student questionnaire, which indicated that AT time was rated lower in student satisfaction compared to other departmental provisions. Additionally, our approach aligned with our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the year, which prioritised improving outcomes for students with a B target grade, as they often underperformed in these types of questions.

Research suggests that "learning is deeper and more durable when it is effortful" (Brown, Roediger, & McDaniel, 2014), and low-stakes retrieval practice is among the most effective revision strategies. Our focus on oracy stemmed from its recognised role in supporting learning. According to Voice 21, "Having an oracy-rich classroom where students are given the space to explore their ideas with their peers can make them feel more confident in their own ideas as well as their academic performance" (Voice 21, 2020). We specifically targeted the Cognitive strand of the Oracy Skills Framework, which involves "the choice of content to convey meaning and intention" (Oracy Cambridge, 2020). Our goal was to integrate oracy-based activities into AT sessions to improve students' exam techniques and overall performance.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We adopted the Lesson Study approach, collaboratively designing an oracy-based activity for a Year 2 Biology AT session. The session focused on a Year 1 topic to allow for spaced retrieval. We selected a practical topic that students found difficult to revise and a question with the stem "Evaluate," requiring balanced arguments.

Our initial activity was a paired "bulls-eye" oracy task, introduced through a short video on extracting DNA from a strawberry. One team member facilitated the session with a Year 2 Biology class of 22 students, while the others observed. Three Case Study students, representing a range of abilities, were identified in advance.

Students provided feedback via post-it notes, sharing what they found useful and suggesting improvements. Based on this, the activity was refined and repeated with parallel groups, delivered by different teachers.

We then co-planned a second session on enzymes, structured to support students in constructing a Levels of Response answer. Activities included an "articulate" game, paired discussions on graph interpretation, and collaborative planning of an extended response. A different team member delivered this session to another Year 2 class of 22 students, again identifying Case Study students across a range of abilities.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Both sessions were highly successful, with strong student engagement. In the first session, students appreciated the competitive element of the "bulls-eye" activity and found the video helpful in recalling experimental details before explaining the process.

Student feedback indicated that the activity reinforced their understanding of practical work. The main improvement suggested was ensuring both students in each pair had the opportunity to explain the process. This adjustment was implemented in subsequent iterations, leading to increased expectations for the second student, who had prior exposure to the "answers."

The second session on enzymes also proved effective. Students engaged enthusiastically with the articulate game, creatively acting out key terms. Case Study students participated well, demonstrating that the activities provided an appropriate level of challenge across abilities.

Less confident students opted for the second turn in paired discussions, allowing additional preparation time. Analysis of students' written responses to the Levels of Response question revealed a common pattern: while they confidently described enzyme function, they often omitted key details. For example, they could explain enzyme denaturation at high temperatures but frequently overlooked the effect of low temperatures on kinetic energy and enzyme-substrate collisions. This highlighted a crucial gap in their responses and provided a valuable teaching point.

Importantly, student perceptions of AT time improved. The student questionnaire results showed increased satisfaction with AT, demonstrating the positive impact of our intervention. Students said they found the activities enjoyable and helpful for improving exam technique.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

These activities will be incorporated into future AT sessions and the wider Biology Scheme of Work (SoW). Moving forward, we will continue developing oracy-based activities to support retrieval practice and exam technique development.

Oracy is now embedded in all Biology lessons, reinforcing the importance of verbal explanations in solidifying understanding. The student questionnaire also reflected a high level of involvement and enjoyment in Biology lessons, further validating the benefits of oracy-based learning approaches.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Using varied oracy activities for retrieval practice can make AT time more effective
- Collaborating as a team to design activities ensures consistency and maximises impact across different teaching groups
- Incorporating past exam questions as the focal point of activities helps provide clear objectives and structure.

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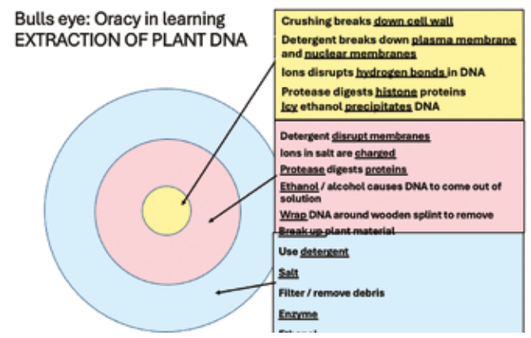


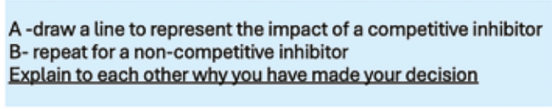


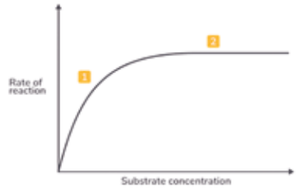


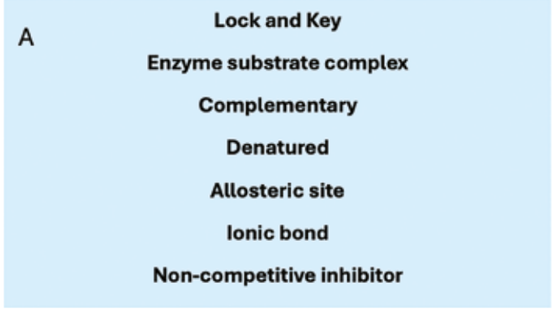


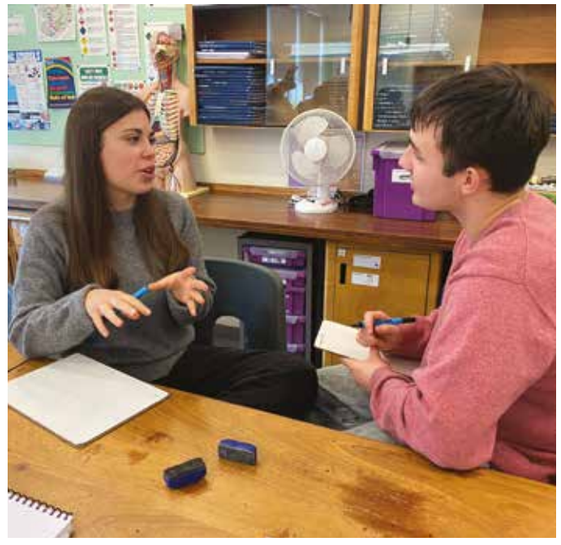

# BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

*Peer & self assessment*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our research aimed to enhance the use of peer and self-assessment to develop independent learning and improve progress. We wanted to use these as active learning strategies rather than purely for assessment. This approach was motivated by the need to manage teacher workload more effectively and help students become more independent learners with stronger metacognition.

Research indicates that developing students' understanding of assessment empowers them as active participants rather than passive recipients of information. Understanding assessment methods increases student confidence and motivation. Knowledge of assessment criteria helps students identify strengths and weaknesses to tailor learning strategies. 'Self-assessment is a powerful tool that triggers deep learning' (Taras, Ming Wong 2022) and supports students taking ownership of their learning. According to Reading University (2024), 'Peer and self-assessment empowers students to develop critical thinking and reflection skills sought by employers.' Our goal was to develop assessment literacy enabling students to evaluate their work and identify areas for improvement.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We adopted the Lesson Study approach, collaboratively designing a DIRT activity for the self-assessment of essays that combined qualitative and quantitative data. Activities included highlighting connectives, assessment stickers, example essays, and levelling sheets. One team member facilitated while others observed three case study students of varying abilities. Students provided feedback via focus groups and surveys.

