ACTION
RESEARCH

JUNE 2026

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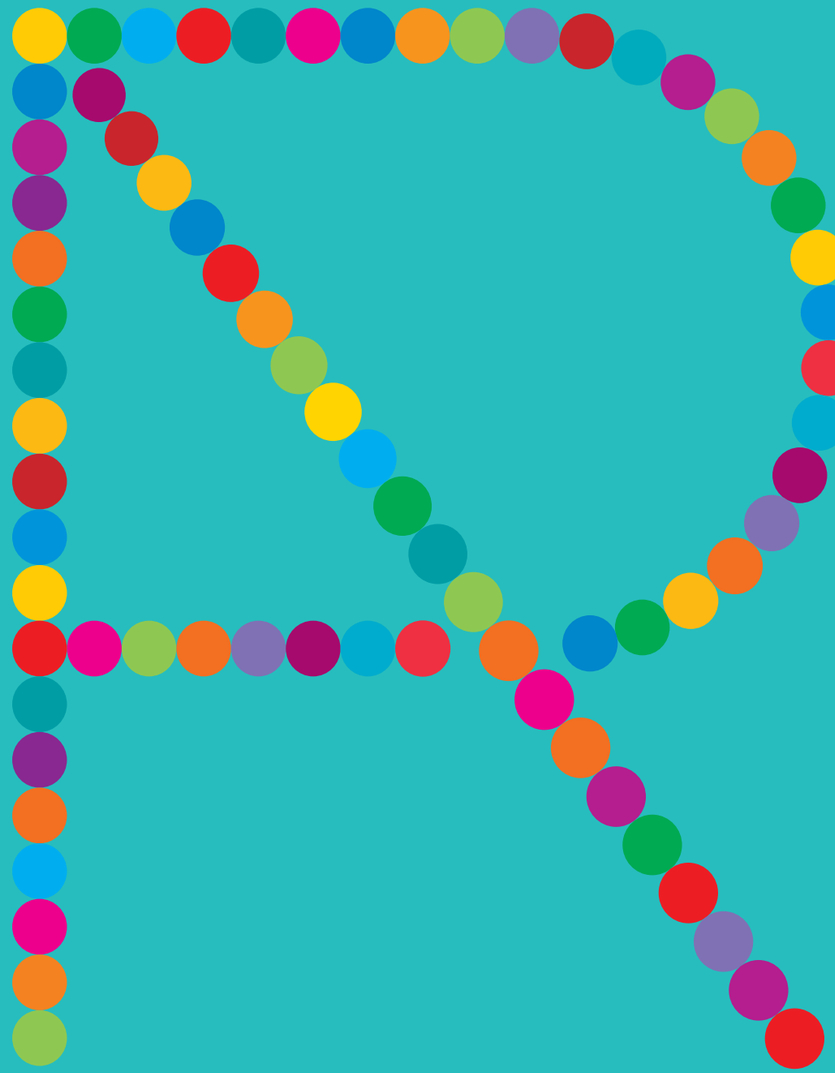
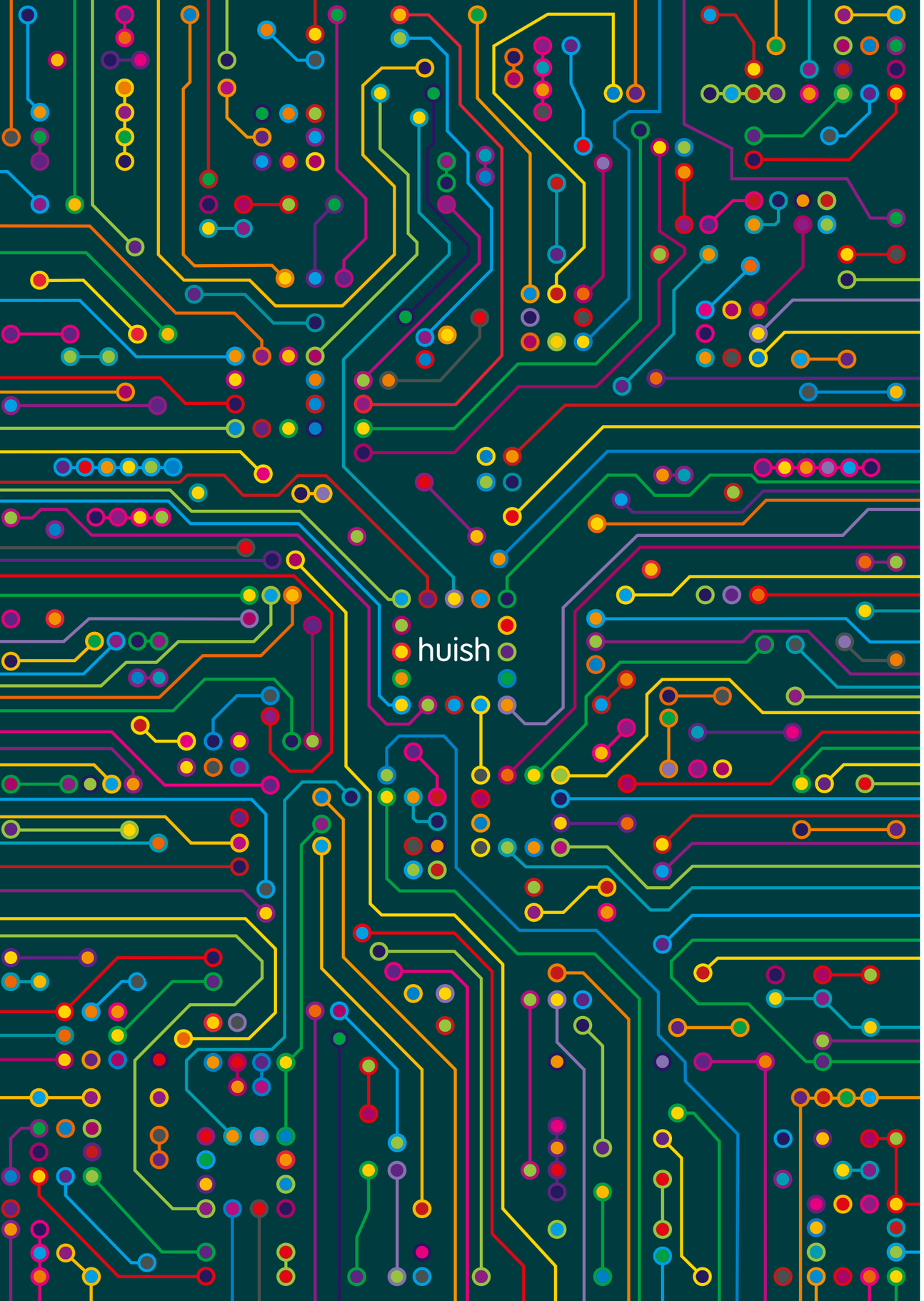


ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS JUNE 2026



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fifth edition of the Huish Action Research Journal. This year our projects cluster into four broad themes, and the Journal is organised accordingly:

- Assessment and Feedback (including AI)
- Inclusive & Adaptive Teaching
- Progression and Recruitment
- Revision, Questioning and Independent Learning

Within each theme, colleagues pursued one of our three research pathways—Academic Research, Lesson Study, or Collaborative Inquiry—supporting professional autonomy while remaining responsive to learners' needs. Those undertaking Academic Research also contribute to the wider educational community by publishing on Camtree, the digital library for close to practice research. Abstracts from these projects are included in this Journal.

Across all areas, we continue to prioritise an evidence informed approach, working in partnership with our students. Student focus groups helped shape our understanding of the issues explored which proved invaluable, and in several cases prompted colleagues to adapt or rethink their research questions. We are also pleased to again include student led action research, with a project undertaken by IT and Computer Science students.

Reflecting on this year's Journal, we are inspired by the purposeful work of both staff and students, and by its positive impact across the college. These projects are making a meaningful difference, not only to teaching and learning, but also to student support services, the tutorial programme, and approaches to progression, recruitment, and marketing.

We extend our sincere thanks to all contributors for their dedication and reflective practice. We are grateful for the opportunity to work closely with Rachel Higginson, Director of the Huish Centre this year, and for the continued leadership and commitment to practitioner led research shown by Emma Fielding, Principal.

It is a privilege to share this collective achievement, and we hope this edition of the Huish Action Research Journal proves both insightful and inspiring.

The PDC Team

Sarah Marshall, Hannah Curtis, Amy Lees, and Lis Sheridan, Assistant Principal.

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AI INTRODUCTION–AI LEAD

College wide AI strategy and implementation

It's been great to see so many departments engaging in Action Research on AI in education this year. Collectively, these projects move beyond speculative debate about AI and instead examine how emerging technologies are intersecting with real classroom practice, assessment design, feedback, workload, and student learning.

Across subjects and contexts, the projects share a common concern: how to harness the potential of AI to enhance learning while maintaining academic integrity, safeguarding, and educational values. Rather than treating AI as a uniform solution, staff have explored its use through discipline specific lenses, recognising that the affordances, risks, and limitations of AI differ significantly between essay based subjects, quantitative disciplines, vocational courses, and extended independent research such as EPQ.

A defining feature of this body of work is its methodological realism. Projects are grounded in everyday practice–marking, feedback, revision, drafting, scaffolding, and assessment preparation–rather than abstract technological capability. Many projects explicitly investigate formative uses of AI, particularly in relation to feedback quality, timeliness, and student engagement, while remaining cautious about summative judgement and automated grading. This reflects a shared understanding that AI is most educationally powerful when it supports reflection, iteration, and improvement rather than replacing professional judgement.

Another consistent theme across the projects is the emphasis on teacher mediation and expertise. AI is not treated as a neutral or authoritative assessor; instead, staff examine how prompt design, mark scheme alignment, task structure, and subject knowledge shape AI outputs. This has led to a growing recognition that AI literacy for teachers–understanding how tools work, where they fail, and how they should be framed to students–is as important as student facing AI literacy.

Student experience and equity also feature prominently. Several projects highlight variation in student confidence, access, and digital fluency, challenging assumptions that post 16 learners are uniformly "AI ready". As a result, many inquiries emphasise the need for explicit teaching about appropriate AI use, clear boundaries, and transparency, particularly in relation to assessment expectations and academic integrity.

Importantly, this collection of projects should be understood not as isolated experiments, but as part of a deliberate institutional approach to AI informed practice. Alongside subject level inquiries, the inclusion of a whole college AI Lead action research project provides strategic context, addressing governance, policy, staff development, and student AI literacy at scale. Together, these projects demonstrate a shift from reactive responses to AI towards evidence informed, values led implementation.

Taken as a whole, the 2025–26 AI based Action Research portfolio illustrates a college engaging critically and constructively with AI: testing its educational value, recognising its limitations, and situating its use firmly within professional judgement, subject pedagogy, and student learning. This work provides a strong foundation for future development, enabling the college to respond confidently to ongoing technological change while keeping learning, integrity, and equity at the centre of assessment practice.

AI LEAD ROLE

College wide AI strategy and implementation

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This action research explored how artificial intelligence could be safely, ethically, and productively embedded to enhance teaching and learning, support staff workload, and prepare students for higher education and employment.

The research was prompted by the rapid emergence of generative AI tools and widespread uncertainty across the education sector about appropriate use, governance, and impact. Rather than viewing AI as a short term technological disruption, the project sought to position it as a long term pedagogical and cultural development aligned with institutional values, safeguarding expectations, and regulatory requirements.

This work aligned explicitly with the college's Quality Improvement Plan priority: to understand and harness the potential of AI in education, student learning, and administration. The research therefore extended beyond classroom practice to include policy development, staff and student capability building, governance, infrastructure, and institutional readiness.

WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

The action research was conducted through the establishment and operation of a college wide AI Lead role, which coordinated AI related activity across curriculum, pastoral, support, and senior leadership teams. The methodology combined exploratory implementation with structured oversight, reflection, and evaluation.
Key strands of activity included:

Governance and policy

- Development and implementation of a college AI policy for staff and students, addressing ethical use, safeguarding, academic integrity, and alignment with institutional values
- Introduction of a GDPR/DPIA led approval process for all non Microsoft AI tools
- Creation of an institutional AI "Green List" to ensure that only approved tools were used with students
- Issuing evidence based guidance to staff where AI features (e.g. detection tools) were found to be unreliable

Infrastructure and systems

- Enabling Microsoft Copilot for students with enterprise data protection, ensuring secure and equitable access
- Coordinating the cross college rollout of TeachEdge.ai for AI assisted marking in subjects where this was pedagogically appropriate
- Treating AI tools as institutional infrastructure, including central budgeting and oversight, rather than isolated departmental initiatives

Staff development

- Designing and delivering whole college and targeted AI CPD, beginning with staff training days and continuing through the academic year
- CPD focused on pedagogy, feedback quality, inclusion, ethical boundaries, and prompt design rather than tool specific training alone
- Curating and signposting external professional learning opportunities to support sustained AI literacy

Student AI literacy and pastoral integration

- Delivering student assemblies and presentations clarifying acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI
- Producing AI safety lesson resources for classroom use
- Embedding AI literacy into pastoral and Progress Tutor provision, including consideration of environmental impact
- Facilitating student forums and surveys to gather student voice and promote critical engagement

Sector engagement and validation

- Engagement with national and sector level research and discussion (e.g. Jisc Digifest, SFCA work)
- Achieving AiEd Certified: Explorer Level Certification, providing external validation of institutional practice
- Regular reporting to governors and senior leaders on progress and impact.

WHAT DID YOU FIND OR LEARN?

Several consistent findings emerged from this college wide action research.

First, effective AI adoption is primarily a leadership, governance, and pedagogy challenge, not a technical one. Where clear principles, policies, and oversight were established, staff confidence increased and practice became more consistent. Where guidance was absent, uncertainty and risk increased.

Second, staff capability and confidence are more important than the tools themselves. CPD that focused on pedagogy, feedback literacy, inclusion, and ethical reasoning proved more effective than narrow, tool specific training. Staff responded positively when AI was framed as supporting professional judgement rather than replacing it.

Third, students require explicit AI literacy. Students engaged more responsibly and confidently when expectations were clearly articulated and when AI use was discussed openly in both academic and pastoral contexts. Assumptions about digital confidence were found to be unreliable; structured support was essential to ensure equitable access.

Fourth, the research highlighted that AI use is most effective when it enhances feedback, reflection, and learning processes, rather than being used to automate grades or outcomes. This reinforced the importance of aligning AI use with established pedagogical principles rather than efficiency alone.

Finally, the work demonstrated that uncritical adoption carries risk. AI tools vary significantly in reliability, particularly in areas such as detection, and require ongoing evaluation. Evidence based caution and transparency were essential to maintaining staff and student trust.

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

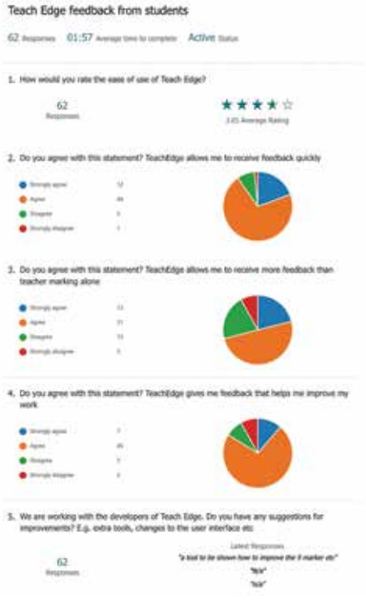
The findings from this action research indicate that AI should be embedded through a long term, strategic, and values led approach, rather than through short term pilots or reactive decision making.

In future practice, AI will continue to be positioned as core institutional infrastructure, embedded within teaching, learning, and support systems. Clear governance structures, approval processes, and central oversight will remain essential to managing risk, ensuring safeguarding, and maintaining compliance with data protection and regulatory expectations.

Sustained professional development will remain a priority. As AI tools and capabilities evolve, staff development will continue to focus on pedagogical judgement, feedback quality, inclusion, and ethical use rather than technical proficiency alone. This approach supports consistency across departments and reduces reliance on individual expertise.

For students, the findings support the continued treatment of AI literacy as an entitlement, embedded across curriculum and pastoral provision. Explicit teaching about AI supports academic integrity, prepares students for future study and employment, and promotes critical, responsible engagement with emerging technologies.

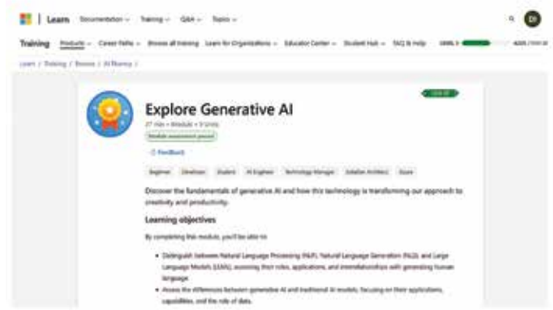
Overall, the research positions AI not as a transient innovation, but as a structural change requiring deliberate leadership, ongoing evaluation, and cultural alignment. The long term impact is a more confident, coherent, and ethically grounded institutional response to AI.



AI
To understand and harness the potential of AI in education, student learning and administration

Through the further development of guidelines, training and support we want to ensure that:

- **Staff are confident and well-trained** to harness the possibilities of AI to enhance student learning and reduce workload
- **Students understand the uses and malpractice of AI** and know how to use it to genuinely enhance their learning and progress
- AI is used, where appropriate, to **reduce administrative tasks** and to increase time for face-to-face student support



BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

Assessment strategies to develop independent learning and metacognition

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our research aimed to refine assessment strategies that develop independent learning and metacognition in A Level Business and Economics students. Although current approaches are effective, they are not sustainable in terms of teacher workload. We therefore explored how assessment could remain high-impact while becoming more efficient.

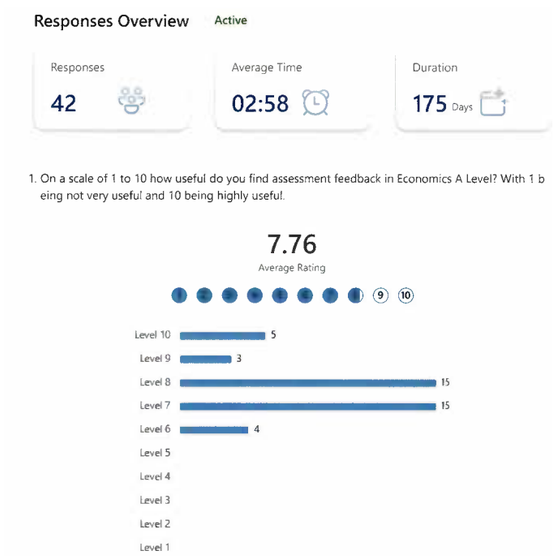
Strong performance in both subjects depends on students demonstrating analysis, contextual application, and evaluative judgement. To support this, we trialled teacher feedback, AI-generated feedback, peer and self-assessment, whole-class feedback, and DIRT (Directed Improvement and Review Time), aiming to position assessment as an active part of learning rather than an endpoint.

Research indicates that peer and self-assessment can improve outcomes when students understand assessment criteria (Yan et al., 2022), while AI feedback provides immediacy and detail. However, feedback only has impact when students can interpret and apply it (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Initial surveys showed overwhelming preference for teacher feedback, with over 90% stating it helped them improve. AI, peer, and self-assessment were met with mixed reactions, particularly around trust and confidence, highlighting the need for refinement in how these approaches were embedded.

WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

Using a Lesson Study approach, we designed, trialled, and refined four assessment methods: teacher assessment, AI feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment.



The research process included:

- Initial student surveys
- Essay-based assessments using different feedback methods
- AI-generated feedback via TeachEdge
- Student questionnaires and focus groups
- Structured DIRT activities
- Follow-up submissions and lesson observations

In Economics, students completed two assessment cycles. After submitting a 25-mark essay, they received AI-generated feedback outlining strengths, areas for development, and suggested improvements. Initial responses to feedback were superficial, so we introduced structured DIRT requiring students to identify improvement points, rewrite analytical paragraphs, add evaluation, and explain how revisions met assessment objectives.

Dedicated lesson time was used to model how to interpret feedback. In Year 2, students co-constructed a more generic DIRT framework, including evaluation checklists and self-assessment tools that could be used across topics, signalling growing independence.