Activities were then refined and repeated with parallel groups by different teachers. Initial feedback showed students found using the AQA levelling challenging, so we created simplified mark schemes and assessment criteria. For the third session, we developed a pre-generated assessment sheet to help students identify key essay components and determine marks.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

All sessions received positive responses with good student engagement. Students found the highlighting exercise useful for analysing structure and the success criteria stickers helped them to identify their strengths and improvement areas. Some of the students found the levelling activity more challenging as the exam board levels are difficult to decipher. Students found it demanding to differentiate between 'limited, reasonable, good and excellent responses' knowledge, application, analysis and evaluation. We reflected on this in the second session by producing a simpler version of the mark scheme.

Survey results indicated 75% rated the activities as "very effective" whilst all students said they were more confident in knowing how to improve their essays. The highlighting activity was most popular and after the initial activity half of the students agreed it helped them become more independent learners.

The modified levelling sheet proved successful in the second session. However, highlighting remained the most popular activity, helping students recognise their need for deeper analysis and more connectives. Most students wished for the teacher to have sight of their self-assessment to see if their levelling was accurate. In this session, students felt the assessment sticker was redundant as it duplicated the highlighting activity.

Student comments from survey and focus group:

- I didn't really understand analysis A03 but now I know how to do it
- Was able to find out what areas of my 16-mark answer were lacking for example I realised I needed to go deeper with my analysis
- It helped to show me what to look to include in a high-level essay answer
- How to layout an essay and work on my conclusion
- Helped me see what I needed to improve and made it more involving
- Being able to visually/clearly see the breakdown of my essay and the marking involved
- The ability to evaluate my choices in words and analysis
- I need to weave in more connectives as it makes the essay flow more and it just looks better with a wider flow of words

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

A variety of self and peer assessment activities will be fully incorporated into future Business and Economics lessons. Moving forward, we will continue to experiment with a range of self and peer assessment methods to support meta-cognition and independent learning as we value the long-term impact of these learning activities.

Following the lesson study activity we have purchased mini printer machines for the team to utilise the assessment criteria sticker method which was very well received by all classes. We also continue to develop pre-generated assessment sheet to support students in self-assessment in relation to essays and utilise example essays and annotation methods as a regular part of classroom practise. We have also produced generic marking sheets with student friendly assessment for the different lengths of question styles.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Use a variety of self and peer assessment methods
- Produce student friendly versions of mark schemes to allow students to become more confident in assessment requirements
- Provide student friendly AO sheet to allow students to highlight the level of their assessment skills.
- Introduce self-assessment and levelling to students early in the course and undertake on a regular basis to increase confidence.

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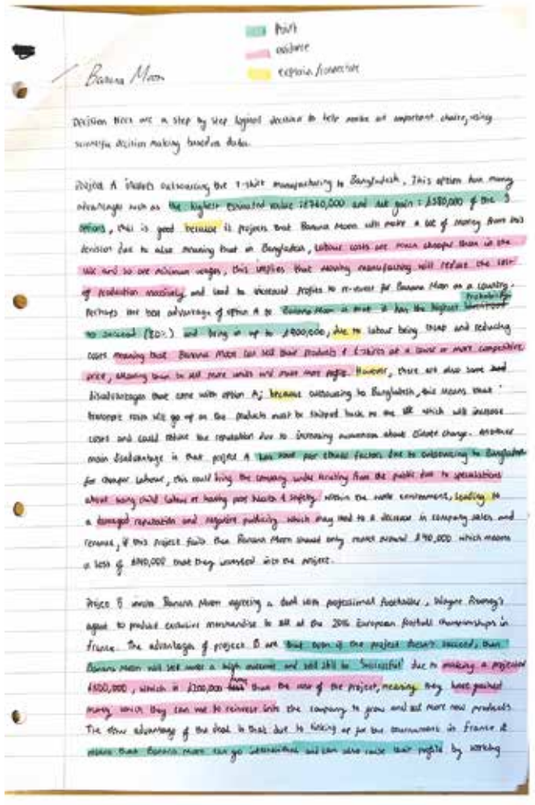
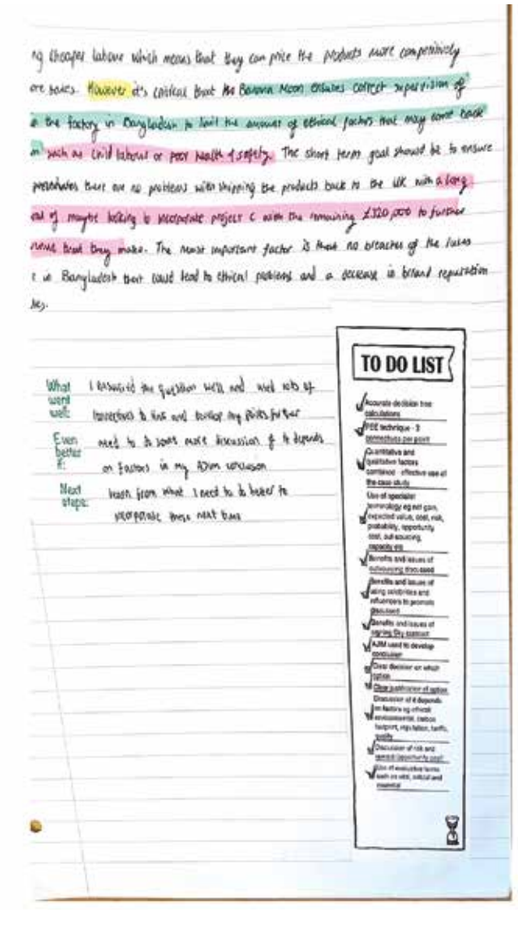
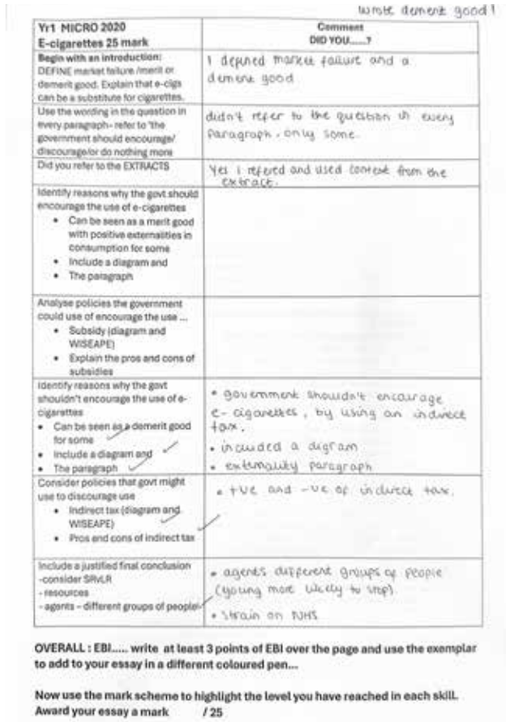