In Business, the lesson study focused on AI feedback alongside structured self-assessment for 16-mark case study questions. Students used AI feedback within DIRT and applied levelling grids and highlighting to evaluate their analysis, application, and evaluation. Modelling supported improvements in contextual application and evaluative judgement.

WHAT DID YOU FIND OR LEARN?

Findings confirmed that teacher feedback is valued for accuracy and clarity. Survey results showed:

- Assessment effectiveness averaged 8/10
- Over 90% felt feedback supported progress
- Only a minority initially preferred peer or self-assessment
- 40% found AI feedback effective, with many neutral responses

After structured DIRT, improvements were significant, especially in Economics:

- Understanding of feedback rose from 68% to 97%
- 74% said their grades had improved through AI feedback
- Independent use of feedback rose from 40% to 78%
- Students ranked TeachEdge assessment together with self-reflection or DIRT as more effective than AI alone

Students reported that AI feedback became far more useful once they were shown how to interpret it. They particularly valued writing EBIs, improving chains of analysis, and rewriting paragraphs. However, limitations were noted: some students felt AI feedback was overly detailed or occasionally inaccurate, especially with handwriting or numerical interpretation. Trust remained an issue with some students, with many preferring teacher validation.

Self and peer assessment were less effective without scaffolding, as students struggled to apply mark schemes accurately. However, using levelling grids and highlighting improved their understanding of how marks were awarded, especially in recognising strong analysis versus weaker evaluation.

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

Our findings support a blended assessment model combining teacher, AI, peer, and self-assessment.

Teacher feedback will remain central for high-stakes tasks.

AI feedback will be used more strategically for low-stakes practice, homework, and in-class essays, with teacher review to ensure accuracy and build trust.

DIRT will be embedded consistently, ensuring all feedback leads to tangible improvement. Structured frameworks will scaffold students initially, with the aim of increasing independence over time.

Self-assessment will become a guided metacognitive tool using simplified mark schemes, teacher modelling, and validation. Peer assessment will be used selectively to support discussion and understanding of criteria rather than grading.

More efficient marking strategies, such as whole-class feedback and selective marking, will continue to support workload reduction without compromising impact.

A long-term aim is to improve transparency around assessment criteria, so students better understand how marks are awarded and develop greater independence as learners. Student voice will remain central to shaping future developments.

FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?

- Use a blended assessment model combining teacher, AI, self, and peer assessment
- Build in structured DIRT so feedback is acted upon
- Explicitly teach students how to interpret and apply feedback
- Use AI strategically and review outputs for accuracy
- Scaffold self and peer assessment to build confidence.

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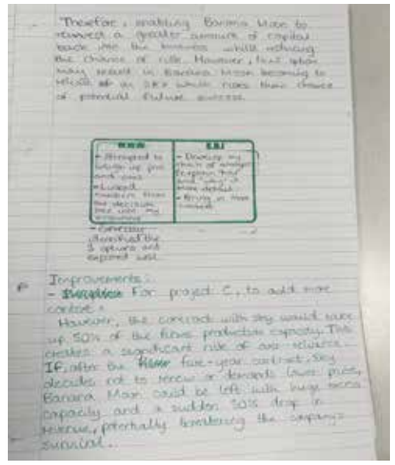
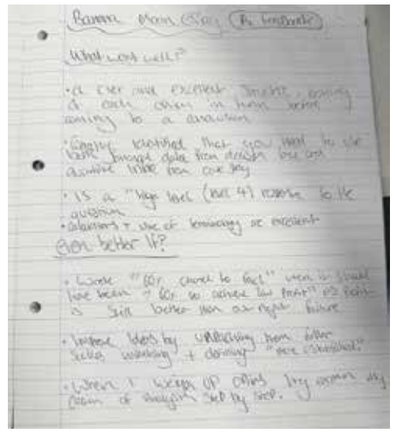
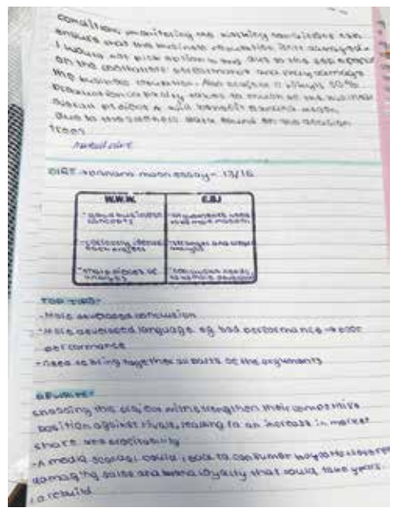






CHEMISTRY

Effective use of AI in Chemistry

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

In response to the evolving educational landscape and the increasing accessibility of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, this action research project explored how students can effectively use AI tools to support their learning and revision in Chemistry. The aim was to investigate the potential of AI as a supplementary resource that fosters independent learning, deepens conceptual understanding, and enhances engagement with subject content.

Ultimately, this research sought to inform future teaching practices and digital learning strategies by identifying effective ways to harness AI in the classroom and beyond.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

The project began with a student questionnaire distributed via Microsoft Forms to gather baseline data on students' existing use of AI in chemistry and across their wider studies. Responses were analysed to identify patterns of use, confidence levels, perceived benefits, and areas of misunderstanding, which informed the next stages of the project.

Following this, a student working party was established. The group met to share experiences of using AI, providing valuable student voice insights into current practice, effective strategies, and potential concerns. This feedback informed both staff discussions and the design of classroom activities.

In parallel, the chemistry teaching team explored the effectiveness of AI in supporting students' understanding of the multiple choice components of Papers 1 and 2, focusing on addressing misconceptions, developing conceptual understanding, and improving exam technique rather than answer generation.

A class based activity was designed and delivered in which students completed a multiple choice test, marked their responses, and used AI to explore incorrect answers. Students prompted AI for detailed explanations of correct answers and analysis of common incorrect options, with teachers modelling effective and responsible use of Copilot. Optional follow up work was provided for Huish 30.

WHAT DID YOU FIND OR LEARN?

Analysis of Initial Student Questionnaire

This research project collected responses from 82 A level chemistry students, providing a clear snapshot of how they were using AI in their studies. Most students did not use AI in chemistry, with 60 reporting "No" compared with 21 who did. However, AI use was far more common in other subjects, where responses were evenly split between users and non users. This contrast strongly suggested that barriers to AI use were subject specific rather than due to general resistance or a lack of interest.

A major finding was the high degree of uncertainty among students. The most frequent response to whether AI could have a positive impact on chemistry learning was "Maybe," indicating that many students were unsure how AI could support their chemistry work. This was likely due to limited exposure to effective, subject specific applications of AI.

Free text responses showed that when students did use AI in chemistry, they primarily relied on tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, and Google AI to simplify difficult concepts, explain mechanisms, generate worked examples, and clarify confusing mark scheme steps. These uses closely mirrored the support students already found valuable in subjects such as Mathematics and Biology.

Overall, the data suggested strong potential for increased adoption if students were provided with clear guidance, trusted examples, and structured opportunities to use AI effectively in chemistry.

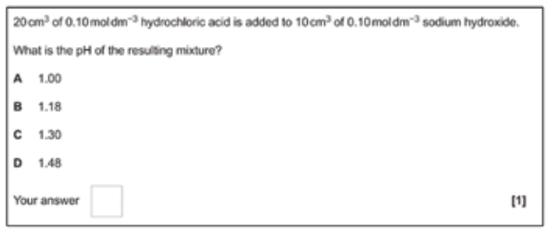
Class Based Activity

Three Year 2 Chemistry classes were set 15 multiple choice questions from the 2020 OCR A level Chemistry Paper 1 under exam conditions. Correct answers were then provided and students were asked to use Copilot to obtain explanations for any questions answered incorrectly. The use of Copilot was modelled by the teacher. Questions were copied as images and uploaded into Copilot, and suggested prompts were provided to ensure outputs reflected British terminology, units, and OCR A level Chemistry calculation conventions.

Example of prompt:

- Explanation of correct quantitative answer

Concisely explain why the answer to this question is D using language and calculation structure expected of an A level OCR Chemistry student. Provide a logical example calculation where the word moles is used instead of symbol n, relative molecular mass is used rather than Mr, units of concentration are moldm-3 and units only appear with answers not within the calculation.


20 cm^3 of 0.10 $mol\,dm^{-3}$ hydrochloric acid is added to 10 cm^3 of 0.10 $mol\,dm^{-3}$ sodium hydroxide.

What is the pH of the resulting mixture?

A 1.00

B 1.18

C 1.30

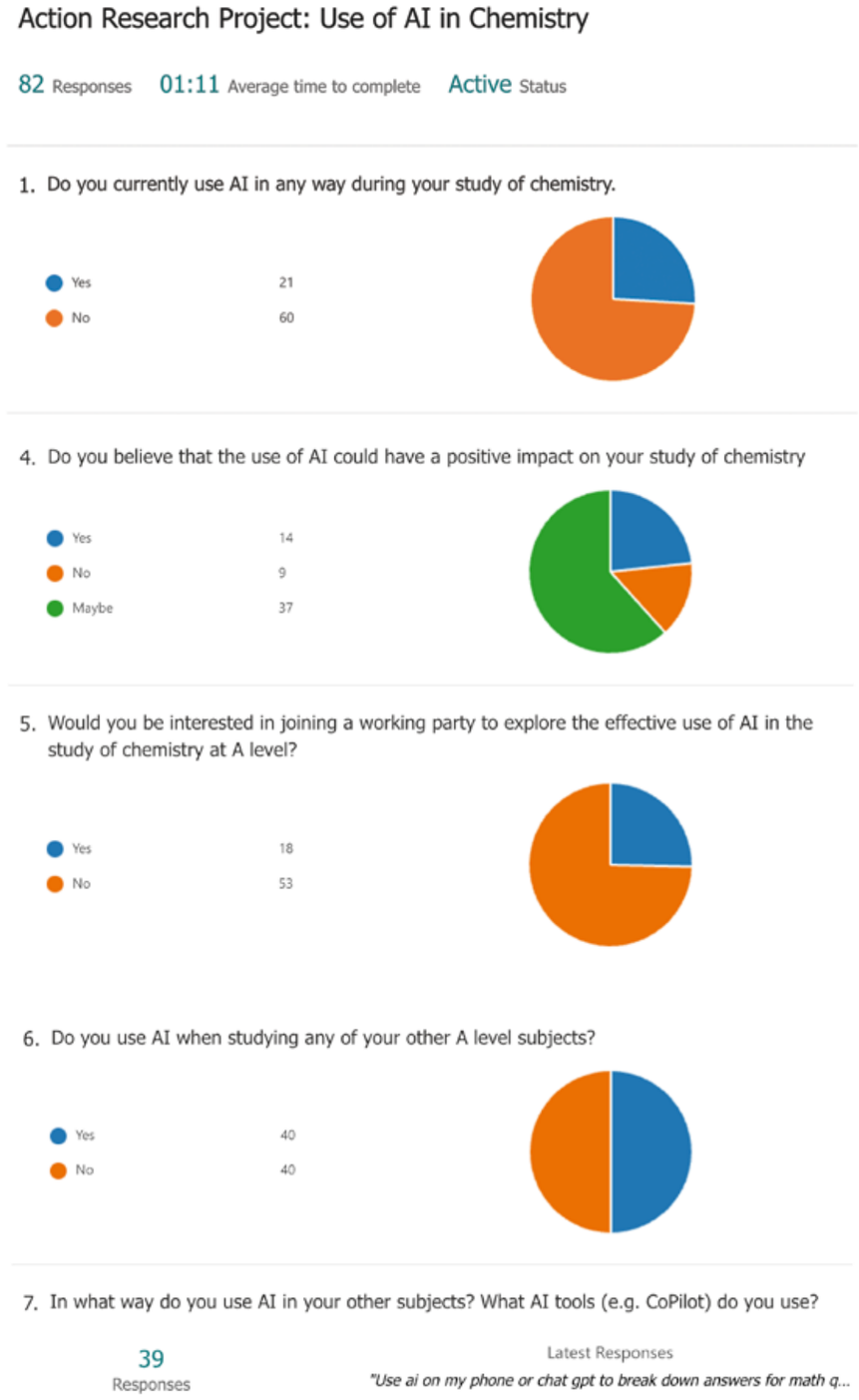
D 1.48

Your answer [1]

Students explored the use of various prompts for different styles of multiple-choice questions.

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

A year exploring how AI can be used effectively in teaching has resulted in increased staff confidence and familiarity with AI tools. Students have also gained valuable early exposure to AI within Chemistry. Initial experience suggests that AI has a use for reviewing multiple-choice questions, but further refinements and trialling is needed by the department. However, effective use requires students to have secure subject knowledge, as interpreting AI-generated answers can be challenging without secure prior understanding. Consequently, AI currently benefits higher-attaining students most. Further thought and development will be needed to refine how AI is used to enhance learning in future.



CORE MATHS

Better feedback after a quiz

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to improve how quiz data is used to provide meaningful, actionable feedback that strengthens student understanding and independence.

In Core Maths, quizzes generate rich diagnostic data quickly, but we identified a gap between collecting this data and using it effectively. Students often received a score without feedback that helped them understand misconceptions, plan next steps, or improve exam-style reasoning, leaving the feedback loop incomplete.

This research aligns with our QIP priorities:

- Improving feedback so students can clearly articulate what to do next
- Developing independent learners who can self-correct and reflect
- Using assessment data more effectively to target teaching and intervention

The project was informed by Dylan Wiliam's work on formative assessment, EEF guidance on effective feedback, and Rosenshine's Principles, particularly checking understanding and corrective practice. Discussions with Maths colleagues and internal observations showed students often focused on scores rather than errors, repeatedly making the same mistakes. This evidence led us to redesign feedback to be more structured, personalised, and closely tied to quiz data.

WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

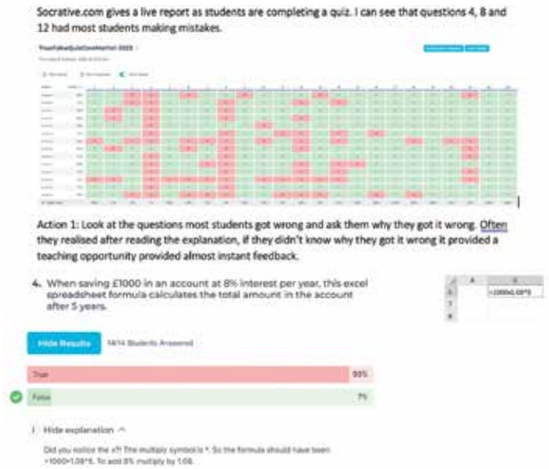
We developed and trialled improved feedback processes across all Core Maths classes (approximately 55 students) during the autumn and spring terms.

Key actions included:

- Transferred existing quizzes created in ThatQuiz to MS Forms quizzes which allows feedback to be given for questions. Introducing low stakes quizzes at the end of each topic, using platforms that provide item level data (e.g., question-by-question breakdowns).
- Re-write and shorten low stakes quizzes, very few questions or simply 'True or False', created on Socrative.com with feedback given after every question. These quizzes were reassigned again at suitable intervals.
- Building in dedicated "feedback time" where students analysed their quiz results on integralmaths.org, corrected errors, and completed targeted follow up tasks.
- Comparing student performance on subsequent quizzes to see whether the new feedback approach reduced repeated errors.

Examples of feedback strategies used:

Socrative.com provided a live report while students were completing a quiz. I was able to identify that questions 4, 8 and 12 were those where most students made errors.



Action 1: I reviewed the questions that most students answered incorrectly and asked them to explain why they had made errors. In many cases, students recognised their mistakes after reading the explanations. Where they were unsure, this created an immediate teaching opportunity and enabled prompt, targeted feedback.

Action 2: I used a similar question as a starter activity in the following lesson, reworded where necessary. A quick approach was to use a team-based activity, while also providing mini whiteboards to students who had previously answered incorrectly. For example: "What formula would you type into cell A4 to calculate the value of the savings after 7 years?"

The quiz report also highlighted students with low overall scores (33% and 50%). I contacted the student who scored 33% via message, as this result was out of character. I also spoke with the student who scored 50%, who acknowledged that they needed to read the questions more carefully.

Action 3: I built in dedicated feedback time by incorporating a short reflective question at the end of a lesson or after a quiz. Repeating the same quiz at a later stage demonstrated clear improvement, with answer order shuffled for reliability. The first attempt included feedback after each question.

WHAT DID YOU FIND OR LEARN?

Several clear findings emerged:

- Students engaged more deeply with feedback when they expected to reattempt quizzes and had to act on it. Features such as Ghost Mode on Kahoot also increased motivation and enjoyment.
- Error patterns became clearer, enabling more precise teacher feedback. Many students recognised they were making the same types of mistakes, while Socrative's live reporting enabled more targeted and specific teacher feedback.
- Students valued quizzes and follow-up tasks as they could see their progress.
- Repeated errors decreased on later attempts, increasing confidence.
- Students became more independent and often identifying their own misconceptions before these were addressed by the teacher. On integralmaths.org, many students requested additional attempts once they felt they had improved.
- Feedback was most effective when immediate, structured, and thought-provoking.
- Shorter quizzes made feedback more manageable.

Overall, quizzes with embedded feedback functioned as learning activities rather than assessments, supporting deeper understanding and retention.

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

This Action Research project has significantly shaped how we will use quizzes and feedback in Core Maths.

Long-term changes include embedding feedback into all quizzes, using whole-class feedback sheets after Section Tests, requiring short student reflections to identify strengths and areas for improvement, setting targeted follow-up tasks, and using quiz data to inform planning, highlighting areas that need reteaching or further modelling

Impact on next year and beyond: the model will be applied across all Core Maths groups. We will explore further use of MS Forms, alternative quiz platforms, and Copilot to reduce workload. Over time, we expect students to become more reflective, accurate, and confident.

Overall, this project has shifted quizzes from assessment tools to purposeful learning activities, with feedback and follow-up planned as an integral part of the process.

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CRIMINOLOGY

Peer Assessment in Controlled Assessment Preparation

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Based on the current assessment criteria set by WJEC, students studying Criminology are required to produce controlled notes to support the completion of controlled assessments, which take place in November and December of the subsequent study years. These controlled notes are a crucial component of student preparation, as they directly support assessment performance and exam readiness.

Traditionally, the responsibility for reviewing and "marking" these notes sat solely with teachers. However, due to both time constraints and a desire to increase student ownership of learning, a peer assessment model was introduced.

Instead of receiving teacher-led feedback, students now engage in structured peer assessment, using a checklist provided by their teacher to assess the quality, accuracy, and completeness of each other's controlled notes (referred to as gridsheets). The rationale behind our action research was threefold: firstly, to build student confidence and competence in peer assessment; secondly, to raise the overall standard and consistency of gridsheets produced; and finally, to evaluate how effective peer assessment is in supporting students' preparation for controlled assessments. We were particularly interested in whether transferring some responsibility to students would result in improved engagement and deeper understanding of the assessment criteria.

2. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To measure both the impact and student reception of this new approach, we conducted a questionnaire with our Year 2 Criminology cohort, consisting of 104 students. This cohort was deliberately selected because they were the only group to have experienced both the previous teacher-led feedback model and the newly implemented peer assessment process. This allowed students to make informed comparisons between the two systems and give meaningful evaluative feedback.

Another key reason for selecting this cohort was their direct involvement in the trial and implementation of the peer assessment process. As the first group to experience the new system, their feedback was particularly valuable in identifying early challenges, strengths, and areas for refinement. Gaining student voice at this stage was essential in ensuring that any future iterations of the process would be more effective and better received.

Data was collected using Microsoft Forms due to its accessibility and efficiency. The questionnaire included a mix of closed questions, which enabled us to gather quantitative data, and open-ended questions, which provided qualitative insights into student perceptions, experiences, and suggestions for improvement. This combination allowed us to identify overall trends while also exploring individual responses in greater depth.

3. WHAT DID YOU FIND OR LEARN?

Our findings suggest that the introduction of regular, structured peer feedback had a positive impact on the quality of students' gridsheets. Across both teachers' groups involved in the trial, 84% (NWW) and 88% (TTO) of students respectively agreed that peer assessment had made the quality of their work either "slightly better" or "much better."

This finding was particularly noteworthy, as we had initially anticipated some resistance from students who were accustomed to receiving feedback solely from teachers. The relatively high levels of engagement and acceptance suggest that the quality assurance measures put in place–such as clear checklists and teacher oversight–helped to maintain confidence in the process.

Analysis of the qualitative responses highlighted several consistent reasons why students felt peer assessment improved their work. Students reported that the process:

- Increased their awareness and understanding of assessment criteria
- Improved accuracy, completeness, and clarity in their gridsheets
- Provided honest, accessible, and student-relevant feedback
- Boosted confidence, reassurance, and feelings of exam readiness
- Encouraged reflection, comparison, and deeper engagement with learning.

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

Following the success of this initial trial, we plan to continue embedding peer assessment into our practice in the coming academic year. Student feedback has been instrumental in shaping how we will refine the process moving forward.

One common concern raised related to time constraints, as peer feedback was often completed at the beginning of lessons. To address this, we plan to dedicate academic tutorial sessions exclusively to peer assessment, allowing students more time to engage meaningfully with the process.

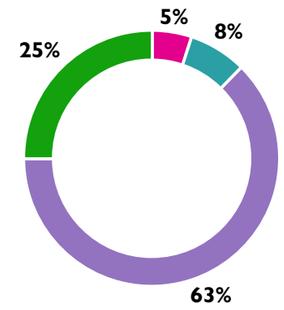
Additionally, some students highlighted the benefits of an occasional variation in approach, whereby they assessed two different peers' scripts rather than one. They reported that this "second pair of eyes" increased the likelihood of errors being identified and provided a broader range of suggestions and insights. We intend to incorporate this approach more consistently where feasible.

Perhaps the most significant impact on our practice is the recognition that peer assessment enables students to actively engage with and internalise assessment criteria. Rather than passively receiving feedback, students demonstrated a clearer understanding of what is required for success. This sense of ownership has increased confidence, improved outcomes, and contributed to higher success rates across the cohort.

As a result, peer assessment will remain a key component of our long-term approach to supporting student achievement in Criminology.

9. How did the peer assessment affect the quality of the content in your gridsheets?

Made it much worse – The quality decreased significantly.	0
Made it slightly worse – The quality decreased a little.	2
No impact – The quality stayed the same.	3
Made it slightly better – The quality improved a little.	25
Made it much better – The quality improved significantly.	10



11. What did you find most helpful or valuable about the peer assessment process? More details

40 Responses

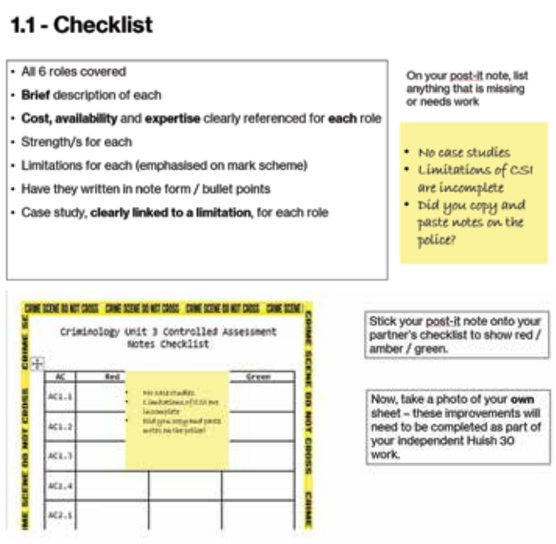
Latest Responses

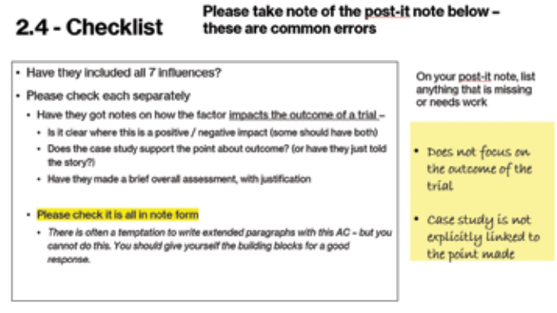
"That it just showed me i forgot somethings."

"Other peoples opionion on how it could be more presentable and easier to read w... "

"I found peer-assessing other people's gridsheets to be valuable because it allowed ..."

8 respondents (20%) answered gridsheets for this question.





EPQ

Use of AI for research in EPQ projects

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The AI lead at college advocated the benefits and drawbacks of AI use and I wanted to explore this further in EPQ. I was also inspired by research by Chea and Xiao (2024) who found the experimental group that used AI-assisted tools in conjunction with traditional methods showed a noticeable improvement in reading comprehension compared to the control group that relied solely on conventional methods.

The use of Microsoft Copilot by Huish students was launched in January 2026. I wanted to model appropriate use of AI in an NEA long report. This tied in with my QIP priority to more effectively use AI. The specific focus I wanted to model was using AI to help with research. For example, feeding in complex academic journal articles and getting AI to summarise it in a more accessible format. I hoped this would bridge the gap for students that struggle with processing.

2. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

I launched AI use in EPQ with my Year 2 EPQ students. I modelled using Copilot to simplify academic articles and encouraged EPQ students to embrace more complex research. There was also instruction given on the appropriate use of AI in EPQ, which emphasised that it could not be used to formulate the written structure of the report. Not only this, I also asked students to use Turnitin to ensure reports were not compromised by use of AI.

Finally, I created a very brief Microsoft form survey that was voluntary to complete assessing the extent the EPQ students embraced using Copilot.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Surprisingly, students acknowledged that their use of AI as a tool for understanding was minimal in the beginning. Only after the introductory lesson on appropriate use of AI in EPQ did they start to incorporate it into their work. It also became apparent that Turnitin considered the app, 'Grammarly' to be AI content which meant students had to rethink their dependence on the application. The survey was not mandatory, and students were signposted to the link on Teams. This led to a very small sample of 11 out of 70 EPQ students responding making it less representative. Nevertheless, most that responded stated that they had not used Copilot before using it in EPQ. Only some of the responses indicated using Copilot to help with their research. This reflects that Copilot was only launched in College in January 2026 when many of the students had already written their report and accomplished their research and were in the process of refining their project.

It will be much more beneficial for the next cohort starting in June 2026 when the use of Copilot can be incorporated at the very start of the students' research process. It was also noticeable when aiding individual students in class to examine challenging sources through Copilot, the absolute need to embed explicit instructions on using Copilot effectively.

Some of the computer literacy skills were less advanced than one might expect for a college student which highlights the ongoing need to reinforce basic digital capabilities to ensure a suitable level of IT proficiency is achieved.

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

Early and explicit instruction on ethical and effective AI use will become embedded within the EPQ induction programme. By framing Copilot as a cognitive support tool—rather than a shortcut for written outcomes—students can develop stronger metacognitive awareness of how to use AI to enhance, rather than replace, their academic thinking. This includes modelling strategies such as interrogating AI-generated summaries, cross-checking outputs against original sources, and using AI to identify themes, key terminology, and areas for deeper investigation. Furthermore, clear guidance on AI-adjacent tools, such as grammar checkers, will be formalised to prevent inadvertent breaches of academic integrity. This will reduce student anxiety around assessment compliance while reinforcing the importance of authorship and originality. The findings also suggest a need for ongoing staff modelling of responsible AI use, ensuring consistency across supervision and taught sessions.

Ultimately, embedding AI literacy from the outset has the potential to widen participation by supporting students who struggle with dense academic texts, thereby promoting equity and independence in research skills. Over time, this approach is expected to foster greater confidence, more ambitious research questions, and a broader engagement with high-level academic sources across the EPQ cohort.

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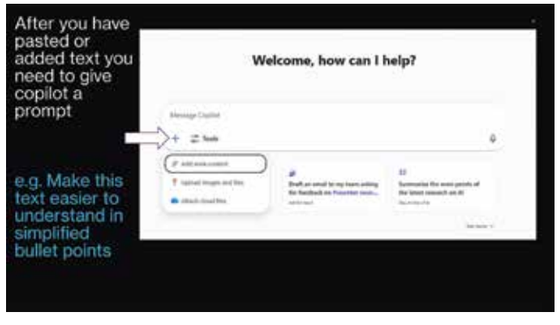
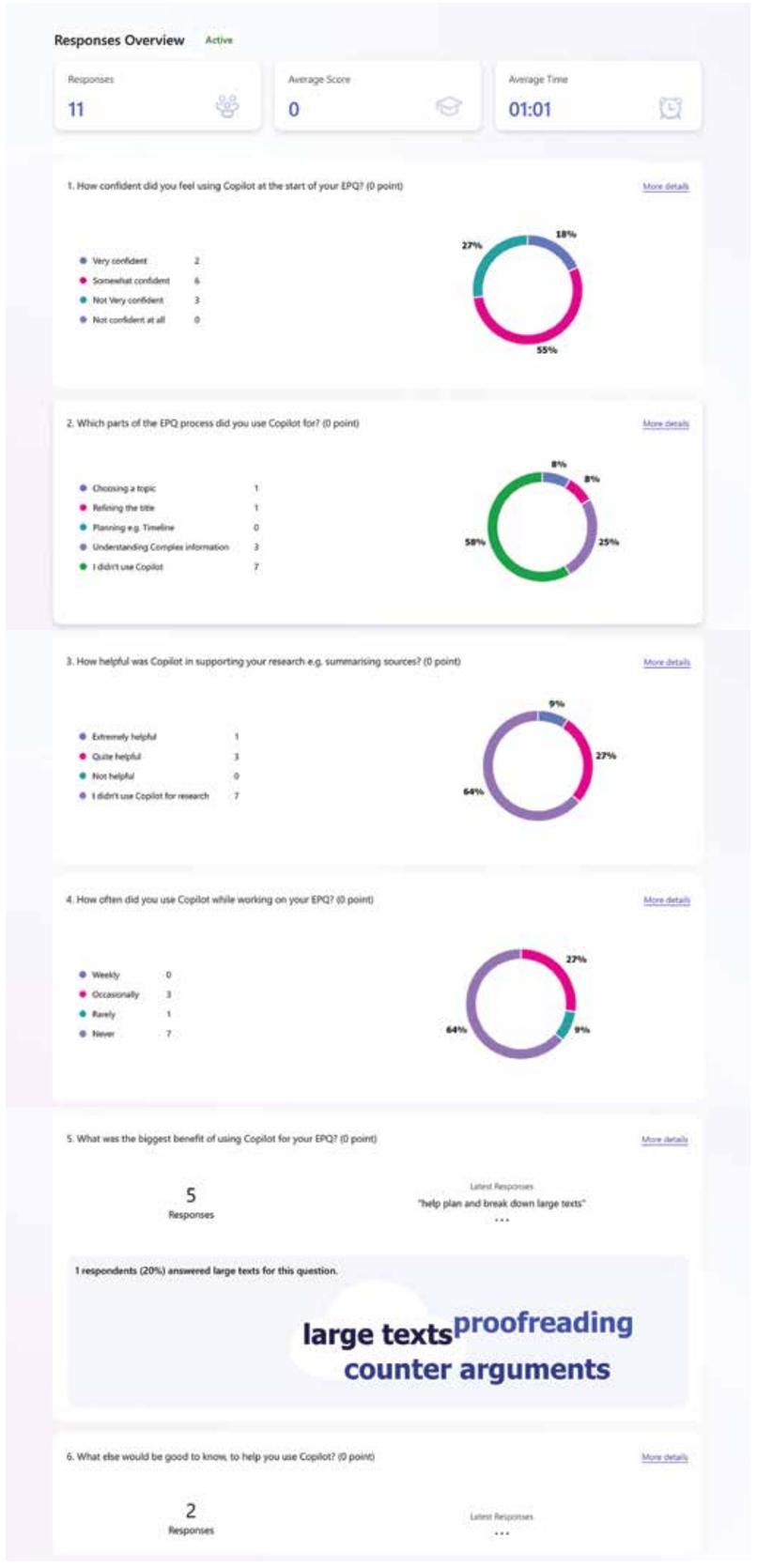




FURTHER MATHS

Student use of AI

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

In response to the evolving educational landscape and the increasing accessibility of artificial intelligence (AI), this action research project explores how students can use AI tools effectively to support their learning and revision in Mathematics.

The aim of the project is to investigate the potential of AI as a supplementary learning resource that promotes independent study, deepens conceptual understanding, and enhances student engagement with challenging subject content.

As part of this initiative, students were encouraged to develop familiarity with a range of AI tools and to use them as sources of guidance and explanation when encountering difficulties in their studies. Through structured use, AI was positioned as a tool to support learning rather than replace it – helping students access alternative explanations, generate additional practice questions, explore real world applications of mathematical ideas, and receive immediate formative feedback.

A key focus of the research was the ethical and responsible use of AI. Students were guided to develop critical awareness of AI's limitations, the importance of verifying outputs, and the need to apply human judgement when interpreting responses. Through structured activities, reflection, and ongoing feedback, the project sought to evaluate the impact of AI supported learning on student confidence, independence, and academic progress.

Ultimately, this research aims to inform future teaching and digital learning strategies by identifying effective and responsible ways to integrate AI into mathematical learning practices.

2. WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

What began as a focused exploration of how AI might support learning in Further Mathematics has, over time, evolved into a wider learning approach that students have begun to adopt independently across their wider studies.

The original intention was to examine whether AI based tools could help students navigate the complexity of Further Mathematics. Students used AI to help break down difficult proofs, explore alternative solution methods, and clarify abstract ideas that are often challenging at this level. The emphasis throughout was on using AI to support understanding, not to produce final answers or replace independent thinking.

The impact was noticeable. Students reported that AI could act as a patient, on demand study partner, offering explanations in different styles and reinforcing learning when they became stuck. This led to increased confidence, deeper engagement with mathematical concepts, and richer classroom discussion.

As students' confidence in using AI responsibly increased, many began to apply similar strategies in other subjects. They adapted their use of AI to suit different academic contexts, identifying where AI could be most helpful for explanation, revision, planning, and reflection. This marked an important shift: AI became a flexible learning tool that students could deploy thoughtfully rather than a subject specific intervention.

Throughout the project, appropriate use was emphasised, particularly around academic integrity, ethical responsibility, and the need for students to remain authors of their own work.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

By the end of the project, student reflections highlighted several consistent themes: increased confidence, improved problem solving skills, and a stronger sense of independence as learners.

Crucially, students also developed a more critical approach to AI generated content. They learned to engage thoughtfully with AI outputs, questioning explanations, checking accuracy, and recognising when human understanding and judgement must lead.

Student reflections included:

"To supplement our classwork, I've started using AI tools to help structure and extend my revision. I've used it to generate extra practice questions on more complex topics and to help break down the logical steps in multi stage proofs when I get stuck. It's been a really helpful way to get immediate feedback and ensure I'm getting enough variety in my problem solving practice."

Sam Stroud.

"I used to think AI couldn't be used for revision because it felt like cheating. After using it properly, I realised how useful it could be to help me understand difficult topics I struggled with before, and that confidence helped improve my grades."

Bini Pequerrucho De Reis-Ferreira.

"I use AI when I need to have the most exact and updated information for my research. It does an excellent job on citation where it can even source academic papers. (…) It provides detailed analysis with a clean layout. One time I used it to generate the best reading timetable for me according to daily schedule, the immense number of books I own, my short- and long-term goals, etc. A sophisticated and professional plan that tailors to my needs was made. When I am asking the AI, I do not purely ask for a worked solution of answer. I use the learning mode so that it can guide me through my steps and feedback on my mistakes. If I forget the concept completely, they can even make a lesson at once and split the question into smaller questions for a easier approach for me."

Kraig Lee.

The influence of the project extended beyond day to day subject learning. Students began using AI to support revision planning, interview preparation, reflection, and independent research tasks. In one case, a student credited AI supported interview practice with helping them articulate ideas more clearly and confidently under pressure during university interviews.

Students also reported using AI tools more broadly to manage workloads, organise revision schedules, and support productivity – developing digital skills that will be increasingly important in higher education and future careers.

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

This project demonstrates that when introduced carefully and responsibly, AI can become a powerful ally in learning rather than a shortcut around it. Beginning with a specific academic challenge in Further Mathematics, the project shows how AI can support curiosity, independence, and ambition when used with clear guidance and ethical boundaries.

What started as a targeted support mechanism has evolved into a broader model for developing independent learners who can engage critically with digital tools. The findings will inform future teaching approaches and contribute to wider discussions about how AI can be integrated into education in a way that enhances learning while safeguarding academic integrity.

Rather than replacing learning, AI – when used well – can help students become more reflective, confident, and self directed learners.

Dr. Asiya Andrews

GEOGRAPHY

Using feedback to improve exam technique

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We want to explore different forms of feedback related to improving exam technique and performance.

In the summer exams 2025 our weakest performance was in C2, particularly the essays. Additionally in a more general context, exam technique is the hardest thing about A level Geography. This can be due to the way the questions are worded, but also making sure the answers are structured to maximise success. We have been working on this (obviously) but would like to make this a real focus for this year, and possibly next.

We have been looking at ideas related to different practise methods, as we know that the more frequently they practise the more likely they are to improve. However, our focus is crucially on providing feedback that students understand and then implement. We are working within the AI group as within this wider focus we will be trialling the AI software 'TeachEdge'.

Our next step is to run student focus groups about their feelings on exam technique, and feedback they have received so far.

We also want to try 'new' ways of practising exam questions and giving feedback this year and will consult year 1 at the end of the year.

- Scaffolded activities developing essay writing techniques – already done but keep using.
- Exemplars – used but could be used more frequently. One idea is to use AI (and us) to write answers with deliberate common mistakes and get them to find them and improve them
- Teach Edge could be used to transcribe handwriting and so we could have far more anonymised answers to use as exemplars
- Collaborative planning – group work before individual writing of answers
- Flip the answering / marking with year 1 in academic tutoring –using Huish 30 to answer the questions and AT to mark them
- Redoing questions from end of module tests / formal assessments after feedback to implement the feedback instantly
- Class feedback on common errors and misconceptions – students highlight which ones apply to them
- AI to help deconstruct questions (once Copilot is working for students)
- More use of YouTube channel? They seem to like this for content and revision so perhaps I could make more videos deconstructing Q, looking at things that could have been included in an answer, what a good answer might look like…

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We trialled the different forms of feedback mentioned above and then ran Student focus groups using the following questions:

- When you receive feedback on exam questions what works well for you? Generally, there are always personal preferences, but common ground seemed to centre around speediness of the feedback being returned after work was marked being effective, concise feedback on 1 or 2 things to work on that wasn't too overwhelming and personalised – so from a teacher who knows you as an individual.
- What would you like to see more / less of? This was about increasing the frequency of feedback received so that they could work on the feedback on the next exam question – strike while the iron is hot.
- Now you have had teacher and AI marking, do you prefer AI marking?

Of a sample size of 97 students, we got these results:
23 No (28%)
15 No real opinion (6%)
59 Yes (66%) Many of the 'yes' responders did ask for less feedback as many felt overwhelmed by the amount they received.

Quotes include:

"I thought it was alright. Would use it again. Feedback might have been too much – maybe like some short quick tips on how to improve"

"Really good feedback from it. Don't mind using again"

"Good level of feedback. I like how quickly it responds"

"Doesn't feel personal so marking doesn't seem as genuine and doesn't stick as much"

- Is it better to set exam questions as Huish 30 or to do them in class or a mix? No consensus here – some see using class time for this as wasteful whereas others admit they are much more likely to do the work if sat in class.

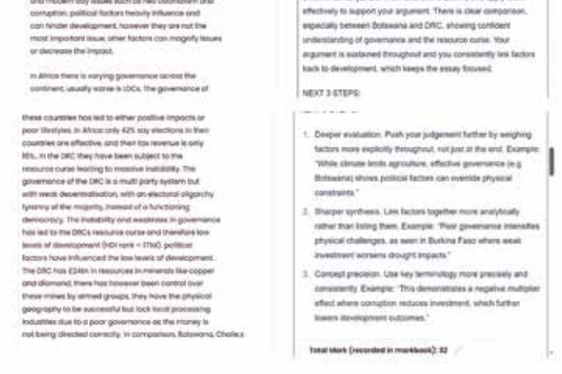
3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

We have learned that it is vital to mix up the techniques used for feedback as part of quality first teaching. Some techniques work well for some students, but others work better for others. AI continues to develop and have potential but there is some fairly significant push back from students. This is particularly the case with geography students who tend to be well informed about climate change and the high energy usage associated with AI. We have also noticed as a team that there are 2 other issues, the first being that as we have increased our use of AI for our marking, there has also been an increase in the use by students to produce the work. This may well be a coincidence but will be interesting to consider. We also feel that it takes longer to get a good understanding of our students despite checking the AI marking. Plus, we are not so aware of the individual strengths and weaknesses they have such as those who struggle to use the PEER technique. However, the brilliance of AI feedback is its speed (which is appreciated by many of them) and detail without much impact on teacher workload. The accuracy has also been pretty good and certainly within exam board tolerance.