| Yr1 MICRO 2020<br>E-cigarettes 25 mark | Comment<br>DID YOU.....? |
|---|---|
| **Begin with an introduction:**<br>DEFINE market failure /merit or demerit good. Explain that e-cigs can be a substitute for cigarettes. | I defined market failure and a demerit good |
| Use the wording in the question in every paragraph- refer to 'the government should encourage/ discourage/or do nothing more | didn't refer to the question in every paragraph - only some. |
| Did you refer to the EXTRACTS | Yes I referred and used context from the extracts |
| Identify reasons why the govt should encourage the use of e-cigarettes<br>• Can be seen as a merit good with positive externalities in consumption for some<br>• Include a diagram and<br>• The paragraph | |
| Analyse policies the government could use of encourage the use ...<br>• Subsidy (diagram and WISEAPE)<br>• Explain the pros and cons of subsidies | |
| Identify reasons why the govt shouldn't encourage the use of e-cigarettes<br>• Can be seen as a demerit good for some<br>• Include a diagram and<br>• The paragraph | • government shouldn't encourage e-cigarettes, by using an indirect tax.<br>• included a digram<br>• externality paragraph |
| Consider policies that govt might use to discourage use<br>• Indirect tax (diagram and WISEAPE)<br>• Pros and cons of indirect tax | • +ve and -ve of indirect tax. |
| Include a justified final conclusion<br>-consider SRVLR<br>- resources<br>- agents - different groups of people | • agents different groups of people (young more likely to stop)<br>• strain on NHS |

**OVERALL : EBI..... write at least 3 points of EBI over the page and use the exemplar to add to your essay in a different coloured pen...**

**Now use the mark scheme to highlight the level you have reached in each skill. Award your essay a mark / 25**

# ENGLISH LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

*Coursework Feedback*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to find out how we could get better at extended task (NEA) feedback in order to streamline systems and benefit students with appropriate methods for their needs. The context for the research is that the process of 'coursework' takes an extremely long time and students increasingly find the process difficult to manage, particularly building on staff suggestions for amendments over an extended period of time. The Literature course QIP is also focused on feedback for students and how to utilise mark grids.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We planned a series of observations which focused on our chosen Case Study students (across the ability range) with two Year 2 English classes (Literature group with 25 students, including three Case Study students identified in advance, and an A level Language class of 17 students including the same case study students.) Some changes were made according to student and staff availability and in light of some feedback received from students. The aim was to make students further aware of the updating and drafting processes involved in a long-term NEA project, including reading and research, choosing appropriate topics/essay titles, using the drafting of long essays to improve the quality of response and working within a word limit to achieve specific assessment criteria. Case Study students' progress was observed over several months and we found their response to feedback differed. After the first stages of drafting, a Literature feedback form was re-designed to incorporate more detailed reference to the AOs for students to check off on a grid, as well as a series of questions which students answered, the teacher 'replied' to and incorporated into the ongoing coursework delivery and feedback sessions and students were encouraged to build on.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

In English Language, the lesson study aimed to make feedback a two-way conversation rather than a one-way delivery. By listening to and reading students' assessments and reflections, we gained insights into their thinking and encouraged them to ask questions. Each Teams comment used specific examples to help students relate key messages to their work. Supervision-style feedback allowed students to make notes and follow up later. This was mostly successful for students with well-formed ideas on their Language NEA investigations, aiming for higher-level evaluations.

In English Literature, similar findings were observed. Feedback traditionally involved written comments on hard copies of essays. This year an early 400 word writing task was set and another short preparatory task where students focused on the beginning and ending of their chosen novels. These were annotated, returned and discussed in class. This helped students develop their use of text detail, context, and critical support. It was important for students to have time to read comments and ask for clarifications.

Students universally valued detailed written notes on hard copies. Those who submitted on Teams found feedback less helpful for longer tasks and preferred annotated hard copies. One of the Case Study students however (who was in the very low prior GCSE attainment band) needed a lot of extra help in finding the text detail, understanding and accessing the critical and contextual material and developing the advice given. Several extra one to one sessions were the only way to enable this student to develop extended writing of any sort: the feedback forms had not been of much help.

Students reviewed the feedback process after the final deadline. While feedback forms and online notes were useful initially, they preferred individual consultations and marginal notes for refining their 3000-3500 word essays.

It was also observed that apart from the student referenced above, all students in the study group were able to refine and improve the detail of their work after consultation and detailed notes provided by the teacher, but that the process and ability to refine their work differed from student to student.

In both Literature and Language the student with the highest prior GCSE attainment initially found using teacher suggestions for refinement and improvement of work (either handwritten, on Teams, oral or a combination of all three) a challenge, and it was only in the later stages of the Literature NEA that they were able to develop their work in line with the AOs. This was possibly due to having a more complex initial idea/overly ambitious essay title and needing to refine both the idea and title in order to achieve clarity and address all the AOs.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

In Literature the impact will be on using more detailed feedback forms for the early part of the process and then continuing with feedback on hard copies with written notes and one to one discussion.

Using research from Andy Tharby (2014) and Barak Rosenshine (2012) Students with low prior GCSE attainment are necessarily going to require more time and input and we can consider suggesting texts and tasks that we know work well for these students. Most students respond well to a variety of feedback approaches and all like to know where they need to improve in attaining the correct AO balance. This can be maintained and increased in frequency in future.

*References*:

Centre for Teaching and Learning. (2025). Giving Effective Feedback. Available at: https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/giving-effective-feedback

Rosenshine, B. (2012). Principles of Instruction: Research-Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know. American Educator, 36(1), pp. 12-19. Available at: www.aft.org

Tharby, A. (2014). Feedback: Built-in or Added-on?. Available at: https://reflectingenglish.wordpress.com/2014/11/22/feedback-built-in-or-added-on/

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

*Spaced Learning and retrieval practise*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This year the focus of our action research was around spaced learning and interleaving. A level Environmental Science is a content heavy subject and although students are very much examined on synoptic application of knowledge, they are unable to do this successfully unless they have acquired the knowledge base from which to work.

Course quality student questionnaire data frequently highlights the size of the specification (knowledge base) as both a cause of student anxiety but also lower student attainment. In addition, there has been significant academic research highlighting the benefits of spaced learning such as The Science of Effective Learning by S.Carpenter, S.Pan and A.Butler and Make it Stick by P.Brown, H.Roediger and M.Mcdaniel. These studies also highlight the importance of combining spaced learning with interleaving – the concept of practicing two or more topic areas or skills within retrieval practice. Therefore, given our own student questionnaire data and the growing body of academic research in this field it seemed a sensible starting point for our action research project-which was also part of our QIP.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We decided to follow the lesson studies approach. Previously, as a subject we have always assessed students on topics either as we teach them (formative) or at the end of a unit (summative). Although this has been effective at giving data on current understanding of topic content it has not particularly helped develop synoptic thinking. Furthermore, some students have been able to be successful in these types of assessments using short term memory only to perform poorly at the end of the year in mock exams where they have been assessed on multiple modules. We wanted students to have time to forget but also to ensure students understand that solid revision is required for exam success so by delaying end of module assessments the theory is that that this should embed good learning habits.

For the lesson observation, a year 2 class was chosen with 20 students. This class was about to start a new module of air pollution but the spaced learning task involved a recap activity from the earlier year 2 topic of water pollution – specifically heavy metal pollution (the students had no prior warning of the lesson activity and topic area). This is a very content heavy topic that students often find challenging both in terms of the amount of content but also the fact that many of the metals have similar sources, impacts and control measures. The spaced learning task consisted of a quiz – quiz – trade activity. It was originally planned that the activity would take around 15 minutes but the students were still swapping and quizzing each other after 25 minutes and it was lovely to see the students interacting so well with each other, chatting to each other, swapping information and working on their oracy skills. Finally, at the end of the activity the whole class discussed synoptic links that could link to heavy metal pollution (inter leaving).