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

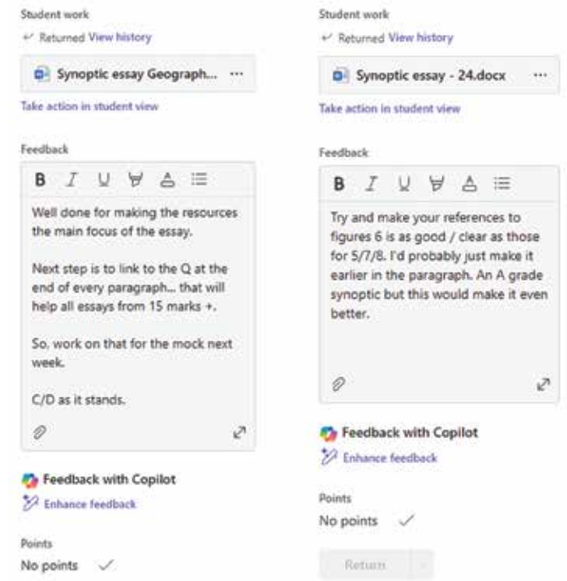
Our decision is to keep going with our trialling of different forms of feedback including the use of AI. This will be on a less official basis than being our action research focus but there is definitely more work to be done.

Peer marking and feedback



Teach Edge (AI) as a feedback tool

Teams assignment feedback on an essay



HISTORY & POLITICS

Use of AI assisted marking in A Level essay-based subjects

This action research project examined how AI assisted marking can be effectively deployed in A Level essay-based subjects, focusing on History and Politics. At its heart, the project sought to understand not simply whether AI can mark essays, but how teachers can meaningfully integrate, adapt, and mediate AI tools to enhance feedback while upholding specialist subject knowledge and assessment standards.

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The project was driven by several intersecting priorities. One was to better support high performing students aspiring to A/A* grades by providing more precise, actionable feedback. Another was to strengthen analytical and evaluative writing skills across extended responses, an area that consistently influences outcomes in essay-based subjects. Reducing teacher workload, particularly during peak marking periods, was also an important consideration, as was aligning with departmental QIP priorities around improving feedback quality and accelerating student progress.

We were especially interested in the nuance of AI deployment: not replacing teacher judgement, but augmenting it through tools that could structure feedback, highlight areas for improvement, and offer consistent commentary aligned with mark schemes. A key contextual influence came from Digifest 2026, where sessions on AI supported marking, staff workload, and digital inclusion provided sector wide insights. These helped us reflect critically on our developing approach without predetermining our conclusions.

Research Question:

How can AI assisted marking be effectively deployed in A Level essay subjects?

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We piloted TeachEdge AI marking software with History and Politics classes, initially with Year 13 before later expanding to Year 12. Students submitted work digitally, with support provided for those who preferred handwritten responses or needed guidance with file uploads. The AI was used exclusively for formative assessment, generating feedback aligned to assessment criteria, while teachers retained complete control over interpretation, editing, and any summative judgement.

The process involved several strands:

- Trialing AI supported feedback on 9 mark responses, extract questions, and full essays
- Comparing AI generated feedback with teacher marked scripts to evaluate accuracy and usefulness
- Gathering student voice through surveys and informal discussion
- Iteratively refining prompts and mark scheme alignment in consultation with the software provider
- Using insights from Digifest–particularly Jisc's AI Marking & Feedback Pilot–to evaluate whether our experience reflected broader patterns around AI as an assistant rather than an assessor.

This blended approach allowed us to examine both the practical and pedagogical dimensions of AI assisted marking.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Our findings present a nuanced but generally positive picture. Students and teachers consistently identified the speed and depth of feedback as the most significant benefits.

1. Speed and quantity of feedback

Survey data showed that 90% of students agreed TeachEdge enabled them to receive feedback quickly, mirroring teacher observations that turnaround time improved dramatically. Students also reported receiving more feedback overall, though a minority noted that quantity does not always equate to usefulness–highlighting the importance of well designed prompts and clear alignment with assessment criteria.

2. Usefulness and impact on improvement

A striking 84% of students agreed that the AI provided feedback that directly helped them improve. This aligns with teacher reflections that comment focused, formative feedback–rather than marks–drives progress, especially in subjects where individual components contribute only small proportions to the final grade. Many students engaged more actively in iterative redrafting and revision planning when supported by detailed, criterion linked commentary.

3. Engagement, confidence, and uneven adoption

Despite overall positivity, engagement varied. Some students found the additional platform challenging or felt anxious about missing out if they did not use it. This raised important equity considerations, echoing wider concerns from Digifest that digital literacy cannot be assumed, even among older students. Clear onboarding, structured support, and integration with familiar systems will be essential moving forward.

4. Accuracy, consistency, and teacher mediation

AI feedback was most reliable on shorter responses and more variable on longer essays and extract questions. Crucially, improvements over time resulted from teacher intervention–refining prompts, supplying mark scheme detail, and calibrating outputs. This reinforced a central finding: AI is most effective when used under the guidance of teacher expertise, not in place of it.

Overall, the research supports the view that AI enhances feedback speed and depth most effectively when used as a formative tool rather than a grading mechanism. Students value rapid, detailed, actionable guidance, while teachers benefit from structured feedback that supports professional judgement rather than replacing it.

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

In the short to medium term, AI will continue to be embedded primarily in formative assessment, supporting personalised, criterion linked feedback. Teachers will maintain full responsibility for summative judgement.

Longer term, the project has reinforced the need for a values led approach to AI adoption. Rather than treating AI as a technological fix, future practice will emphasise:

- Ongoing refinement of prompts and alignment with mark schemes
- Targeted staff CPD on feedback literacy and effective AI mediation
- Structured student support to ensure confidence, access, and inclusion
- Clear communication that AI supports teachers but does not replace them.

Used in this way, AI has the potential to support student progress while improving teacher wellbeing–keeping assessment human-centered.

FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?

- Start with feedback, not efficiency: clarity of learning purpose is key
- Keep teachers in control: AI should assist, not replace, judgement
- Invest in prompt design: high quality inputs = high quality outputs
- Support students explicitly: never assume digital confidence
- Use AI where it adds value: formative tasks typically benefit most.

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MFL

Use of AI in MFL learning

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

As use of AI has become more widespread in education and in the workplace, we want to find out how we can get better at encouraging students to use AI appropriately for independent learning to improve their progression in learning the target language (French, German, Spanish). The aim is to research various AI tools for language learning, consider students' input and use of AI and encourage a wider, more targeted and reflected use of AI tools.

Mohebbi (2025) states that "AI driven tools significantly enhance language learning outcomes by promoting engagement, providing immediate feedback, and facilitating personalised learning experiences." Additionally, language acquisition is enhanced by the use of chatbots, especially advanced ones, as identified by Silvia Bastow (Nogues, 2024).

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We initially had a small focus group of targeted students to find out their opinions of AI and the extent to which they use AI. Following our initial student input we researched some of the options and identified ones we felt would be useful for A-level language learning. Finally we asked students to try out at least one AI tool as part of their Huish 30/independent learning and collected their responses to a survey on Microsoft forms.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Summary of Findings from Focus group (Nov 2025)

The data shows that most students use AI regularly, with 73% using it weekly, while 18% use it daily and 9% never use it. Overall attitudes toward AI are positive: 73% find it useful, 9% very useful, while only 9% feel it is not at all useful.

Students use AI for a wide range of language learning tasks. The most common uses include researching topics of interest, completing Huish 30 tasks, and practising grammar. This suggests that AI is already integrated into both academic and skill building activities.

When asked what they would most like to use AI for, the majority prioritised practising grammar (50%) and practising their IRP (Individual Research Project) (40%), with a small number wanting help with essay skills (10%).

Overall, the findings indicate strong engagement with AI, generally positive attitudes, and a clear desire for AI tools that support grammar practice and independent project work.

Summary from Survey (March) – 40 out of 62 students (French and German) responded

Students were assigned to use at least one example of an AI tool in their Huish 30. They were given a choice of tool and purpose and answered the survey on Microsoft forms giving details on how they used the app, how helpful it was.

The survey responses reveal that students are engaging with a wide range of AI tools to support their French, German, and Spanish learning. The most commonly used tools are Copilot/ChatGPT, Superfluent, and gizmo.ai, with occasional mentions of Pingo, Meta AI, Gemini, and Quizlet. Students predominantly use AI for grammar practice, vocabulary learning, IRP (Individual Research Project) question generation, speaking practice, and checking written work.

90% of students report AI as "somewhat helpful" or "very helpful." Many value AI's ability to generate instant grammar explanations, create quizzes, correct errors, and provide personalised speaking practice – particularly useful for those who lack someone to practise with at home. A student commenting on using Copilot for grammar practice stated: "For learning the verb tables, it explained the rules around the verb patterns, and how best to approach learning them." Tools like Superfluent and Pingo offer simulated conversation practice, while gizmo.ai and Quizlet provide fast, efficient vocabulary learning. One student said of superfluent: "The app tells you when you make mistakes and makes you repeat yourself so you're correct and reminds you to ask questions in speaking scenarios."

However, several students noted limitations. Some found AI-generated questions too simple, too repetitive, or occasionally inaccurate. A few reported that explanations were unclear or that AI sometimes used vocabulary beyond their level. Others expressed caution about over-reliance on AI or discomfort using it for ethical reasons. A handful encountered technical frustrations, such as gizmo's "lives" system or flashcard generation errors.

Despite these drawbacks, most students stated they would use AI again, often with a sense of selective trust – seeing AI as a useful supplementary tool, especially for checking work, consolidating grammar, or accelerating revision. A minority preferred traditional methods, feeling they learned better from books, teachers, or handwritten resources.

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

Students use a range of AI tools to support grammar, vocabulary, speaking, and IRP (individual research projects) preparation. Most find AI helpful for personalised practice, quick feedback, and efficient revision, though some report inaccuracies or repetition. Overall, AI is seen as a useful supplement that enhances language learning when used alongside traditional methods.

We will encourage students to continue to use a range of AI tools in their independent language learning and will specifically guide them to the most useful tools and how to use them.

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PHYSICS

Use of AI in Physics

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to explore whether AI could be used effectively to generate and mark A-level Physics exam-style questions, while providing timely, accurate and useful feedback without increasing teacher workload.

This came from a practical need within teaching. In A-level Physics, students benefit from regular exposure to exam-style questions and from feedback that helps them improve quickly. However, writing suitable questions, marking them carefully and returning feedback promptly can be time-consuming. Having been introduced to TeachEdge.ai as a platform for writing, setting and marking questions, we wanted to evaluate whether it could support this process effectively in our own context.

More specifically, we wanted to find out whether TeachEdge.ai could generate questions at the right level for AQA A-level Physics, mark responses accurately, including calculations and diagrams, provide feedback that students found helpful, and fit into teaching and revision routines without creating extra workload.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We began by creating weekly topic-based questions on TeachEdge.ai and trialling them with Year 2 students in support groups. From September to December, students completed AI-generated questions, which were marked first by the platform and then checked by staff before being returned.

To evaluate the impact of this initial trial, we gathered student voice through a survey and focus-group discussion. The survey involved 25 students. We then used the findings from this phase to decide whether the platform was strong enough to extend more widely.

In January, we rolled out the programme to the main Year 2 teaching groups as part of their weekly revision schedule. TeachEdge questions were used alongside AQA past paper question sets to supplement existing revision materials and support preparation for the summer examinations. We continued to evaluate the impact through survey evidence, student comments and discussion during the revision period.

In the longer term, we intend to compare the final examination outcomes of this cohort with those of a comparable cohort from the previous year.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Overall, the findings were positive. Most students felt that TeachEdge.ai was helpful as a revision and practice tool, although the survey and comments also highlighted clear limitations.

The strongest finding was that most students felt the platform supported their learning. Of the 25 students surveyed, 21 students (84%) agreed that TeachEdge.ai had helped them understand Physics topics better. Two students were neutral and two strongly disagreed, suggesting that the platform was beneficial for most but not all students.

Students were also optimistic about its effect on attainment. Twenty students (80%) felt their test scores would improve a bit through using TeachEdge.ai, four thought their scores would stay the same, and one thought their scores would get worse.

A major strength was the speed and usefulness of the feedback. Eighteen students (72%) gave clearly positive responses about the quick feedback and marking, with a further five giving mixed but broadly favourable responses. Students valued finding out "almost immediately" what they needed to improve. This matched our experience that the platform could usually interpret handwritten responses, including calculations and some diagrams, with reasonable accuracy.

Students also responded well to the variety of question types. Nineteen students (76%) gave clearly positive responses about the mix of numerical and descriptive application questions, with a further five giving mixed but generally favourable views. Students commented that the questions helped them practise exam technique, prepare for assessments and apply their knowledge in different ways.

However, the research also highlighted limitations. Some students wanted more precise feedback, for example clearer indications of which topic they needed to revise rather than simply which answer was wrong. A small number found the AI marking less helpful than teacher marking, and a few reported technical difficulties with uploading handwritten work.

There were also subject-specific issues. TeachEdge.ai is currently unable to incorporate diagrams and pictures into question creation, which is a significant weakness in A-level Physics where many exam questions rely on graphs and visuals. As a result, the questions did not always feel as authentic as real AQA past paper questions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that TeachEdge.ai is a useful and promising tool, but not a replacement for traditional exam materials or teacher judgement. Its strengths lie in generating relevant questions, marking handwritten work reasonably well, and providing quick feedback that most students found helpful. Its limitations include the need for teacher checking, some technical issues, occasional lack of precision in feedback, and reduced authenticity compared with real Physics exam questions.

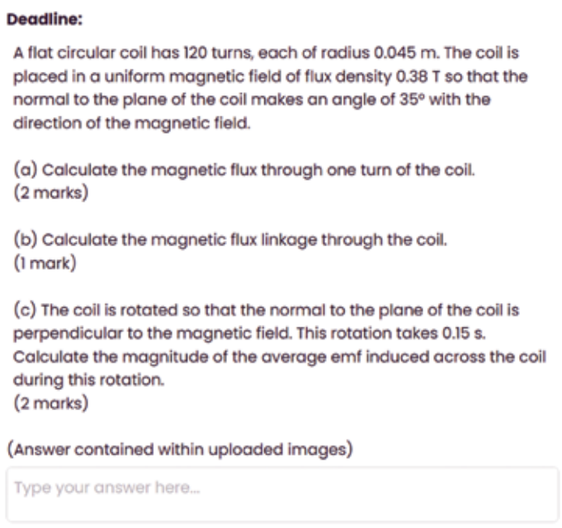
4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

This action research has made us more confident in using AI-generated and AI-marked questions as part of A-level Physics teaching, especially for revision and targeted support. The survey findings showed that most students found the platform helpful, valued the speed of feedback and felt it supported their understanding and exam preparation. This was strong enough for us to extend the trial from support groups to the wider Year 2 cohort.

As a result, we incorporated TeachEdge.ai into the Spring term revision schedule through weekly Huish 30 assignments alongside AQA past paper questions. Our findings suggest that the platform is most effective as a supplement to authentic exam materials, rather than a replacement, as it increases opportunities for exam-style practice and feedback.

Going forward, we would continue to use the platform in support sessions and revision next year. However, we would continue to pair it with traditional past paper questions, particularly because authenticity, diagrams and teacher oversight remain important in Physics. Overall, TeachEdge.ai appears to be a valuable complementary tool, with the potential to become more useful as the platform develops further.

Barrie Hall and Tim Hunt



Deadline:

A flat circular coil has 120 turns, each of radius 0.045 m. The coil is placed in a uniform magnetic field of flux density 0.38 T so that the normal to the plane of the coil makes an angle of 35° with the direction of the magnetic field.

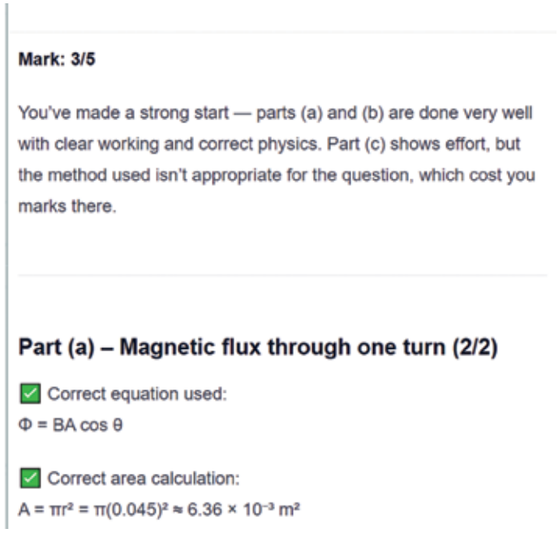
(a) Calculate the magnetic flux through one turn of the coil.
(2 marks)

(b) Calculate the magnetic flux linkage through the coil.
(1 mark)

(c) The coil is rotated so that the normal to the plane of the coil is perpendicular to the magnetic field. This rotation takes 0.15 s. Calculate the magnitude of the average emf induced across the coil during this rotation.
(2 marks)

(Answer contained within uploaded images)

Type your answer here...



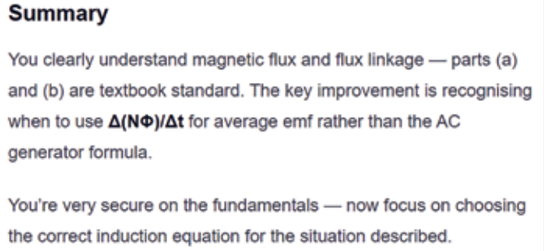
Mark: 3/5

You've made a strong start — parts (a) and (b) are done very well with clear working and correct physics. Part (c) shows effort, but the method used isn't appropriate for the question, which cost you marks there.

Part (a) – Magnetic flux through one turn (2/2)

✅ Correct equation used:
$\Phi = BA\cos\theta$

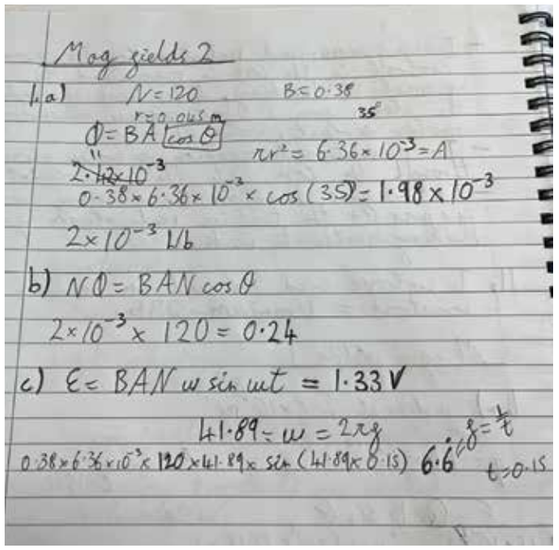
✅ Correct area calculation:
$A = \pi r^2 = \pi(0.045)^2 \approx 6.36 \times 10^{-3}\ m^2$



Summary

You clearly understand magnetic flux and flux linkage — parts (a) and (b) are textbook standard. The key improvement is recognising when to use **Δ(NΦ)/Δt** for average emf rather than the AC generator formula.

You're very secure on the fundamentals — now focus on choosing the correct induction equation for the situation described.



PSYCHOLOGY

Use of AI in essay technique

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

The purpose of this action research project was to investigate whether using TeachEdge as a supplementary AI-based marking and feedback tool could improve A-level Psychology students' performance on extended writing questions. Specifically, we wanted to examine whether timely, structured feedback provided by TeachEdge would support students in developing stronger exam-focused responses. This research emerged from ongoing challenges in providing detailed, individualised feedback within curriculum and workload constraints, alongside the increased importance of essay technique in examination outcomes. Students often fall short of the top grades because, while their subject knowledge is secure, they fail to access the higher-level marks on extended questions due to weaknesses in essay structure, evaluation, and effective application of assessment criteria.

Fleckenstein et al. (2023) conducted a large-scale meta-analysis and found that AI-generated feedback had a moderate positive effect on students' writing performance, particularly when used formatively rather than as a replacement for teacher marking. Likewise, Ekizoğlu and Demir (2025) found that secondary-age students receiving AI-assisted feedback demonstrated significantly greater improvement in writing quality than those receiving teacher feedback alone, highlighting the value of immediate, criterion-linked feedback for developing structure, clarity, and coherence. Together, these findings provide strong evidence for exploring TeachEdge as a supplementary feedback strategy within A-level Psychology assessment practice.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

204 first-year A-level Psychology students completed one 8-mark essay under timed conditions to replicate exam expectations and received AI-generated feedback on TeachEdge. Teachers reviewed and amended AI-generated feedback before returning to students. Students reflected on the feedback they received and used it to inform their preparation for a second extended question. Students then completed an application-style 16-mark question under the same exam conditions, marked using the same AI-based software. TeachEdge feedback was then used alongside teacher judgement to explore how AI-generated marking could support students' understanding of assessment criteria, structure, and evaluative depth. The rationale for this procedure was to determine whether AI tools can enhance formative assessment without replacing teacher expertise.

We collected student feedback through a structured Microsoft Forms questionnaire. The questionnaire combined closed Likert-scale questions to allow quantitative analysis of trends, alongside an open-ended question to capture their individual experiences. The Likert-scale items were designed to measure students' perceptions of the clarity, value, and impact of TeachEdge feedback on their essay technique, as well as their confidence in, and willingness to recommend, its use.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The questionnaire responses indicated mixed student perceptions of TeachEdge as a supplementary AI based marking and feedback tool for A level Psychology extended writing. Overall, students did not view TeachEdge as a replacement for teacher marking, but some recognised value when it was used alongside teacher feedback.

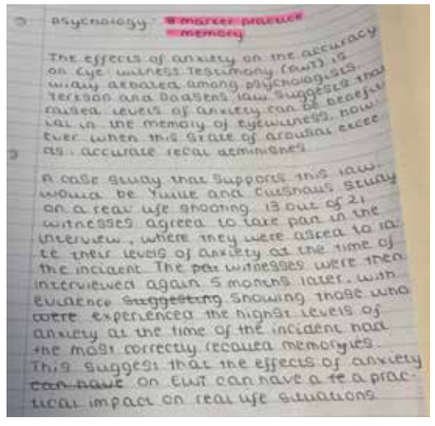
A prominent theme was a strong preference for teacher feedback, with many students expressing greater trust in teachers' subject knowledge, judgement, and ability to explain mark scheme nuances. Several students stated that teacher feedback was "more accurate" and "easier to understand," and that AI feedback lacked context or nuance.

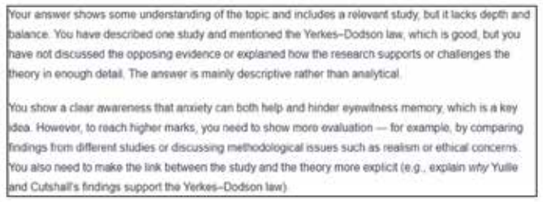
A second key finding concerned the quantity and clarity of feedback. While students frequently acknowledged that TeachEdge provided detailed feedback, this was often described as overwhelming, generic, or harsh. Comments such as "too much feedback which is hard to understand" and "some of my feedback points made no sense" suggest that its effectiveness varied between learners.

Technical and usability issues were also common. Difficulties with logging in, uploading work, and handwriting transcription frequently disrupted lessons and reduced students' engagement with feedback.

Despite these concerns, a subset of students reported that TeachEdge was useful for quick, initial feedback, particularly for identifying areas for improvement and understanding assessment objectives. This suggests that TeachEdge may support performance improvement when used as a formative, supplementary tool rather than a standalone marking system.

The findings should be interpreted with caution, as students submitted only a limited number of essays to TeachEdge during the study. It is possible that perceptions of usefulness and impact on performance would differ if the tool were embedded more consistently and used across a full academic year, allowing greater familiarity and more sustained engagement.




Your answer shows some understanding of the topic and includes a relevant study, but it lacks depth and balance. You have described one study and mentioned the Yerkes–Dodson law, which is good, but you have not discussed the opposing evidence or explained how the research supports or challenges the theory in enough detail. The answer is mainly descriptive rather than analytical.

You show a clear awareness that anxiety can both help and hinder eyewitness memory, which is a key idea. However, to reach higher marks, you need to show more evaluation — for example, by comparing findings from different studies or discussing methodological issues such as realism or ethical concerns. You also need to make the link between the study and the theory more explicit (e.g., explain *why* Yuille and Cutshall's findings support the Yerkes–Dodson law).


~~The effects of anxiety on the accuracy on eye-witness testimony (EWT) is widly debated among psychologists. Yerkson and Dodsons law suggests that raised levels of anxiety can be beneficial in the memory of eyewitness, however when this state of arousal exceeds accurate recall diminishes.~~

The effects of anxiety on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony (EWT) have been widely debated. The Yerkes–Dodson law suggests that moderate levels of anxiety can improve recall accuracy, but when anxiety becomes too high, memory performance decreases. [*Clarifies the InvertedU relationship*]

~~A case study that supports this law would be Yuille and Cutshalls study on a real life shooting. 13 out of 21 witnesses agreed to take part in the interview where they were asked to rate their levels of anxiety at the time of the incident. The ppa witnesses were interviewed again 5 months later. with evidence suggesting showing those who were experienced the highest levels of anxiety at the time of the incident had the most correctly recalled memories.~~

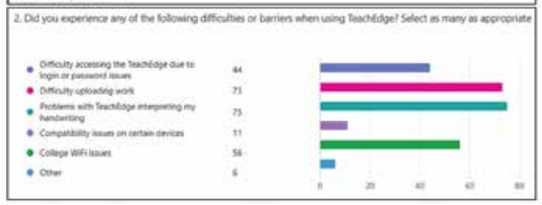
Yuille and Cutshall's study of a real-life shooting supports this law. They interviewed witnesses five months after the event and found that those who reported higher anxiety at the time gave more accurate accounts. This suggests that in real-life, high-stress situations, anxiety may enhance memory accuracy. [*Adds clarity and links to theory*]

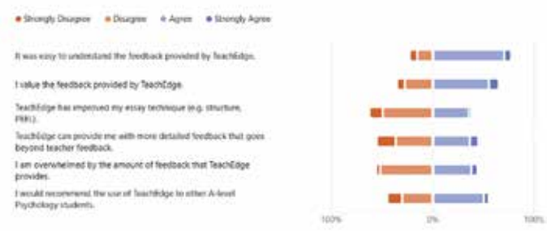
However, other research such as Johnson and Scott's weapon focus study found that anxiety can reduce accuracy. Participants who saw a man holding a knife were less able to identify him than those who saw a man with a pen. This suggests that high anxiety narrows attention to the weapon, reducing recall of other details. [*Adds contrasting evidence and evaluation*]

A possible explanation for these mixed findings is that real-life anxiety may differ from laboratory-induced anxiety. Real events may trigger stronger emotional engagement, improving memory, whereas artificial lab settings may not produce the same effects. [*Adds evaluative reasoning*]

Overall, research suggests that anxiety can both improve and impair eyewitness accuracy depending on the level of arousal and the realism of the situation. [*Summarises balanced conclusion without adding a formal conclusion section*]

This improved version would reach Level 4 (7–8 marks) because it includes accurate description, balanced discussion, and clear links between theory and evidence.





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

This research has directly shaped our practice by clarifying how TeachEdge should be positioned pedagogically. While we initially hoped it might improve extended writing outcomes. Student feedback highlighted the importance of teacher mediation, trust, and clarity. As a result, we will continue to use it selectively for formative purposes, and to supplement teacher feedback.

Next year, we will be more explicit with students about the purpose and limitations of AI feedback, modelling how to interpret and prioritise it. We will examine ways to reduce reliance on handwritten uploads to minimise technical barriers. In the longer term, this research has reinforced our commitment to teacher led feedback for summative assessment, using AI only where it genuinely enhances, rather than complicates, students' understanding and confidence in extended writing.

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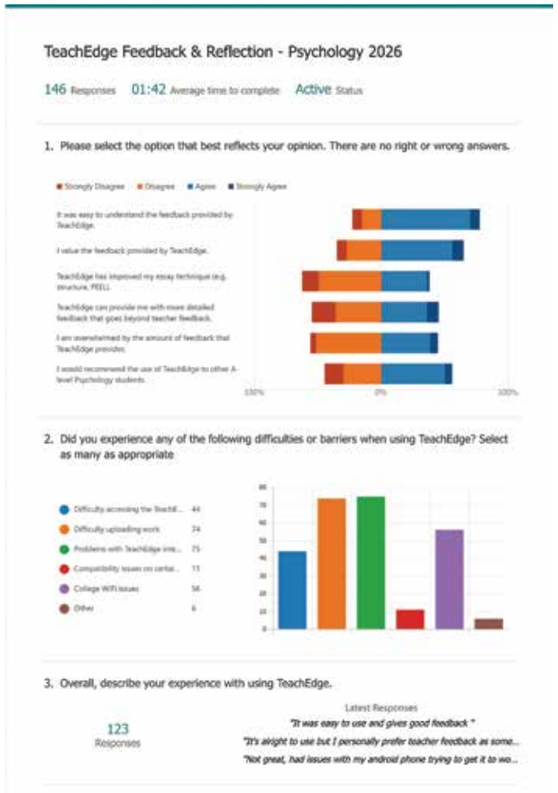
Fleckenstein, J., Liebenow, L. W., & Meyer, J. (2023). Automated feedback and writing: A multi level meta analysis of effects on students' performance. Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence, 6, Article 1162454. https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2023.1162454.



SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

Coaching - Impact of Feedback styles

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We want to improve the quality of coaches' feedback across our team that is impactful to our students to support their learning and adding value to their college experience.

Effective feedback is a critical component of athlete development within FE sport environments. Research shows that the type, timing, and delivery of feedback significantly influence athlete motivation, technical improvement, and engagement in learning. Coaches regularly use a range of feedback methods; however, their effectiveness can differ depending on the sport, context, and needs of the athlete.

The purpose of this action research project was to investigate which types of feedback athletes perceive as most effective. This investigation supported the development of more effective coaching practice within an FE sporting environment.

We are going to research the Impact of Feedback styles on Student Athletes.

1. Research studies around feedback and let that inform our approach
2. Use a feedback form to gain insights from students on feedback
3. Feedback reflections from the students.
4. Write a report to be able to share with coaches on Preferred feedback
5. Create a 2-minute video

This research is related to our QIP priorities.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

The study explored four main forms of feedback:

- 1-to-1 Individual Feedback
- Immediate (Concurrent) Feedback
- Post-Session Feedback
- Remote Feedback (video analysis, written notes, digital communication)

Data was collected from athletes representing four different sports within the institution:

- Women's Rugby
- Men's Football
- Women's Football
- Basketball

This multisport sample ensured a diverse range of performance contexts, physical demands, and coaching structures.

A structured Microsoft Form was created to gather athlete perceptions of each feedback type. The form included a combination of:

- Likert-scale questions
- Multiple-choice items
- Open-ended qualitative responses

The survey was distributed across all four sports, and additional insight was gained through:

- Observations during coaching sessions
- Informal conversations with athletes
- Reflections by the coach during training delivery

This mixed-method approach provided both quantitative and qualitative data to support reliable findings.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

From analysing the feedback questionnaire results collected between 4 February 2026 and 9 April 2026, several clear patterns emerged regarding how athletes best receive and apply feedback within a sporting environment.

The most significant finding was that on-pitch/on-court immediate feedback is the most effective form of feedback for the majority of athletes. This type of feedback was most frequently identified as beneficial, as it allows athletes to make immediate corrections while situations are still fresh. Acting on feedback in real time was seen as crucial in preventing repeated mistakes and supporting learning directly within the performance context.

A second key finding was that individual (one-to-one) feedback is also highly valued. Athletes reported that this form of feedback allows greater focus, opportunities to ask questions, and more personalised guidance. One-to-one feedback was particularly effective after sessions or matches, when athletes felt more relaxed and able to reflect. This suggests that while immediate feedback supports rapid performance correction, individual feedback is more effective for deeper understanding and long-term development.

In contrast, online or remote feedback was identified as the least effective feedback method. Athletes felt it lacked practicality and removed the physical and visual elements of performance. Many also found it harder to understand feedback without face-to-face interaction or opportunities for clarification.

Another important learning point was that feedback becomes less effective when too much information is given at once. Immediate feedback is most effective when it is short, clear, and focused on a single point.

Overall, the findings show that athletes benefit most from a blended feedback approach, combining immediate, practical feedback with planned opportunities for individual reflection.

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

Our action research has had a clear and lasting impact on how we approach feedback within our coaching practice. By collecting and analysing athlete feedback, we gained a deeper understanding of how different feedback methods influence learning, performance, and engagement. This process has helped us shift towards a more evidence-informed and athlete-centred approach to coaching.

One key finding was the strong value athletes place on on-pitch/on-court immediate feedback. While this was already part of our practice, the research highlighted the importance of delivering feedback that is short, clear, and focused on a single coaching point. As a result, we are now more deliberate in how we use immediate feedback, ensuring it supports performance without disrupting flow or causing confusion.

The research also emphasised the importance of individual one-to-one feedback, particularly for reflection and personalised development. This has encouraged us to plan structured opportunities for individual feedback rather than relying on informal conversations. We now recognise one-to-one feedback as a key tool for supporting confidence, understanding, and long-term athlete development.

In contrast, our findings showed that online or remote feedback is less effective when used alone. Moving forward, we will use digital tools more selectively and ensure they are supported by practical examples or face-to-face discussion.

Overall, this action research has shaped our long-term practice by encouraging more intentional, reflective, and player-centred feedback strategies. Next year and beyond, we plan to use a blended feedback model that combines immediate performance feedback with planned individual reflection, supporting sustained development over time.

UPS, EDEY & HSC

Controlled assessments to improve results

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This research aimed to develop a clearer understanding of how learners perform under controlled assessment conditions compared with traditional internally assessed approaches. A particular focus was on whether controlled assessments enhance authenticity, learner independence, and the accuracy of assessment outcomes.

A key driver was the need to reduce resubmissions and address growing concerns around AI use and plagiarism in NEA based units. By examining learner performance and behaviour under controlled conditions, the study sought to identify assessment approaches that promote genuine engagement and provide more reliable evidence of individual achievement.

The research also aligned with curriculum and qualification reforms, ensuring teaching, learning, and assessment practices better meet both legacy ED/T Level expectations and the requirements of the new AAQ qualifications. This directly supports the HSC Quality Improvement Plan, which highlights the need for greater use of varied assessment methods and improved preparation for future qualifications.

In addition, the study supported several wider organisational priorities. Within Education and Early Years (EdEy), it aimed to prepare both learners and staff for assessment models increasingly embedded within new qualification frameworks. Within UPS, the research responded to concerns about over reliance on model answers and templates in internally assessed units, and the potential impact of this on learner independence and higher level achievement.

Overall, the research sought to inform future assessment design by identifying approaches that balance structure, authenticity, and accessibility, while preparing learners more effectively for evolving qualification demands.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

The research evaluated the impact of controlled assessment conditions on learner outcomes within NEA units, compared with traditional internal assessment methods. A mixed methods approach was adopted to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.

Initially, historical assessment results from NEA units delivered under controlled conditions were analysed. To strengthen the comparative element, controlled assessment was then introduced into selected ED units across both UPS and HSC, while other units retained traditional approaches and acted as control groups. The key units involved were UPS Unit 1, HSC Unit 25, and HSC Unit 7.

During the planning stage, controlled assessment was embedded into UPS Unit 1 at the start of delivery, HSC Unit 7, and the first AAQ NEA for F092. Additional planned activities included HSC Unit 14 Learning Aims A, B, and C (Merit and Distinction only), EdEy practice ESP, and continued collaboration across UPS and HSC teams to analyse historical and emerging data.

A direct comparative element was introduced within HSC Unit 7, where the same learners completed two different tasks under different assessment conditions. Learners were asked to reflect on and compare their experiences, submitting feedback through a Microsoft Form. Ethical considerations, including consent and anonymity, were carefully observed.

Learner perspectives were captured through pre research feedback across all subjects, followed by post assessment feedback gathered via Microsoft Forms, focus groups, and reflective learner commentary. In collaboration with the AAQ team, learners studying Business Vocational or Applied Science alongside NEA units were identified, enabling cross subject comparisons of assessment experience and performance under varying conditions.

This mixed methods approach allowed for triangulation of data and provided a more comprehensive understanding of how controlled assessments affect learner outcomes, confidence, independence, and assessment validity.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Several significant outcomes have emerged from the research so far. The introduction of controlled assessment conditions has not reduced the number of resubmissions, indicating that tighter control alone does not necessarily improve first time accuracy.

However, a notable positive outcome has been a clear reduction in the use of AI and incidents of plagiarism. This suggests that controlled conditions support improved academic integrity and more authentic evidence of learner ability.

Another key finding is that there were no late submissions. All learners met assessment deadlines, implying that controlled assessments offer structure, accountability, and clarity around expectations, supporting improved time management and compliance.

Encouragingly, more learners attempted higher level criteria under controlled conditions, suggesting increased confidence or ambition. Learners also demonstrated more academic structuring of their work, showing improved understanding of formal assessment conventions.

The research revealed a divergence in learner independence. Some learners benefited from the reduced opportunity for over scaffolding and became more self reliant, while others struggled without ongoing teacher input. This highlights the importance of careful preparation, scaffolding withdrawal, and differentiated support prior to controlled assessments.

Templates emerged as a further limitation. While useful for supporting lower level responses and structure, overly prescriptive templates can inhibit extended writing and higher level achievement, potentially capping outcomes for more able learners.

Finally, controlled assessments were found to take significantly longer to deliver. This reduces teaching and learning time and, in some cases, resulted in content being rushed, affecting depth of understanding across the wider unit.

Overall, the findings indicate that controlled assessments improve authenticity, academic structure, and deadline compliance, but require careful implementation to avoid unintended impacts on curriculum time, learner confidence, and higher level achievement.

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

This is a longitudinal study, and the current findings will inform continued research next year. An immediate impact has been the decision to trial AAQ NEAs using short, off timetable assessment blocks. This approach aims to preserve curriculum time for teaching and learning while retaining the benefits of controlled assessment. Ongoing refinement will focus on preparation strategies, template design, and balance between structure and flexibility to support all learners effectively..

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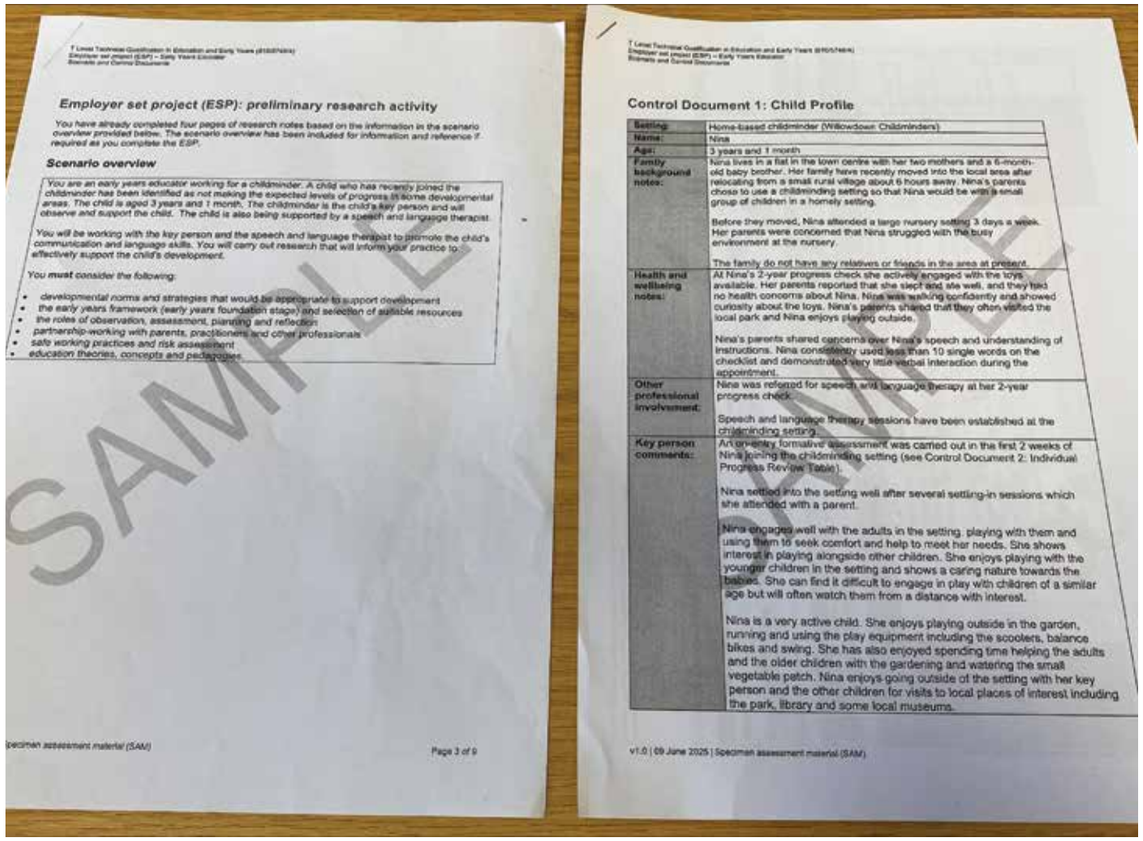

Employer set project (ESP): preliminary research activity

You have already completed four pages of research notes based on the information in the scenario overview provided below. The scenario overview has been included for information and reference if required as you complete the ESP.