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

After the lesson a short survey was carried out 84% of the students said that they found the activity very useful with the remaining students finding it quite useful.

This project has had a considerable influence on the delivery of this subject. The student feedback from the spaced learning lesson activity was overwhelmingly positive and this will be rolled out to other topic areas next year – particularly those content heavy topics with many synoptic links to other parts of the specification such as the biogeochemical cycles.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

Summative assessments will now be carried out at least 3 weeks after the end of module teaching allowing students time to forget. The impacts of this are too early to assess at this point but it is hoped that moving forward this should have a positive impact of both student work ethic and study habits as well as exam result performance.

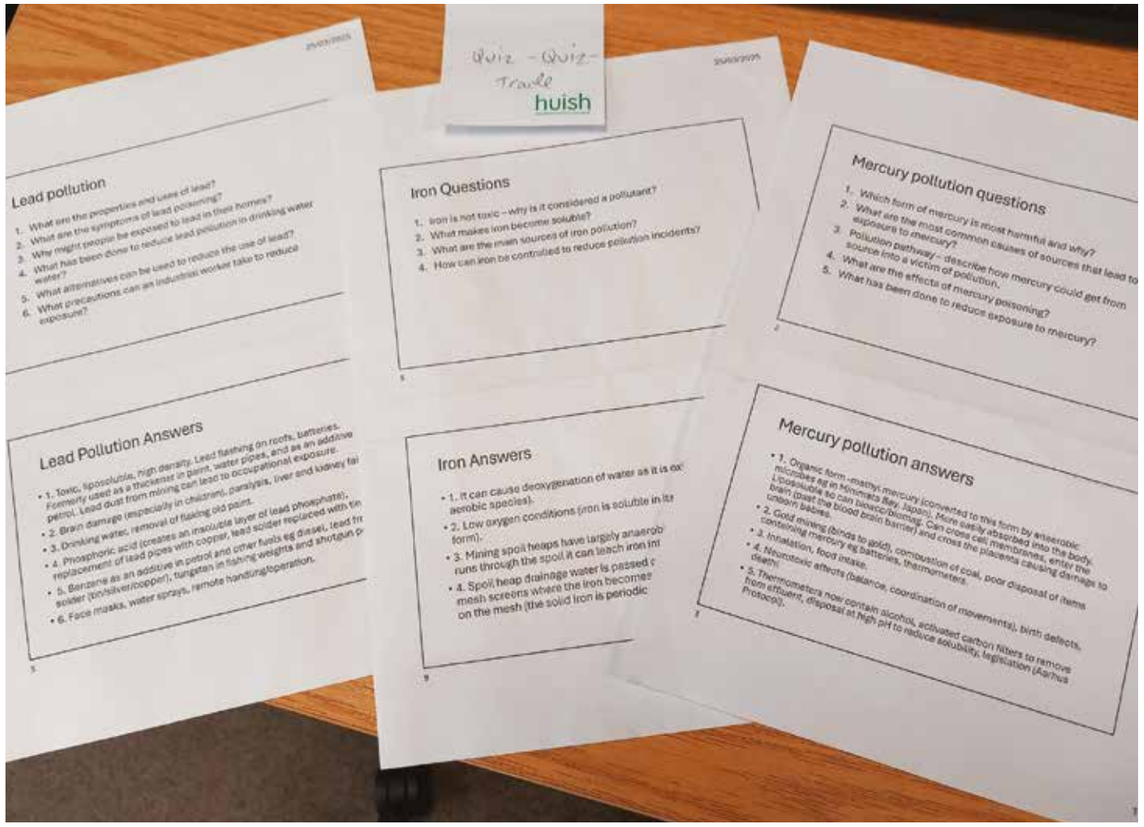
*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Incorporate regular recaps of previous topics within schemes of work
- Consider spacing end of unit assessment tests at least 3 weeks after topic teaching has finished (allow time to forget)

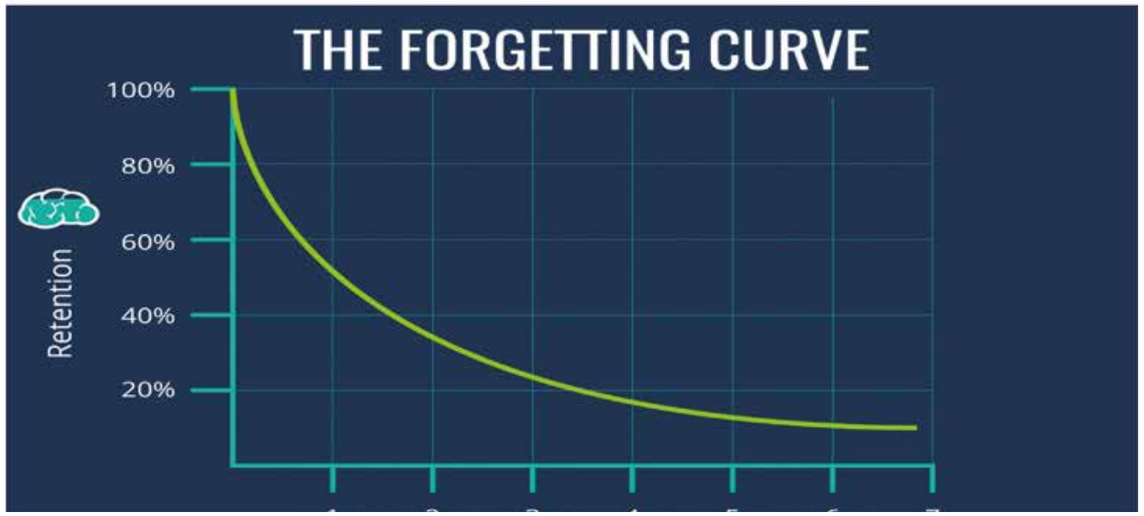
*References*

Brown, P.C., Roediger, H.L. III & McDaniel, M.A. (2014). Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press

Carpenter, S.K., Pan, S.C. & Butler, A.C. (2022). The science of effective learning with spacing and retrieval practice. Nature Reviews Psychology, 1(9), pp. 496-511




# Ebbingham's Forgetting Curve



# GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

*Oracy*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to improve the engagement of our mid-ability students, particularly those on D grades, by improving their oracy skills. Traditional methods often favour more confident learners, so we integrated oracy-based activities to engage reluctant learners and boost their confidence in class contributions. We focused on the Cognitive strand of the Oracy Skills Framework, which involves "the choice of content to convey meaning and intention" (Oracy Cambridge, 2020). This initiative also aligned with our college's priority of developing oracy skills.

Kate Jones' book "Retrieval Practice" emphasizes that regularly recalling information enhances long-term memory retention and improves learning outcomes (Jones, 2020). She provides practical strategies for integrating retrieval practice into everyday teaching to make learning more effective.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We conducted two rounds of lesson studies in December 2024 and March 2025, focusing on year 2 students. The activities were part of their ongoing revision, using spaced retrieval on year 1 topics and exam question practice. We focused on three case study students per class who fit our target group.

We co-planned an activity called 'Ask the Expert,' which each teacher adapted based on the needs of their students and class:

- Teacher 1: Topics were semi-randomly allocated, and students had two weeks of academic tutoring time to become experts on that topic. They initially sat in their normal groups to ease anxiety, which worked well, but at later sessions the teacher mixed them into different groups and expanded the activity to include discussing exam questions rather than just revision topics.
- Teacher 2: Topics were randomly allocated, with two weeks of preparation. Students practiced in friendship groups before mixing twice more with other students within the group, the idea being that they improved and consolidated their knowledge. The activity lasted about 40 minutes, with future sessions planned to be shorter and more focused.
- Teacher 3: Pairs of students revised a topic, preparing in the last 15 minutes of a lesson. The activity was the starter for the next lesson, with students delivering their sessions multiple times. The whiteboards that they had prepared were ready, but they had 10 minutes to do final prep and rehearsal.
- Teacher 4: Students chose their revision topics, leading to some duplication but increased comfort. Preparation was done for Huish 30, with a focus on preparing questions for other topics.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

After We were all really pleased with how well the students engaged in this. It was noted by all teachers that even the students who were often more reluctant to contribute in class engaged well with the 'Ask the Expert' activity. This activity definitely helped with oracy skills. The activity helped students improve their ability to articulate their thoughts and engage in discussions.

The quality of revision varied among students. Some students went beyond the parameters of the task, showing a deeper understanding and better preparation. For example, Teacher 1 noted that mixing students into different groups and expanding the activity to discuss exam questions rather than just revising topics led to more effective revision sessions.

Each method had merits and drawbacks, highlighting the importance of learning from each experience and considering group dynamics. Different strategies used by teachers had varying levels of effectiveness:

- Teacher 1: Mixing students into different groups after initial preparation helped them discuss exam questions more effectively.
- Teacher 2: The activity ran out of steam after about 40 minutes, suggesting that shorter, more focused sessions might be better.
- Teacher 3: Preparing in pairs and delivering sessions multiple times helped students consolidate their knowledge.
- Teacher 4: Allowing students to choose their topics led to increased comfort but also some duplication. Better preparation for listeners could make the activity more interactive.

Group dynamics also played a significant role in the effectiveness of the activities. Students were more comfortable and engaged when working in familiar groups, but mixing groups also helped them build confidence and improve their oracy skills.

Results from the student questionnaire showed that students found discussing past exam questions the most helpful activity, followed by discussing revision videos and the 'Ask the Expert' activity.

Overall, there was a small increase in students' confidence in their oracy skills, from 3.52 to 4.11 out of 5.

In the questionnaire students also made some suggestions of other things that could be tried in the future, such as an articulate style game they had tried in Environmental Science and a Pictionary style game they had used in History.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

We plan to continue to integrate oracy skill development into our curriculum and will continue to develop new activities. Gradual confidence-building activities can help even reluctant students become more involved in class discussions, improving overall engagement.

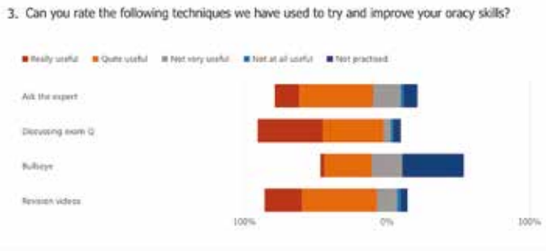
### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- There is definitely no 'one size fits all' strategy and even within our small action research group, we had our own versions of the task. Take time to develop your own and don't be afraid to tweak it each time.
- It is likely to go better than you think it will!
- Having a scaled approach to this over the duration of your course would probably build the most confidence in students long term.

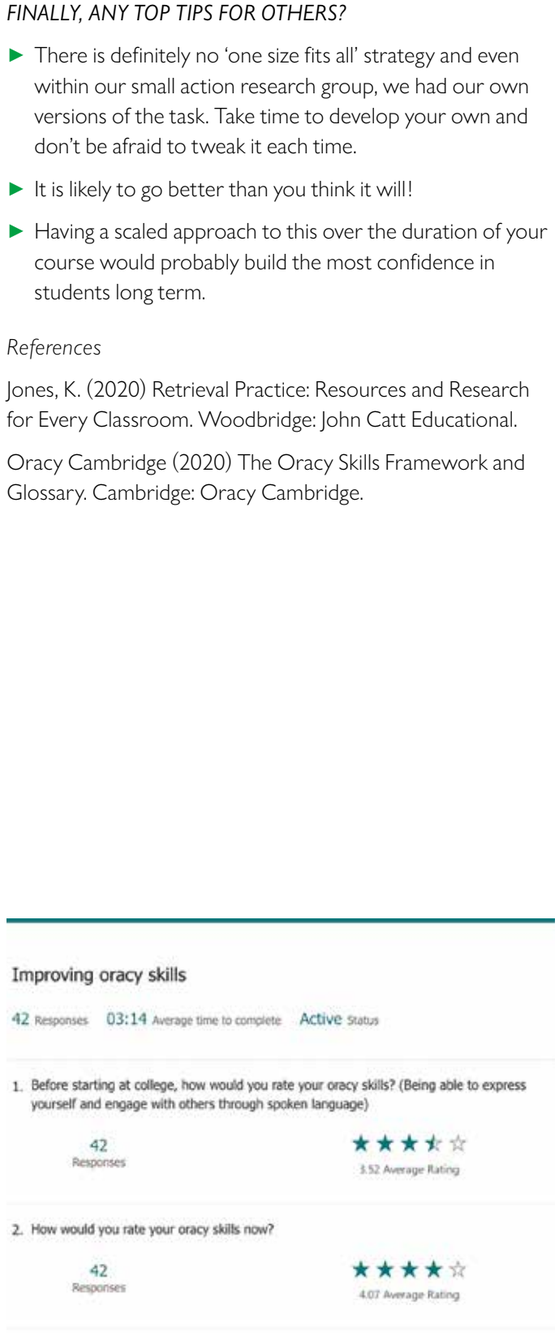
*References*

Jones, K. (2020) Retrieval Practice: Resources and Research for Every Classroom. Woodbridge: John Catt Educational.

Oracy Cambridge (2020) The Oracy Skills Framework and Glossary. Cambridge: Oracy Cambridge.






# MATHS A LEVEL

*Academic Tutoring*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our research looked at Academic tutoring for Year 2 retrieval practise.

We looked at different ways to structure the retrieval practice sessions using past paper questions (PPQs) with the aim of deciding which would be the most efficient. We were interested in considering some of the research summarised by Barton (2018), namely does testing identify gaps in knowledge (and do students find this useful), and does frequent retrieval practice in the form of past paper questions encourage students to study.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We adopted the lesson study approach and having jointly planned the sessions, two members of staff delivered both sessions to two groups of Year 2 students. Other staff observed the sessions, and we then jointly discussed each lesson, and then looked at the feedback from students.

In each lesson the class teacher had identified 3 focus students, one below target, one on track and one exceeding their target grades. This was shared with the observers so that we could look at the impact on specific students.

The first lesson involved retrieval of a year 1 topic, binomial expansion. Students were given a one-week warning to allow them to prepare for this topic, either to prepare some revision notes or to practice some questions.

Students were given a PPQ which they were allowed to discuss with each other. Then a student was chosen to explain the question on the board and other students had an opportunity to ask questions. A second question was then set, no discussion allowed, and this was then collected and marked by the class teacher.