Scenario overview

You are an early years educator working for a childminder. A child who has recently joined the childminder has been identified as not making the expected levels of progress in some developmental areas. The child is aged 3 years and 1 month. The childminder is the child's key person and will observe and support the child. The child is also being supported by a speech and language therapist.

You will be working with the key person and the speech and language therapist to promote the child's communication and language skills. You will carry out research that will inform your practice to effectively support the child's development.

You must consider the following:

- developmental norms and strategies that would be appropriate to support development
- the early years framework (early years foundation stage) and selection of suitable resources
- the roles of observation, assessment, planning and reflection
- partnership-working with parents, practitioners and other professionals
- safe working practices and risk assessment
- education theories, concepts and pedagogies.

Specimen assessment material (SAM)

Page 3 of 9

Control Document 1: Child Profile

Setting:	Home-based childminder (Willowdown Childminders)
Name:	Nina
Age:	3 years and 1 month
Family background notes:	Nina lives in a flat in the town centre with her two mothers and a 6-month-old baby brother. Her family have recently moved into the local area after relocating from a small rural village about 6 hours away. Nina's parents chose to use a childminding setting so that Nina would be with a small group of children in a homely setting. Before they moved, Nina attended a large nursery setting 3 days a week. Her parents were concerned that Nina struggled with the busy environment at the nursery. The family do not have any relatives or friends in the area at present.
Health and wellbeing notes:	At Nina's 2-year progress check she actively engaged with the toys available. Her parents reported that she slept and ate well, and they had no health concerns about Nina. Nina was walking confidently and showed curiosity about the toys. Nina's parents shared that they often visited the local park and Nina enjoys playing outside. Nina's parents shared concerns over Nina's speech and understanding of instructions. Nina consistently used less than 10 single words on the checklist and demonstrated very little verbal interaction during the appointment.
Other professional involvement:	Nina was referred for speech and language therapy at her 2-year progress check. Speech and language therapy sessions have been established at the childminding setting.
Key person comments:	An ongoing formative assessment was carried out in the first 2 weeks of Nina joining the childminding setting (see Control Document 2: Individual Progress Review Table). Nina settled into the setting well after several settling-in sessions which she attended with a parent. Nina engages well with the adults in the setting, playing with them and using them to seek comfort and help to meet her needs. She shows interest in playing alongside other children. She enjoys playing with the younger children in the setting and shows a caring nature towards the babies. She can find it difficult to engage in play with children of a similar age but will often watch them from a distance with interest. Nina is a very active child. She enjoys playing outside in the garden, running and using the play equipment including the scooters, balance bikes and swing. She has also enjoyed spending time helping the adults and the older children with the gardening and watering the small vegetable patch. Nina enjoys going outside of the setting with her key person and the other children for visits to local places of interest including the park, library and some local museums.

v1.0 | 09 June 2025 | Specimen assessment material (SAM)

ADULT HEALTH AND CARE

Widening access to resources

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to improve how effectively new learners access our Microsoft Teams site so communication is strengthened and learners can easily find support materials, current resources, and essential course information.

Learner focus group feedback had highlighted reluctance to share personal email addresses as a major barrier to accessing Teams. We therefore wanted to remove this barrier, and ensure that all new students could be issued with a dedicated student account, including a college email address and photo ID. As part of implementation, we planned to provide guidance to help learners use online systems such as Microsoft Teams, AI tools, and VQ Manager confidently and responsibly.

Research shows that access to online learning platforms, including Teams and Learning Management Systems, positively affects learner engagement, communication, and outcomes by offering flexible access to resources and opportunities for interaction (Al Samarraie et al., 2024; Martin et al., 2020). However, effectiveness depends on course design, digital confidence, and the level of tutor support available.

In addition, collaborative and authentic tasks within platforms such as Microsoft Teams support transferable skill development and enable staff to monitor learner progress more effectively (Kearney et al., 2022).

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We established a dedicated Microsoft Teams site where learners could access information about the diploma, relevant external websites, and up-to-date learning resources. Our focus was on new learners who began their diploma on or after 1 October 2025.

These learners were contacted by email and asked to provide a photograph for their college ID badge. Once photographs were received, learners were gradually granted access to the Health and Social Care Teams site.

Tutorial resources and questionnaires for each tutorial session were uploaded to the Teams site. In addition, guidance on 'How to Use AI Responsibly' was added, and existing resources were reviewed. Plans were made to progressively expand the content available to learners as confidence with the platform increased.

A 'hot topics' section was also developed and aligned with the wider college tutorial programme. These topics were shared with learners via email and explored in greater detail during reviews and discussions with assessors. This approach was intended to link Teams activity directly to tutorial content and assessment requirements, reinforcing its relevance to learners.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

All new learners are now in the process of obtaining a college ID badge, with more than half already having received one. As a result, learners now have a college email address and are able to access the Teams site.

This has also enabled learners to access Microsoft 365 applications, including Word, to produce their work. Previously, many learners did not have access to Word due to cost, and evidence was often submitted in Notepad format. This made it difficult for learners to use spellcheck or formatting tools. Access to Microsoft 365 has improved both the quality and presentation of learner work.

The Health and Care teaching team has become increasingly confident in using Microsoft Teams and has uploaded unit plans for all current units. Staff recognise the strong potential of the platform, particularly its ability to centralise resources, clarify assignment requirements, and improve overall consistency and quality of learner submissions.

However, encouraging learners to actively engage with the Teams site has been more challenging than expected. During placement visits, learners were shown how to access the site and navigate its resources. Verbal feedback was positive, with learners recognising the benefit of having assignment information in one central location. Despite this, learner surveys were not completed, and Teams Insights data shows very limited engagement overall.

Several factors may explain this outcome. These include varying levels of digital confidence and IT skills, learners being at different stages of the diploma, which makes shared activities harder to design, and limited or no internet access in some placement settings.

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

Although learner engagement with the Teams site has been lower than anticipated, the action research has highlighted its value as a central hub for teaching resources and key information. Early verbal feedback from learners was encouraging, and staff confidence in using the platform has improved considerably.

Moving forward, consistent modelling by the teaching team will be crucial. Staff will continue to demonstrate how to access and use Teams during learner visits, clearly reinforce expectations, and regularly revisit its role in supporting assignment work.

To embed Teams more effectively into learners' routines, future assignments will include specific tasks that require learners to retrieve information from the Teams site. This approach aims to build digital confidence, normalise regular platform use, and maximise the long-term benefits of Microsoft Teams for teaching, learning, and communication.

References:

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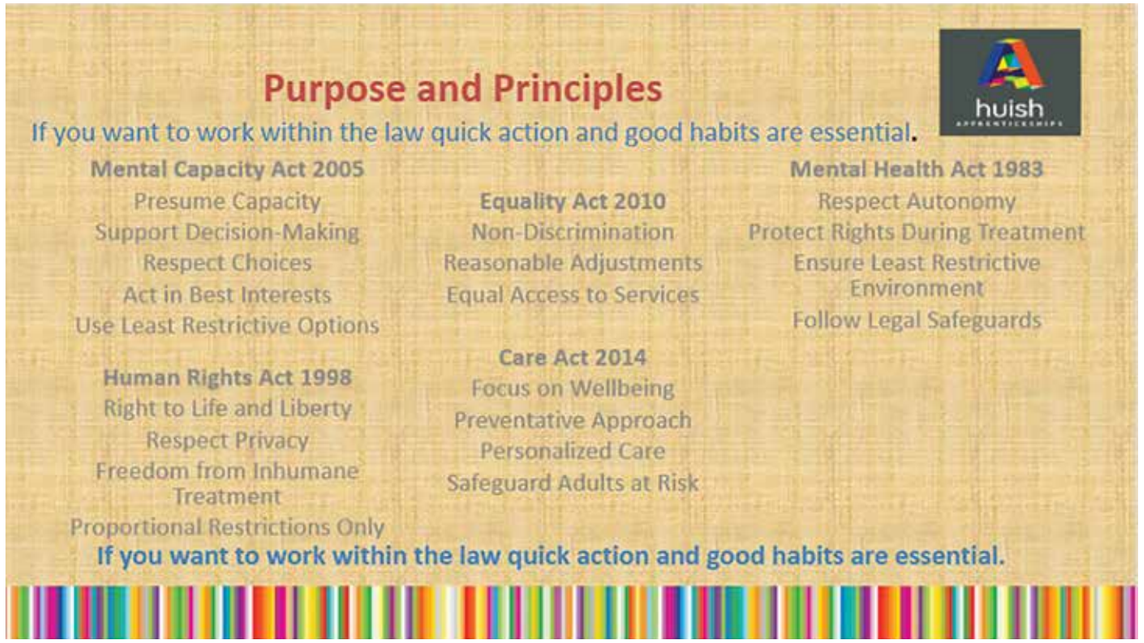

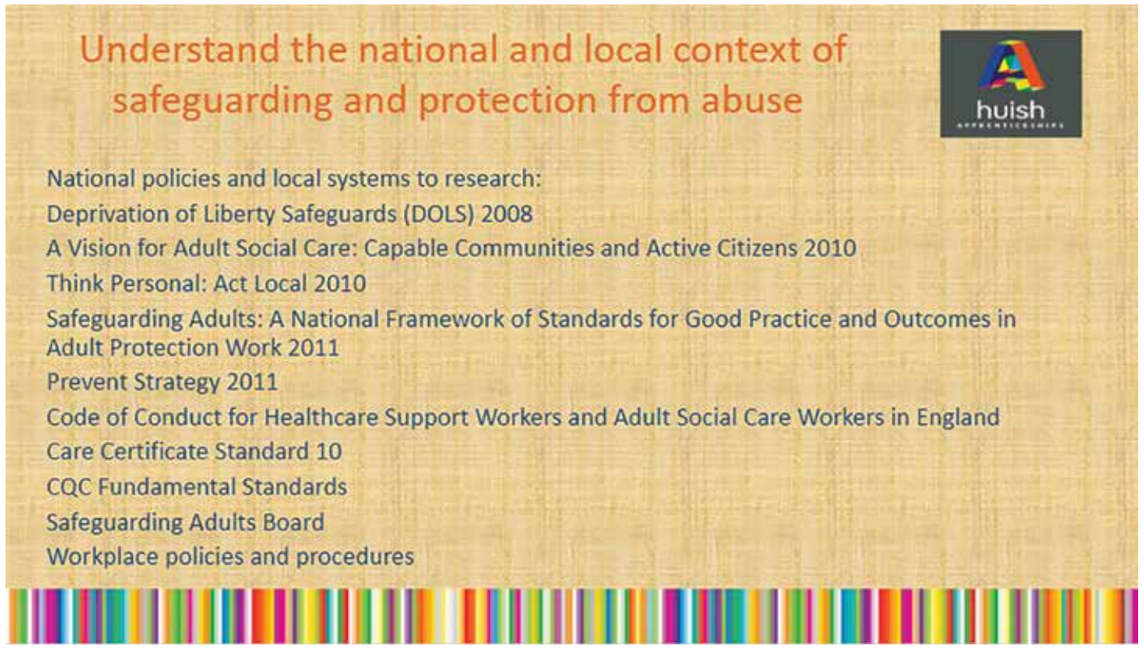

EDUCATION APPRENTICESHIPS

Creating topic summaries

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Initially, our aim was to help learners feel more connected to the wider college community, fostering a stronger sense of inclusion and belonging. Research consistently shows that a strong sense of belonging correlates with higher motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

To better understand learners' perceptions, we conducted four focus groups exploring their sense of belonging, motivation, and support needs.

The findings were insightful. Across all focus groups, learners consistently reported feeling confident and well-supported by tutors. They particularly valued clear communication, flexibility, and responsiveness, which enhanced their motivation and provided reassurance. However, for most learners, being part of the wider college community was not a priority. They already feel well supported by their tutors and primarily view college as a place to gain qualifications, showing little interest in broader engagement.

This is interesting and fits with the wider evidence that suggests that belonging is context-dependent and layered. Students often prioritize acceptance and support from their immediate circle, such as classmates and tutors, over the wider institutional community, which is what appears to be happening with the Education Apprenticeships.

Benefits are most pronounced when belonging is rooted in close relationships, rather than broad institutional affiliation. Smaller, relationally rich environments foster persistence and success by meeting students' psychological needs for connection and support.

Smaller groups provide Psychological safety and trust, enabling open communication and risk-taking, opportunities for influence and mattering, where students feel their contributions are valued and shared emotional connection, identified by McMillan & Chavis (1986) as a core element of community.

In the focus groups, when learners were asked what additional support they needed to succeed, some learners requested a course overview booklet and assistance with OTJ login.

In response to these findings, we decided to shift our focus. In line with learners' requests, we plan to strengthen our provision of supportive documentation by developing course topic summaries in the form of an overview booklet to aid revision.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

At the start of the project, we had 5 Level 2 Early Years Apprentices, 9 Level 3 Early Years Apprentices and 39 Level 3 TA Apprentices. The apprenticeships are roll on, roll off courses which allow for flexibility for employers to recruit as and when they need to and so the numbers varied during the project.

We planned to create summaries for each of the topics we teach, using AI where possible to assist us. We have made several already and these are saved in the Teams pages for each Apprenticeship. This has been advertised and promoted during taught college sessions. Verbal feedback has been good with learners making comments such as "that's a good idea" and "I'll use those to revise from at the end".

We monitored Apprentices accessing and using the summaries and gathered feedback towards the end of the Spring term as to their effectiveness in supporting Apprentices learning and preparation for assessments.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The topic summary sheets are being produced for each topic and provide an overview of the curriculum content for each topic for each of the qualifications. Due to the roll on and roll off nature for the provision, the student starts the college aspect of the apprenticeship once employment has started. The topics are then completed until they have covered the full content. Often when they start learners will ask "Do I have to catch up on the topics I've missed?" This isn't the case and the new topic summary sheets will allow new learners to see the topics in the order they will be covering them.

Each topic has been created on an A4 poster which can be ordered to suit the starting point for any learner. It also gives an insight into all of the content that will be covered. This makes it very personalised to each apprentice. This will support learners as they requested.

To create the topic summaries we wanted to ensure the key information was given in an appealing format that provides a clear overview. To do this we needed to find a format that would work and research led us to Canva. Canva provides templates that can be altered to add personalised texts.

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

These summaries will be used as an ongoing resource to support as mentioned above. The aim is it will give new learners an overview when they start, allowing them to track their progress through the course content. Additionally, they will be used as a resource to support learners as the approach their End Point Assessment. One element of the final assessment for apprentices is to create a portfolio of evidence showing the knowledge they have developed across the qualification. These topic summaries should support with this as they will work as a resource to enable apprentices to check they have covered all of the requirements within the portfolio.

References:

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. Psychological Bulletin, 117(3), 497–529.

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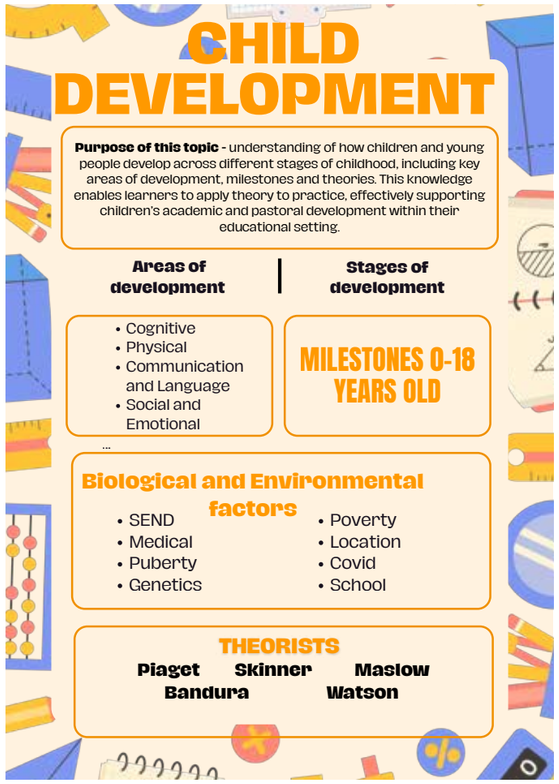
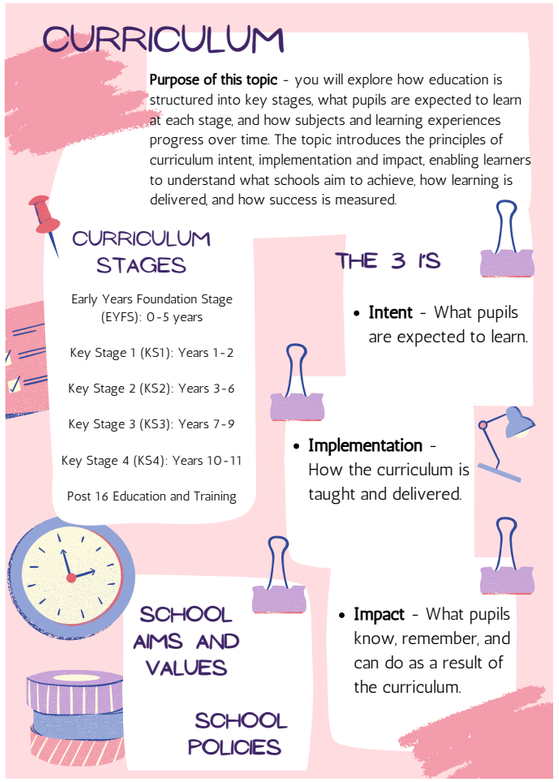
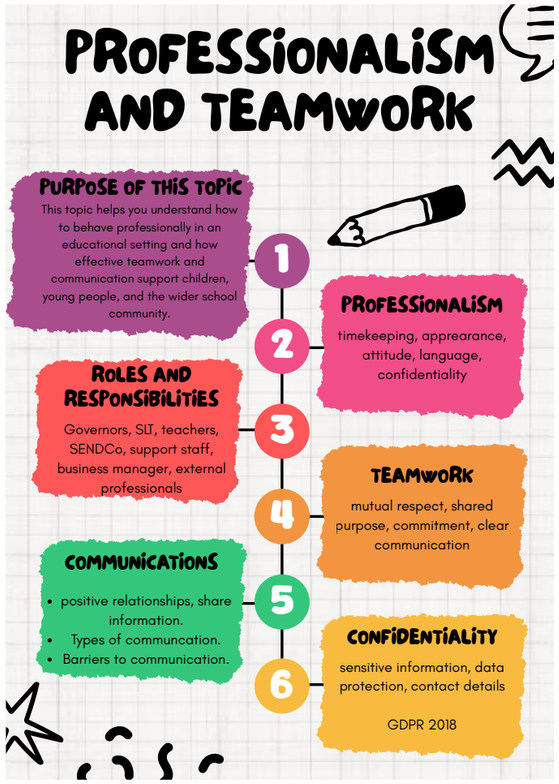
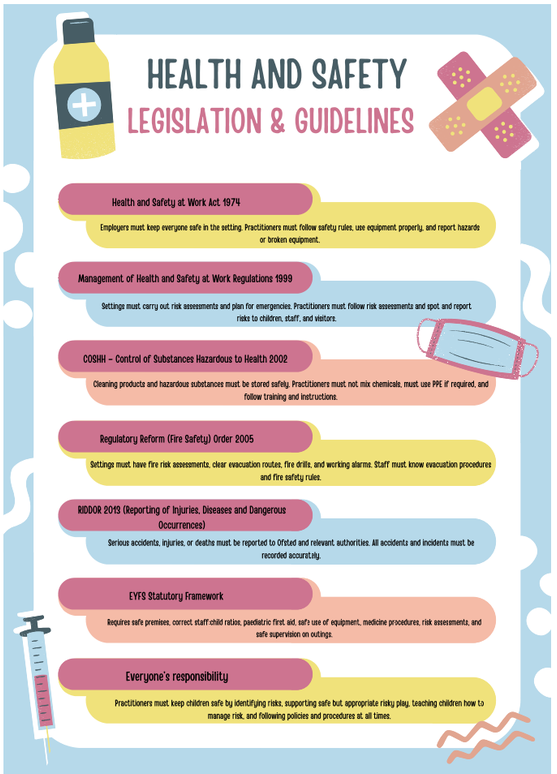








EVS

Developing student maths skills in tackling data response questions

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We want to improve our teaching of maths skills so students can better answer data response maths questions. Our overall aim is to improve student exam results on these types of questions. Analysing the student exam results from 2025 showed that as a centre we considerably out-perform other similar centres in our overall results and across all question formats apart from maths style data response questions where we perform averagely. It is therefore an obvious area for us to focus on.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

As a subject area, we have historically produced a mathematical skills booklet that is issued to students at the beginning of Year 2. This booklet is designed to support students' mathematical development by covering the key skill areas identified in the AQA subject specification guidance. It includes a range of past paper questions and model answers across all of these skill areas, and students are expected to work through the questions gradually over the course of Year 2 as part of their Huish 30 independent study. While this resource has proven useful in providing structured practice, we felt there was scope to develop a more student-centred resource that was directly informed by students' experiences, feedback and perceived areas of difficulty.