For the second lesson there was no pre warning of the topic, R cos alpha. The same process was followed.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Both lessons were successful, students were fully engaged and keen to identify any errors and make improvements.

*From the teacher observations, marking and discussion:*

In both classes in lesson 1 students were overwhelmingly able to make progress with question 1 because they had prepared, some of the students who were below target grade needed some hints but not full explanations – students who were not able to start admitted to not having prepared. They all then scored well on the teacher marked second question.

In lesson 2 students were much less able to make progress with the first question and needed more help and explanation, this was particularly the case for students who were below or on track, those working above their target grades were more able to start. Lots but not all students then scored well on the subsequently teacher marked question. We felt those students who still found question 2 difficult had needed more time for the explanation and discussion of question 1 which we hadn't planned for.

In both lessons most students chose not to discuss question 1 even though they had been told they could, and in many cases would have benefitted from doing so.

*From the collected student feedback:*

All students said that retrieval practice in the form of PPQs is useful.

There was mixed feedback about prewarning, some felt it encouraged them to revise, some liked finding out whether they had gaps.

They don't like other students going through the questions on the board, but they do like the teacher explaining the question on the board!

They find teacher marking of the second questions useful especially to see whether they have missed method marks, the mark schemes can be hard to interpret in maths.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

Using PPQs for retrieval practice session identify gaps in knowledge both for the teacher and the student, lots of the student feedback referred to this. What is less clear is whether it encourages students to study. Our sense is that it does, but we need to look at this more as we continue to use our academic tutorial sessions in this way.

We plan to continue to mix up pre-warning and testing 'cold' to get more evidence, but it does seem that the process may be more efficient when students are pre warned about the topic.

We will continue with teacher marked questions.

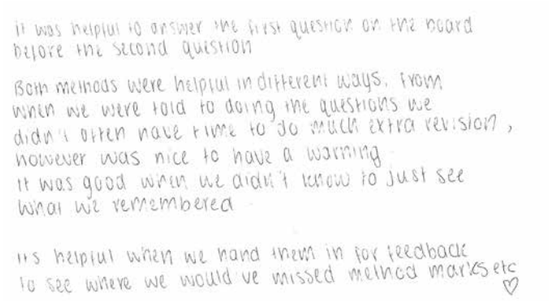
When there has not been pre warning of the topic we need to anticipate that more time will be needed to look at question 1 before they embark on the independently completed teacher marked question 2.

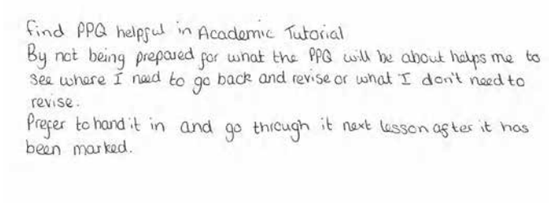
### *FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

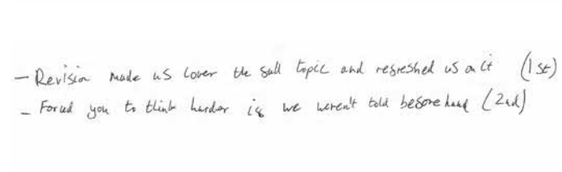
- Set aside enough time so students do not feel rushed, consider those with extra time.
- Choose the questions carefully.
- In maths, students often prefer the teacher to go through and explain the question.

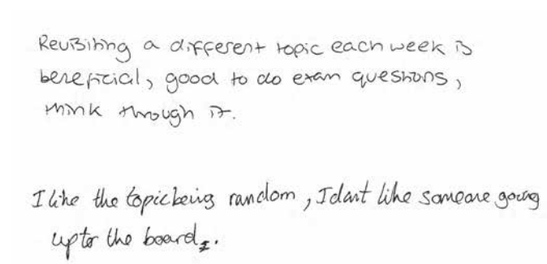
*Reference*

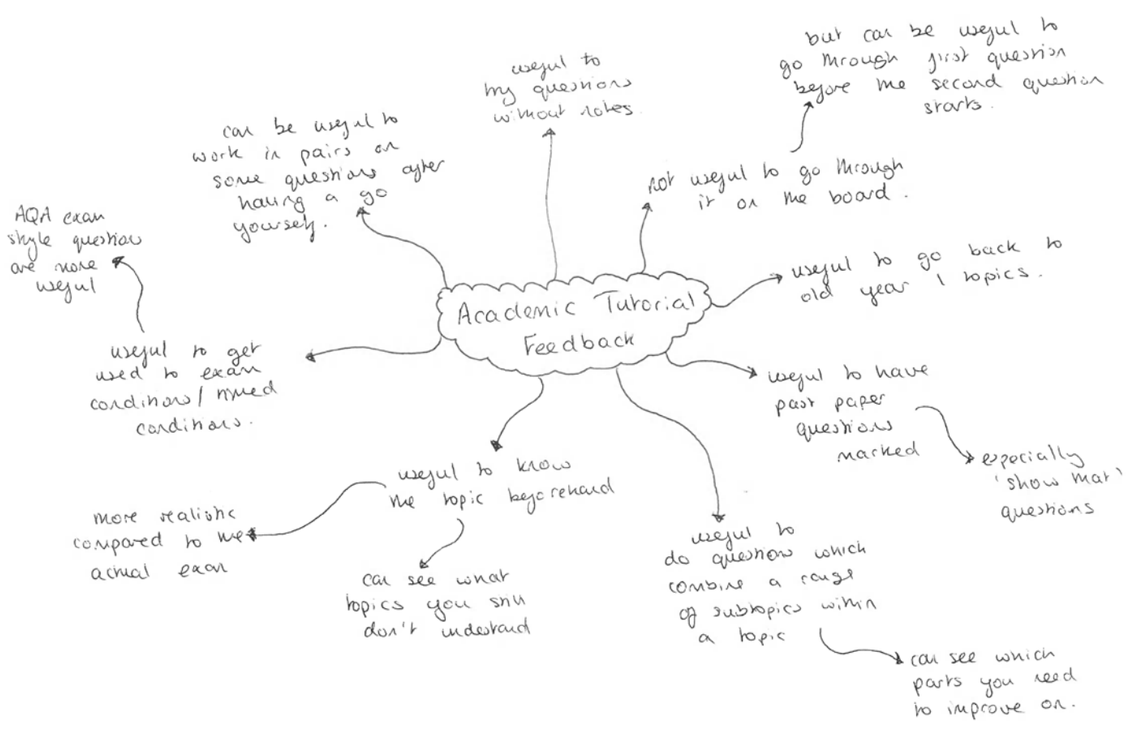
Barton, C. (2018) How I Wish I'd Taught Maths: Lessons Learned from Research, Conversations with Experts, and 12 Years of Mistakes. Woodbridge: John Catt Educational Ltd.



# VOCATIONAL MUSIC

*Musical communication and confidence*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our Research aimed to explore students' use of technical terms within music to increase student confidence and oracy within professional industry environments. We focused on our ability as teachers to equip students with the vocabulary needed to be confident in industry settings and utilise communication skills, in order to improve their oracy and industry-readiness. As a teaching body, we have found over the past few years that our students have the knowledge and expertise to operate professionally within the music industry, but lack the technical vocabulary to prove their knowledge. This was also evidenced in their overall oracy and communication skills. By incorporating more of these elements into our teaching, we hoped students would gain more confidence in their knowledge and increase their employment opportunities.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To help us achieve this goal, we trialled a new strategy a new aspect to production lessons: 'Term of the Day'. As a 5 to 10-minute activity, each week, students were introduced to a technical term: a phrase or a keyword that is commonly used and essential whilst operating within the music industry. It was important to us that these terms weren't just learnt in a vacuum but were applied in their practical uses. So, when possible, the terms were introduced alongside a practical element, for example, when our term of the day was Equalisation, and all the elements that went along with that, the lesson content was on mixing and how to balance frequencies within a song, a mix. This gave students the chance to link the terms with their function and had a greater chance of accessing a student's long-term memory.

As the 'Term of the Day' was a year-long and consistent exercise, we also experimented with and observed different activities to engage students and build their oracy skills. One was an activity to assess the students' knowledge-a think-pair-share activity where students needed to choose two topics to think about, discuss in pairs, and share these on post-it notes. The subsequent lessons involved similar activities that build upon these skills and encourage oracy skills in a three-week cycle. Week one focused on writing down findings, week two prioritised discussing with another pair, and in week three students presented their synthesiser diagram to the rest of the class. All three activities were observed and discussed throughout the department, and changes were made. For example, after the first and second activities, it was suggested that students be prepared to present these ideas to the rest of the class to increase confidence, but it was agreed that this should be done with scaffolding. By building these, the level of public speaking needed gradually increased to the point where they were comfortable with their knowledge and ability to communicate it.

Another activity asked students to prepare a PowerPoint presentation and record a commentary over the top. We noticed that the use of technical language had greatly improved as had their general presenting skills.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Music Production is such a creative and practical subject that students struggled in the beginning to put this into practice; they were much happier to put on their headphones and work on their practical projects, but the more we persevered with this exercise, the more it became just part of their weekly routine, and the more confident in their own ability they became. Their ability to explain their reasoning and use correct technical terms were greatly improved throughout the year. By regular and consistent work on the use of technical language, students have started to incorporate these skills into this subject which will help them no end in the industry. Not only has it helped their technical vocabulary, but it has also had a huge impact on their general confidence and willingness to share with the rest of the class. These activities have also really helped with assessment and have been evidenced in both summative and formative assessment throughout the year. Another noticeable change has been the students' ability to communicate with teachers and relay information and knowledge effectively, but also to socialise, communicate and collaborate with their peers. We have noticed a much higher level of cohesiveness within each class, and the level of collaboration between students on projects has increased, and we believe that we can see a correlation between this outcome and the oracy and technical terms activities.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

These findings have had a large impact on our department and are something that we will continue within our music production lessons and build upon. It has demonstrated the importance of fostering collaboration and the ability to communicate effectively, and how this needs to be set up and led from the front by teaching staff. We are now contemplating how we can roll this out to other parts of the music department, including Music Performance, and what aspects need to be different to succeed. We have seen these finding and process have had an impact on higher marks from students and has built confidence in them which we have seen evidenced in assignments throughout the course. This process has been a positive one and formative towards how our students improve in many facets of their musical and holistic abilities.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Start small- identify the very specific aspect or exercise and goals you want to achieve
- Plan to build- provide opportunities for students to keep practicing their oracy over time making these both mandatory and optional opportunities
- Link to goals- be very clear how and why these skills will be needed outside college, so they know how to make links between the classroom and other contexts this help to create motivation and can help to inspire students.

# STUDENT RESEARCHERS

*Breaktime Seating Provision*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to look at seating areas in the college because we observed that many students were not staying on campus during breaks between lessons and at lunch. Instead, they were going into town or sitting outside near the college's exterior walls, even during winter. These conditions made it challenging for students to effectively engage in activities like revision and homework, which are essential for their academic success. Additionally, the lack of adequate seating negatively impacted students' sense of belonging and well-being. Research by Whiting, Hinton & Jensen (2022) conducted a school-wide survey of 830 students in the US to investigate the correlation between students' experience at lunchtime and their sense of belonging to the school. They found that socialising with a group of friends at lunch had a strong correlation with their sense of belonging. This research underscores the importance of providing students with sufficient seating to foster a sense of community within the college.

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To investigate this issue, we designed a questionnaire to assess student views on the current seating situation around the college. The survey included multiple open questions to allow students to express their opinions in detail, as well as closed questions to provide numerical data. The question about the potential impact of seating was deliberately left open-ended to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences. The questionnaire was distributed via Microsoft in tutorials to reach as many students as possible. It was sent to tutor groups of first-year and second-year students enrolled in level 2 and level 3 courses, including both A-level and vocational courses. A total of 708 students responded to the questionnaire, providing a substantial dataset for analysis.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Our findings revealed that 76% of students felt there was not enough seating during breaks and free periods, which translates to 537 individual students. This data was visually represented through a graph to highlight the extent of the issue. On average, students reported that the most significant impacts of the lack of seating were difficulties in seeing their friends, which affected their sense of belonging, and challenges in revising, which impacted their academic performance. Additionally, students felt cold and unable to eat, which negatively affected their physical health.

One student poignantly described the impact of not finding a seat: "Being absolutely freezing cold! Then becoming ill because of it. Then it's difficult to concentrate in lessons due to being cold. The weather is shocking as usual, so that makes people wet and grumpy." This statement highlights how the lack of seating can significantly decrease both physical and mental health. Becoming ill due to exposure to cold weather can lead to absences from lessons, causing students to miss valuable content. Illness also limits the quality of work students can complete during lessons and their personal revision time. Regularly being unable to find a seat can have a substantial negative impact on students' education due to absences from illness or a lack of concentration. Furthermore, students reported developing negative attitudes towards their peers due to the unhappiness caused by the side effects of not having a seat, which reduces their sense of belonging–an important factor for student well-being.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

The findings from this research suggest that providing more indoor seating is the most straightforward solution, although it may not always be practical or possible. However, there are alternative ways to increase seating capacity without compromising other areas of the college. For instance, the college has large amounts of open space outdoors that could be utilised to provide additional seating during warmer months. Between the Willow and Hawthorne areas, there are approximately 14 benches, and on sunny days, many students stand or sit on the floor. Adding more outdoor seating during spring and summer could accommodate more students.

During colder months, more classrooms could be opened to provide indoor seating for the larger volume of students. Alternatively, areas like the hall could be made available for students, although classrooms would likely suffice. Additionally, informing students about available seating areas through tutorials can help ensure they are aware of all the options. This approach can improve students' sense of belonging, well-being, and academic performance by providing a comfortable and conducive environment for learning and socialising.