For this reason, our action research primarily focused on the current Year 2 cohort, consisting of 64 students. We began by exploring students' perceptions of their own mathematical skills, asking them to identify where they felt there were gaps and to explain how these gaps limited their success when answering mathematical and data response examination questions. Students were encouraged to reflect not only on their ongoing classwork, but also on their performance in end-of-module assessment tests completed during Year 1.

This qualitative data was collected through a combination of targeted student focus groups and structured reflection feedback forms, which students completed at the end of each module. Once the data had been analysed, it was used to edit and refine the existing mathematical skills booklet, which was then issued to students at the start of the autumn term. In parallel, we also adjusted the weighting of exam-style questions in the November and March mock examinations by increasing the number of data response questions. The intention was that students would gain more frequent and meaningful exposure to these question types under exam conditions, and that this increased familiarity and targeted practice would lead to improved performance when compared with previous cohorts.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

As expected, students appear to struggle with certain mathematical skills; ratios, statistical tests and converting units (eg joules to watts) in particular, but one of the key unexpected discoveries was that basic calculator skills were holding many students back. The assumption was that having passed GCSE maths, all students would be very proficient in using their calculator but this was definitely not the case. As a result we added a whole new section on calculator skills within the maths skills booklet and practiced these within lessons.

Initial qualitative evidence from students suggests that they are finding the new resources useful and that they are feeling more confident when tackling maths/data response questions. However, quantitative evidence will have to wait until the summer exam results.

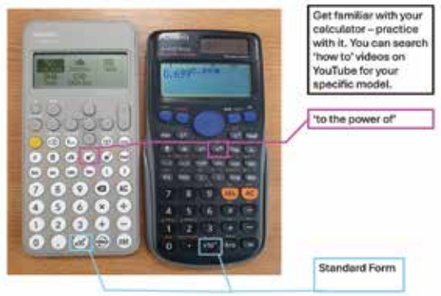
4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

We intend to continue using the revised format of the mathematical skills booklet in future years, with further refinements made as necessary in response to student feedback and detailed analysis of examination outcomes. Ongoing review of student performance will allow us to identify which sections of the booklet are most effective in supporting learning, as well as any areas that may require additional clarification. This approach will ensure that the resource remains responsive to students' needs and aligned with the demands of the specification.

Given the inclusion of additional sections and the increased emphasis on targeted skills practice, it now seems more appropriate to introduce the booklet at the very start of Year 2 rather than waiting until the October half term. This earlier introduction will provide students with a longer period in which to engage with the material, allowing skills development to be more gradual and embedded over time. It also enables teachers to reference and integrate the booklet more consistently into lessons and independent study from the outset, supporting a more coherent and sustained approach to developing mathematical skills.

Calculator skills

Do you know how to type in standard form and 'to the power of' into your calculator?



Every model is different – some calculators can covert units and work out standard deviation for you. Learn how to make the most of it.

Now try this exam question from Paper 2 2025:

0 8 Scientists investigated the density of wood of different species of mangrove trees.

Trees from a variety of mangrove forests across Thailand and Indonesia were sampled. Trees of different mangrove species were cut down and the mean wood density for each species was determined.

Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5

Species	Mean density (ρ) / t m^{-3}	Two standard deviations	Number of samples	Number of sampling sites
Bruguiera cylindrica	0.749	0.042	13	2
Bruguiera gymnorrhiza	0.699	0.121	18	3
Ceriops tagal	0.746	0.012	6	2
Rhizophora apiculata	0.770	0.093	33	3
Rhizophora mucronata	0.701	0.032	13	1

Scientists used the data in **Table 5 on page 20** to formulate the following equations that estimate the above and below ground mass of mangrove trees:

Above ground mass (M_a): $M_a = 67.3 \times \rho \times D$

Below ground mass (M_b): $M_b = 0.199 \times \rho^{0.899} \times D^{2.22}$

ρ is the mean wood density.

Tree diameter (D) was measured at a standard height of 140 cm above ground level.

M_a and M_b are measured in tonnes (t).

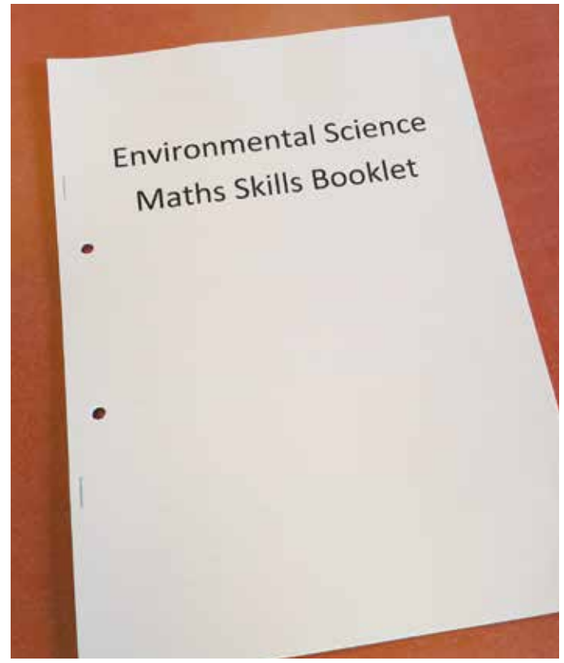
0 8 . 3 Calculate the total mass of a *Bruguiera gymnorrhiza* with a diameter of 46.0 cm.

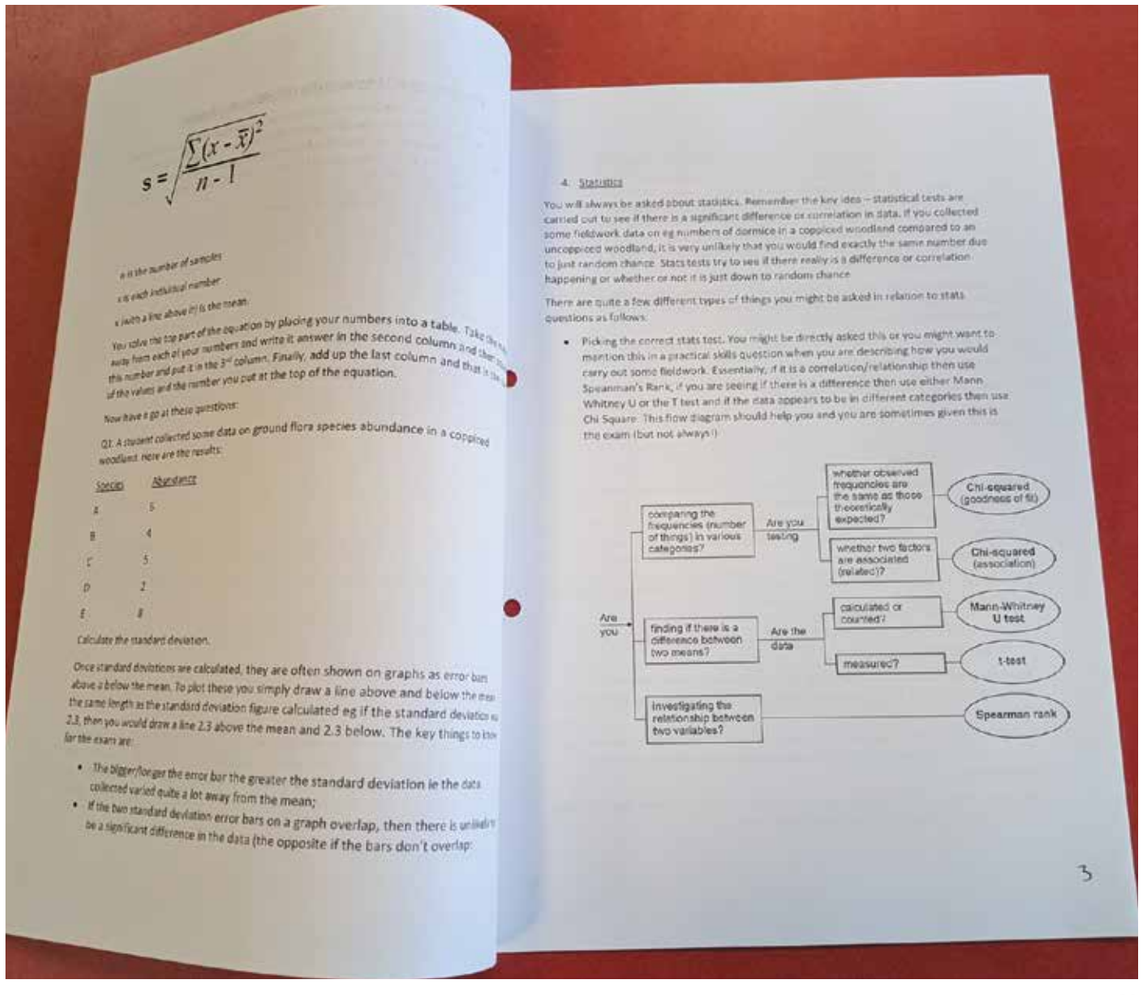
Use **Table 5 on page 20** and the equations.

Write your answer to the most appropriate number of significant figures.

Show your working.

[4 marks]





ENGLISH GCSE

Contextual analysis in GCSE English

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This project aimed to investigate the problem of underachievement in GCSE English Language Paper 1, Question 4, compared to similar centres in the AQA results data. In this question students are given two non-fiction extracts: one from pre 1900 and one post 1900 and asked to compare the writer's different attitudes towards the shared topic. After looking at previous exam responses, it was felt that our students often have a lack of social context knowledge that is limiting their understanding of the topics set on the exam. Previous topics have included issues such as the environment, child-labour and animal cruelty and the GCSE retake students often lack knowledge of what life was like for people in the 1800s that we take for granted within our Level 2 cohort. The purpose of this research was to support our students to develop their knowledge of such topics.

Andrew McCallum, in a blog post for the English & Media Centre, also identifies the issue of social context and suggests a strategy he calls 'noticing' to help improve understanding.

We decided to pilot the use of McCallum's 'noticing' strategy with our students to see if it was effective in improving knowledge of social context.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

We designed a series of lessons focused on past paper 2 content using an adapted version of McCallum's 'Noticing' strategy. We started by looking at a paper that focused on attitudes to child labour in the Victorian era. We adapted McCallum's strategy by adding use of visual stimulus in the form of photographs from the respective periods to start the discussions around social context.

Stage 1: Students were presented with a photograph of a Victorian factory with child labourers and asked to 'notice' anything in the data that stands out to them that is different from contemporary social context. They wrote notes down on a handout in response to Wh-questions: What is happening in the image? What are they wearing? What do you notice about the building? etc.

Stage 2: Students were given the exam paper extract, a Victorian account of conditions in the factory and asked to repeat the 'Noticing strategy' making notes on any differences they noticed.

Stage 3: Students were given some contextual notes about child labour conditions in Victorian England and asked to draw links between their 'Noticing' notes and the social context notes.

Stage 4: The activity was repeated for a contemporary photograph of child labourers in Bangladesh and a related written extract.

Stage 5: Students responded to a Paper 2, Question 4 question, using their 'noticing' notes to draw connections between the two extracts.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

After following the 'noticing' strategy for a couple of weeks, students demonstrated improved understanding of the differing social contexts of the time periods.

The 'noticing' of the photographs stage was taken out of the exercise as the students gained more confidence with understanding the importance of understanding social context and the students continued to demonstrate improved understanding of social context.

Eventually, students were asked to respond to a Paper 2, Question 4 without completing any of the noticing stages. Their responses continued to show improved understanding of the different social contexts.

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

We will continue to use the 'noticing' strategy with our classes, embedding it as a regular and purposeful part of exam preparation. This approach will be introduced most intensively at the start of Term 1, as students begin to build towards the November examination, and then revisited in January, once the November exam results have been analysed.

To support this, we intend to develop a suite of 'noticing' resource packs based on past examination papers. These packs will include photographs, and concise contextual notes.

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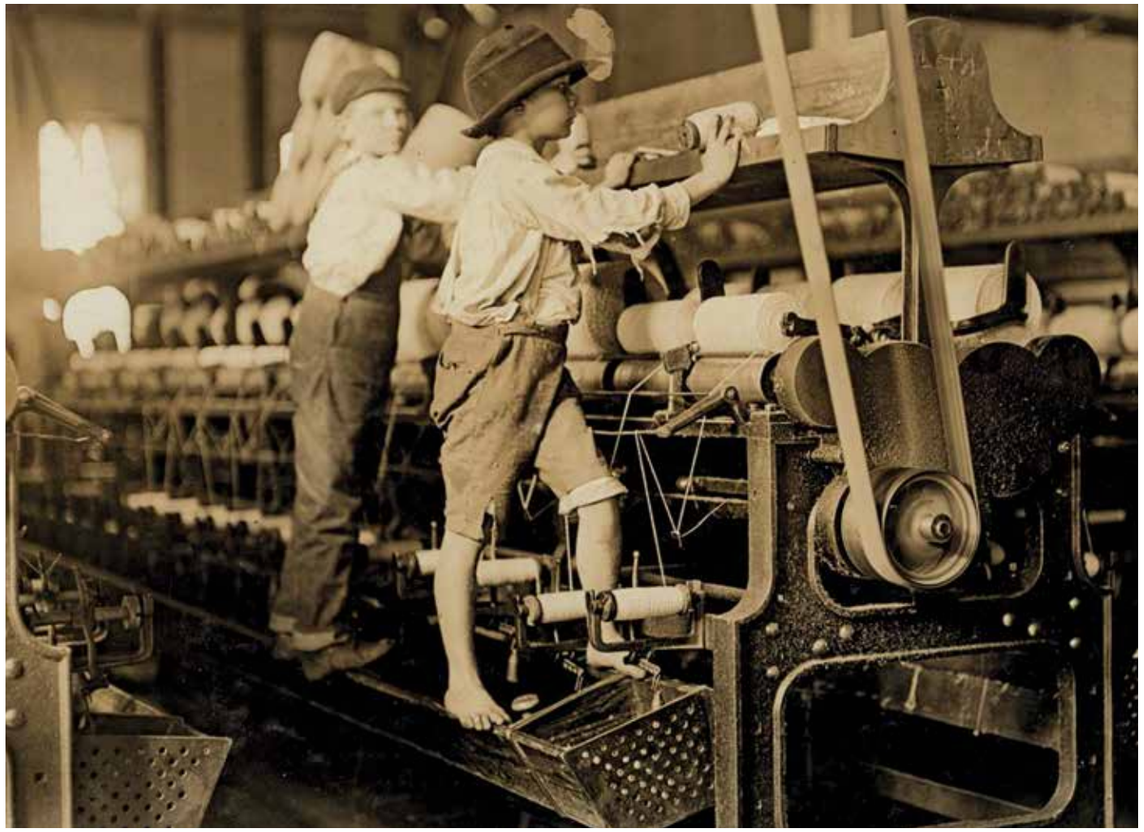
English and Media Centre (n.d.) Noticing context: Putting the text first. Available at: https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/blog/noticing-context-putting-the-text-first/ (Accessed: 30 April 2026).



FILM & MEDIA

Focus and phone use

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

As an extension to our interest in facilitating creativity in our cohorts, we noticed that one of the biggest barriers to progress is a lack of focus, particularly in conjunction with phone usage. As a part of this research we have worked with the students to inform a mobile phone policy that is fair, realistic and fit for purpose within the media department. When setting out our research, we focussed on the existing issues within our Year 2 Extended Diploma cohort, alongside considering school phone policies, and how these have shaped a student's impression of mobile phone usage – and the strategies used in education to minimise this.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To gain the full scope of the student relationship with mobile phone policy, we divided our action research into two focusses. One study explored the ethics and boundaries of restricting mobile phone usage in a Media context when considering our goal for learners to achieve more independence and industry experience while in Further Education. The other study had a more psychological approach, looking into the impact a phone policy has on learners and their personal impressions of this.

Psychology in relation to the impact of a phone policy

To establish context to our study, we focussed on the Year 1 Extended Certificate students, who had most recently experienced secondary school phone policies. Through survey, we asked students to share what their experience of phone policy at school had been. They were then asked to identify the transition from school to college and how they have adjusted to the rules and expectations at Richard Huish College. We also asked for insights into the benefits and drawbacks of having a mobile phone, so we could consider this when identifying boundaries with phone use in lessons.

Media Department phone policy

This study was completed with the Year 2 Extended Diploma cohort, who seemed to have the most issues with mobile phones being a barrier to focus. The goal with this class was to get them to a point where they were able to independently identify appropriate times to use their mobile phone. Initially, students were monitored with little to no intervention in class.

After observations had been made, each of the three teachers of this class came up with their own approach to reduce mobile phone use. These approaches included the use of an 'Offline Oasis' – a lockable storage box for mobile phones to go in over the duration of a lesson. We felt it was key to name it something with positive connotations, to move away from the idea that time away from phones is a punishment or negative experience. The separate approaches were done intentionally to encourage learners to think about which approach seemed the most reasonable, and impactful. After two weeks of this, learners were asked to provide feedback of their experience, including identifying rules that they consider to be fair. Centralising this feedback informed a phone policy that considered each individual learner's ideas. In doing this, and proposing the policy to students, they were able to gain a sense of ownership over these boundaries.

Secondary School Study

Student feedback about their phone policy experience highlighted a trend in animosity between students and teachers being identified due to the rules in place. There was also a feeling of secrecy associated with phone use in school. While school policies varied, students highlighted that they would typically try to find a way around the rules, rather than fully adhere. No schools included in the study were using Yondr pouches to restrict phone use.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

After trialling the implementation of the centralised, student-informed policy for two weeks teachers noticed a significant improvement in most of the learners' attention to coursework, and a reduction in phone use in class. This was successful also in helping a small number of learners in the class to autonomously use the 'Offline Oasis' to ensure their focus remained on the lesson and their work.

Overall, phone use in lessons decreased significantly, due to the learners' awareness of the expectations they had set out. There were also instances where learners were taking responsibility for reminding their peers of the rules. This evidences a slight increase in independence and ownership that we had not yet experienced with this cohort. Teachers have since observed that a small number of learners in the class still have an issue with phone use in the classroom, and this behaviour correlates with the quality of work submitted by these students being significantly weaker.

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

Within the creative scope of the subjects in the department, we believe an outright phone ban is restrictive and not reflective of the reality of workplaces. There's also clear demarcation across different classes – for some classes phone use is not a barrier to progress, for some there is instant negative use regardless of overt expectations. Plus – some individual students already have a compulsive use of their phones that is worryingly ingrained and detrimental to the student's wider progression at Huish and beyond.