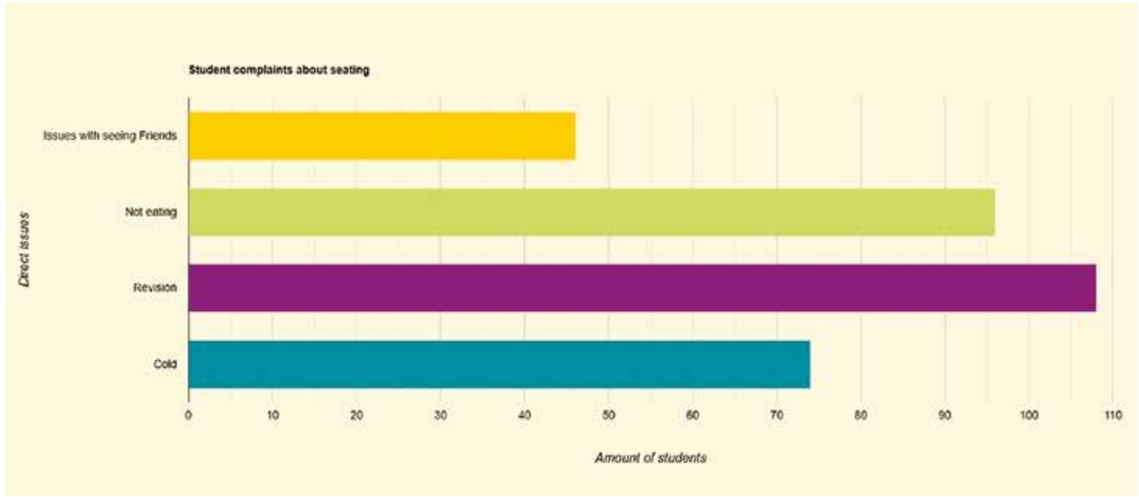
By implementing these changes, the college can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that addresses the needs of all students, ultimately enhancing their overall educational experience.

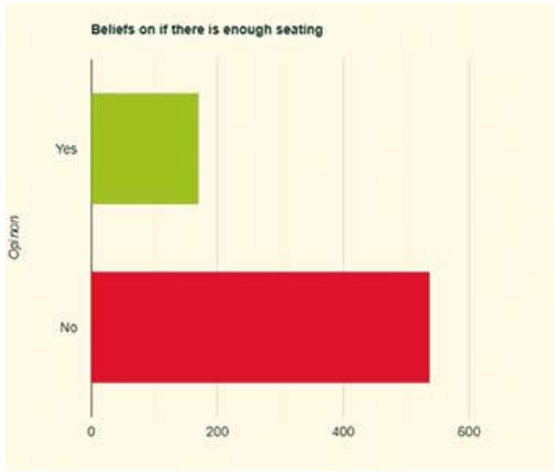
*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Utilise Outdoor Spaces: Add more outdoor seating during warmer months to make use of available space.
- Open Additional Areas: Open more classrooms or large indoor spaces like the auditorium during colder months to provide adequate seating.
- Communicate Availability: Inform students about available seating areas through tutorials to ensure they know where they can sit.

*Reference*

Whiting, E.F., Hinton, A.E. & Jensen, B. (2022). Loving lunch in junior high: Lunchtime activities and a sense of belonging in school. Journal of Community Psychology, 50,7, 2973-2992.




# STUDENT EXECUTIVE

*Huish 30*

## 1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We aimed to investigate how to better manage the use of Huish 30 to ensure it supports our learning and is impactful. Our research question was: "How can we maximise the impact of Huish 30 to increase outcomes and effectiveness?"

## 2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We decided to focus our research on A-levels to ensure manageability within our time frame. We sampled upper sixth A-level students through class questionnaires and asked questions on Huish 30, such as on frequency of Huish 30, monitoring of Huish 30, type and perceived effectiveness of activities. Class questionnaires were be distributed via Microsoft Forms, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and transparency.

Following the questionnaire, we also completed focus groups. Teachers selected six students of varying abilities for focus groups, in a range of subject areas. For each focus group, a pair of student executives used a semi-structured interview approach asking questions on effectiveness of specific tasks and the more in-depth qualitative reasoning behind the judgements.

## 3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

We obtained 196 responses to our survey, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of Huish 30.

- Types of Activities Set: The data revealed a wide variety of tasks assigned as part of Huish 30. The most common tasks included practice questions, retrieval exercises, revision activities, watching videos, and consolidating notes. Conversely, group tasks and reading were the least frequently assigned activities.
- Effectiveness of Activities: Students rated the effectiveness of these activities in enhancing their learning. The most common tasks, such as practice exam questions, retrieval questions, and essay writing, were deemed the most effective. On the other hand, group tasks, reading, Seneca, and flipped learning were considered the least effective. This prompted further investigation in our focus groups.
- Overall Effectiveness of Huish 30: The overall effectiveness of Huish 30 was complex. While students acknowledged that it helped improve their grades and confidence, their enjoyment and motivation to complete the tasks were divided. Motivation often stemmed from deadlines or the consequences of not completing the work. These results highlighted the importance and effectiveness of Huish 30 in academic improvement, though measuring motivation accurately would require more in-depth research methods beyond our current scope.

*Focus Group Findings*

Our focus groups provided deeper insights into the effectiveness of specific Huish 30 activities.

- Flipped Learning: We concluded that flipped learning requires improvement in some areas. It needs careful planning and scaffolding to ensure students possess the necessary skills. Common issues included students copying without understanding and forgetting content set too far in advance. Flipped learning may need to be taught as a skill specific to each subject, as some students struggled with aligning it to strict mark schemes or processing significant knowledge.
- Practice Questions: Practice questions emerged as the most effective Huish 30 tasks. They were highly valued for their ability to help students process and apply knowledge, and they motivated students by allowing clear tracking of progress. This effectiveness was particularly noted as A-level exams approached.
- Seneca: Feedback on Seneca was generally negative. Students felt it did not encourage them to process and correct their mistakes, as it allowed guessing. Additionally, the content often did not align with specific Huish curriculum requirements, making it less effective.
- Autonomy and Structure: Students who excel academically wanted more independence in their assignments, whereas those needing more support required structured guidance, like detailed revision plans. This balance between autonomy and structure is crucial for catering to different student needs.
- Completion of Huish 30: The completion of Huish 30 tasks was influenced by various factors, including deadlines, teacher expectations, and the importance of coursework. Students prioritised tasks based on urgency and the potential repercussions of non-completion. Monitoring and checking the quality of Huish 30 were identified as important motivating factors for students.

## 4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

Our findings have several implications for long-term practice:

- Improving Flipped Learning: To enhance flipped learning, it is essential to provide structured guidance and teach it as a skill specific to each subject. This will help students better understand and retain the content, making flipped learning more effective.
- Emphasising Practice Questions: Given their effectiveness, practice questions should be a central component of Huish 30. They not only help students process and apply knowledge but also motivate them by tracking progress, especially as exams approach.
- Re-evaluating Seneca: The negative feedback on Seneca suggests a need to reevaluate its use in Huish 30. Ensuring that the content aligns with curriculum requirements and encourages students to process and correct their mistakes will make it more effective.
- Balancing Autonomy and Structure: A tailored approach that balances autonomy and structure will cater to diverse learning needs. This balance will help maximise the effectiveness of Huish 30 for all students.
- Monitoring and Feedback: Regular monitoring and feedback on Huish 30 tasks are crucial for maintaining student motivation. Ensuring that students understand the importance of these tasks and receive constructive feedback will enhance their engagement and performance.

*FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?*

- Variety was not as important as the effectiveness/usefulness of the task. Autonomy and choice could be improved as students mature in Year 2.
- Teaching students the skills needed is very important e.g. consolidation, note taking.
- Flipped learning needs to be timely and tailored to the lesson
- Huish 30 needs to be very subject specific to Huish and not an external resource e.g. Seneca
- Consideration that students have 2 or 3 other subjects, and staff need to be aware of equity.
- It should also be set regularly with a realistic timeframe for completion.

Overall planning and sequencing by subject teams for Huish 30 is vital, it should be responsive to the needs of the cohort.