Our aim for next academic year is to build on the bespoke approach – tailoring expectations when needed, encouraging independent oversight of phone use and creating ownership through student created policies when needed.

College Mobile Phone Policy

Policy written and conceived by Yr. 2 Media students

1. **Purpose of Use – improve grades and attainment:**
   - Phones may be used during lessons **only for tasks directly related to the course**, such as:
     - Research or specific tasks approved by the teacher
     - Filming or taking photos for coursework
   - During individual coursework tasks, phones may also be used to **listen to music**, provided it does not cause distraction.
2. **Breaks**
   - Students may use their phones freely during **short breaks** (5 mins) given by the teacher at 45 minutes into the lesson
3. **Restrictions**
   - **No social media** or unrelated activities during lesson time (excluding 5 min breaks)
   - **No phone use during creative tasks** unless it is for lesson-related purposes.
4. **Time Limits**
   - Quick personal checks (messages, social media) should be limited to **before the lesson, the five-minute break and after the lesson**
   - If the lesson allows for listening to music, this can be set up on the phone at the start of the lesson before the phone is put into the **Offline Oasis.**
5. **Teacher Oversight**
   - If a teacher asks a student to put their phone away, the student must comply immediately.
   - Failure to comply will result in:
     - **First time:** Verbal warning
     - **Second time:** Phone placed in the **Offline Oasis** or kept in the student's bag for the rest of the lesson.
6. **Lesson Structure**
   - Phones should be placed in the **Oasis** or away for the **first 45 minutes** of the lesson (except for approved tasks). After this, students may access their phones for a five-minute break, then promptly return to following the above policy.

MATHS

Peer mentoring

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

An agreed priority for the A Level Mathematics course this academic year has been to improve Year 1 student engagement, particularly in relation to navigating course resources effectively, organising and completing the Huish 30 (independent work) weekly, adapting to the increased expectations placed upon learners at A Level, and embedding new mathematical methods through deliberate practice. Evidence from classroom observations, assessment outcomes, and informal student feedback indicated that many Year 1 students struggle to manage the transition from GCSE to A Level, not only due to lack of mathematical skill, but because of challenges involving organisation, confidence, and study habits. To address this, we investigated whether pairing Year 2 A Level Mathematics students with Year 1 learners could support academic engagement and improve students' confidence and independence.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

Research shows mentoring improves academic performance, retention, wellbeing, and social integration (Le et al., 2024). Structured hierarchical mentoring models are the most effective (CIRL, 2022). Peer mentoring also supports transition, building motivation, and belonging (Clark & Andrews, 2011). Further studies show benefits in mathematics-specific mentoring, including skill development and conceptual understanding (RSIS, 2025; ATM, 2018; Swedish Maths Coach, 2018). A 2024 study identified four categories of peer mentoring benefits: academic, emotional, social, and transitional. ASDAN's Peer Mentoring programme demonstrates that mentor training courses are viable in post–16 settings.

The action research involved weekly Wednesday lunchtime mentoring sessions, recruitment of Year 2 volunteer mentors, promotional materials shared with students, one-to-one mentoring as the preferred format, review of homework and past-paper questions, occasional teacher oversight, and structured focus groups to gather evaluative feedback.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Mentors reported increased confidence, improved communication skills, strengthened subject knowledge, and satisfaction in supporting younger students. Mentees reported improved understanding, enhanced confidence, reduced anxiety, better homework performance, and smoother transition into A Level expectations.

Limitations included loss of lunchtime for mentors and mentees, several difficulties when explaining complex topics, reliance on teacher presence for clarification, and some mismatches in communication or working styles. There were also logistical challenges, for example, there was less engagement with peer mentoring if students could not make the prearranged Wednesday lunchtime slot.

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

While the mentoring programme demonstrated clear benefits, the findings also showed that sustaining mentoring throughout the entire academic year is not feasible without considerable teacher oversight and structured mentor training. Both mentor and mentee feedback indicated that effective sessions often depended on teacher presence for clarification and that mentors would benefit from additional training in communication and explanation techniques. These requirements make a year-round programme too time-consuming to deliver at scale alongside existing teaching commitments.

Peer mentoring offers meaningful gains in engagement, confidence, and conceptual understanding for Year 1 students; however, realising these benefits depends on a notable commitment of time for structured mentor training and ongoing teacher involvement. Given these demands, the programme is best positioned as a targeted early-year support mechanism rather than a continuous provision throughout the academic calendar. We are planning to use this next year in the first half term to help Year 1 students adapt to the A Level course and we will continue to review its effectiveness.

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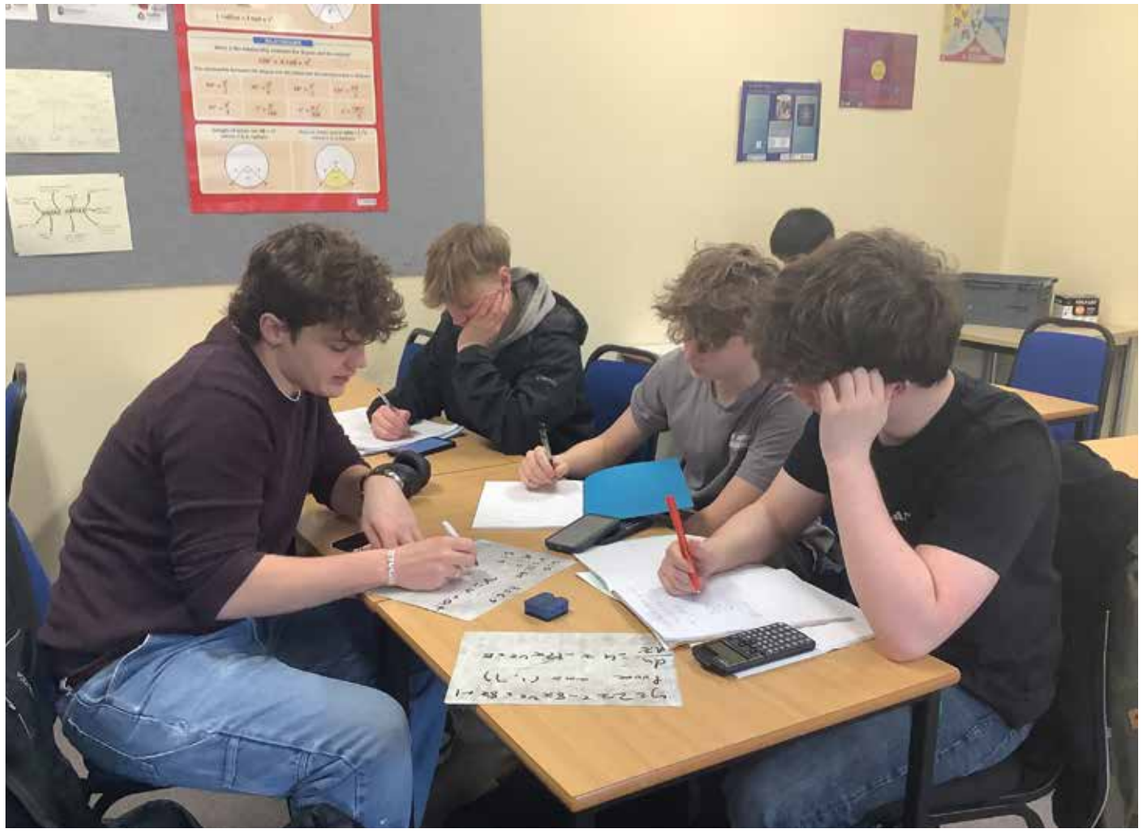

SOCIOLOGY

The gender gap in Sociology

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This action research project aimed to investigate gender disparities in student engagement, attitudes, and subject choice in A Level Sociology. Within the research setting, male students were underrepresented, reflecting a broader pattern in which males are less likely to choose Sociology. Analysis of historical attainment data indicated that male students generally met their target grades, whereas a higher proportion of female students exceeded theirs, suggesting differences in engagement and approach to the subject. These observations aligned with wider national trends indicating that Sociology attracts disproportionately higher numbers of female students (Younger and Warrington, 2005).

The research was motivated by concerns that male students may enter the course with misconceptions about its academic rigour, contributing to uneven engagement and attainment. In particular, teachers noted that boys often perceived Sociology as an "easier" or "common-sense" subject, suggesting a misalignment between expectations and course demands. These findings reflect broader literature showing gendered differences in attitudes toward humanities and social sciences (Francis, 2000). This raised questions about the role of subject marketing, induction materials, and peer influence in shaping student decision-making.

The project also sought to explore how classroom experiences and communication norms might reinforce gendered differences in participation and confidence. By adopting a collaborative action research model (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), the study aimed not only to generate insight but also to involve students directly in diagnosing challenges and co-constructing solutions.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

The study adopted mixed-methods, participatory action research design involving both teachers and students as co-researchers (McNiff, 2017). The research team comprised three Sociology teachers and three Year 2 students (Darcy Bulbeck, Harvey Oaten and Sammy Freeman) with strong methodological understanding and awareness of ethical research standards, in line with the British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines. This collaborative approach positioned students as active contributors rather than passive subjects.

The project unfolded in three key stages. First, a staff–student focus group was conducted to define the research problem, identify potential explanatory factors, and agree on research roles.

Second, student researchers designed a questionnaire to explore students' perceptions of the subject, experiences of learning, and expectations. Teachers ensured clarity, validity, and ethical integrity, particularly by avoiding leading questions or explicit references to gender.

The questionnaire was distributed to 110 Year 2 Sociology students, yielding 73 responses (66% response rate), including 11 male respondents. Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, anonymity, and the right to withdraw data. Finally, the data was analysed collaboratively, with teachers and students interpreting patterns and identifying implications for practice.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The findings revealed clear gendered patterns in subject choice, expectations, and engagement. Notably, none of the male respondents had selected Sociology as their first-choice A Level. Instead, it was frequently chosen as a third option. This suggests that boys' subject selection may be more instrumental, influenced by perceptions of workload and difficulty rather than intrinsic interest.

Male students were also more likely to rely on informal, second-hand sources when forming expectations about the subject. This contributed to widespread assumptions that Sociology was relatively easy or required limited academic effort. Such misconceptions were linked to weaker early engagement and underdeveloped study habits.

Attitudinal data further reflected these patterns. While overall student perceptions of Sociology were positive, male students reported slightly lower levels of enthusiasm, indicating more neutral or ambivalent attitudes. Additionally, no male respondents volunteered for further research participation, suggesting lower levels of identification with the subject.

Overall, the research identified a complex interplay of factors shaping male engagement, including stereotypical perceptions of the subject, misjudgments about academic challenge, and limitations in information, advice, and guidance.

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

The findings have significant implications for long-term curriculum design, teaching practice, and student recruitment strategies. A key priority is the revision of Headstart and induction materials to ensure they communicate a more accurate representation of Sociology's academic demands.

The study also highlighted the importance of introducing greater academic challenges at the outset of the course. Incorporating exam-style questions, complex theoretical content, and extended writing tasks earlier in the teaching sequence may help establish clear expectations and promote sustained engagement.

To support this, student researchers have engaged with staff to support the production of a new Huish Headstart document that will be used in the summer of 2026. Feedback has been constructive around ensuring the work reflects the integrity and expectations of the course, whilst remaining appealing to new students.

Improvements to information, advice, and guidance are also essential. Students must be supported to make informed subject choices through accurate, detailed information about course content, assessment methods, and required study behaviours.

Importantly, the findings emphasise supporting all students to develop informed expectations and succeed, rather than focusing narrowly on increasing male participation.

Overall, whilst the finding of this research will be instrumental in the support of all learners in A Level Sociology, it has allowed us to take massive strides in ensuring that male student arrive with a more informed sense of the course. It has also demonstrated the value in student collaboration, and we would like to extend our thanks to the support provided by Darcy, Sammy and Harvey in this research.

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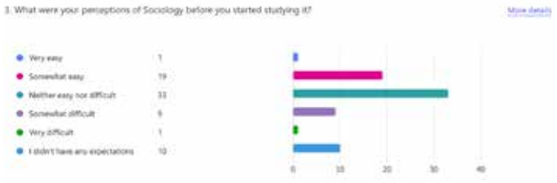

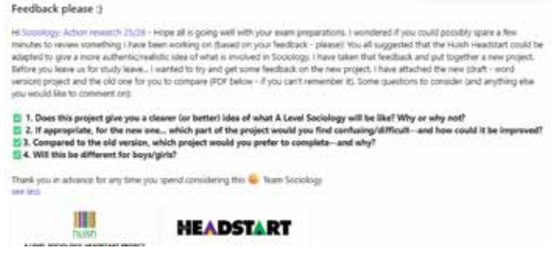

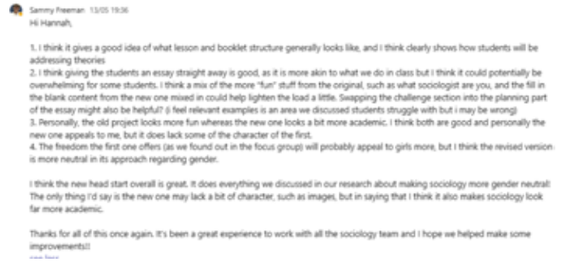

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT HEALTH

Supporting Student Learning During Concussion Recovery

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our action research aimed to better understand how concussion affects students' learning experiences in the classroom, in order to improve the support, adjustments and teaching approaches provided during recovery. As staff working closely with college athletes, we had noticed that students who experienced concussion often returned to lessons appearing physically recovered but continued to struggle cognitively. Difficulties with concentration, mental stamina and engaging in demanding tasks were common. This led us to explore the gap between medical recovery and readiness to learn.

This research aligns with our priorities around student wellbeing, inclusion and academic success. Many of our students balance high intensity sporting commitments alongside their studies, and concussion presents a risk that can disrupt learning, confidence and progress. The project also supports our course Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which focuses on reducing barriers to learning and ensuring students with temporary or additional needs are supported effectively. By gaining a clearer understanding of students' experiences, we were able to reflect on whether current classroom practices and expectations sufficiently supported learners recovering from concussion.

Our rationale was informed by professional reflection and research evidence. Acord Vira et al. (2019) suggest that returning to learning before concussion symptoms have fully resolved can negatively affect recovery, academic performance and learning outcomes. Discussions with teaching staff, tutors and sports colleagues also revealed inconsistency in how concussion was managed across subjects, with adjustments often relying on individual judgement rather than clear guidance. This highlighted the value of evidence informed practice grounded in student voice and experience.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To examine the impact of concussion on learning, we designed and distributed a student survey. The survey explored concussion symptoms, duration of impact, perceived effects on classroom learning, and the types of support or adjustments students felt would help during recovery. It included a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions to provide both measurable data and personal insights.

Participants included male and female college athletes aged 16–19. The survey was shared with all student athletes across the college; however, most respondents were rugby players, reflecting the higher prevalence of concussion within contact sports. In total, 14 students completed the survey. Of these, 7 reported a confirmed concussion within the past 12 months. The remaining responses related to suspected concussions or concussions outside this timeframe but still provided useful contextual information.

Quantitative questions asked students to rate the impact of concussion on aspects such as concentration, while qualitative questions allowed students to describe their experiences and propose strategies they believed would support their learning.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The findings showed that most students experienced concussion symptoms for one to two weeks. Despite this relatively short period, students consistently reported a noticeable impact on their learning. The average rating for impact on concentration was 5.8 out of 10, with several students reporting levels as high as 7–8, demonstrating significant disruption to learning.

Students identified a range of symptoms affecting classroom engagement, including reduced concentration, headaches, difficulty processing information, visual disturbances, sensitivity to noise and slower task completion. Many described difficulty sustaining focus and working at their usual pace. Cognitive strain was the most frequently reported challenge, particularly during lessons involving prolonged attention or screen based activities.

Analysis of qualitative responses highlighted six key themes where students felt adjustments would improve their learning:

- Time and workload adjustments, such as extended deadlines
- Opportunities for breaks and recovery within lessons
- Changes to the learning environment, including reduced noise
- Learning format adjustments, such as alternatives to screen-based work
- Greater staff awareness and understanding of concussion
- Physical support related to symptoms such as headaches or fatigue

Overall, the findings confirmed that concussion has a clear and sometimes hidden impact on students' ability to engage effectively with learning.

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

This action research has significantly shaped our understanding of concussion and its implications for teaching practice. We now recognise concussion not simply as a short term medical issue, but as a meaningful barrier to learning that requires a flexible, informed and empathetic response from staff.

In the short to medium term, we will place greater emphasis on adapting classroom practice for students recovering from concussion. This includes adjusting deadlines, reducing workload where appropriate, building short breaks into lessons, and being mindful of environmental factors such as noise and screen use. Where possible, alternative learning formats, such as paper based tasks or shorter activities, will be offered to reduce cognitive and sensory strain.

A key outcome of this research is the importance of staff awareness and communication. We will aim to improve how information about student concussions is shared between academic staff, tutors and sports departments, ensuring students receive consistent and coordinated support without needing to repeatedly explain their situation.

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TUTOR TEAMS

Improving cohesion within tutor groups

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This action research project was undertaken in response to an identified need to improve cohesion, communication, and student confidence within tutor groups. Early observations indicated that many students interacted cautiously during tutorials, often remaining within familiar or table based groupings. Verbal contributions were limited, particularly in whole group contexts, and some students displayed indicators of anxiety, including closed body language, reduced eye contact, and reluctance to speak. These challenges were especially evident among quieter students, newly enrolled learners, and those managing heightened wellbeing needs.

While some level of social development is expected to occur naturally over time, it became evident that this process was uneven and that several students risked remaining socially peripheral. The project therefore aimed to evaluate whether structured, low stakes, inclusive activities embedded into tutorials could positively influence student interaction, confidence, and sense of belonging.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

A structured programme of relational activities was implemented within selected tutor groups across several weeks. Activities included name based games, birthday ordering tasks, word searches, riddles, collaborative problem solving challenges, discussion based tasks, debates, creative activities, and simple games. These activities were deliberately varied in format, demand, and delivery style, and were positioned as starters, integrated tasks, or end of session activities.

The approach was underpinned by principles of predictability, inclusivity, and low pressure. Activities were designed to encourage interaction beyond existing friendship groups while allowing students to participate at different levels depending on confidence and need.

To support evaluation, all students completed a baseline cohesion questionnaire earlier in the year.

In April 2026, outcomes from tutor groups receiving the intervention were compared with those from non intervention groups, who continued with standard tutorial provision. Both groups completed the same survey measuring anxiety about attending tutorial, comfort presenting to peers, familiarity with other students, and sense of belonging.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Anxiety About Attending Tutorial

Mean anxiety scores were very low in both groups and almost identical:

- Intervention group: 1.68 / 10
- Non intervention group: 1.67 / 10

This indicates that tutorial attendance anxiety was already low across the cohort and was not significantly influenced by the intervention. Importantly, the activities did not increase anxiety, demonstrating that belonging focused interventions are safe to introduce and do not add emotional pressure to tutorial environments.

Comfort Presenting to the Tutor Group

Comfort levels around presenting were low in both groups:

- Intervention group: 3.63 / 10
- Non intervention group: 3.79 / 10

Although the non intervention group scored slightly higher, the difference was small. This finding supports tutor observations that presenting confidence appears relatively independent of belonging. Students may feel accepted and connected within a group while still experiencing discomfort with public speaking. It is also possible that intervention group students developed greater self awareness and more critically evaluated their confidence following structured discussions around participation and group dynamics.

Sense of Belonging

The most significant difference between the two groups was observed in students' sense of belonging:

- Intervention group: 6.14 / 10
- Non intervention group: 5.80 / 10

This represents a meaningful increase of +0.34 points in favour of the intervention groups. Given that both groups were surveyed late in the academic year, when relationships would normally be established, this difference cannot be attributed simply to time or cohort settling. Instead, it suggests that belonging is not a passive outcome, but one that can be actively strengthened through intentional relational practice.

Notably, very low belonging scores (0–2) appeared more frequently in the non intervention cohort, highlighting a greater risk of persistent disengagement when belonging is left to chance.

Social Cohesion and Peer Familiarity

Although peer familiarity responses were categorical rather than numerical, clear qualitative patterns emerged. Non intervention groups still included a noticeable proportion of students reporting knowing "None" or "1–3" peers within their tutor group. In contrast, intervention groups showed a stronger shift toward mid to high familiarity, with very few students reporting complete social isolation. This suggests that structured relational activities helped accelerate peer recognition and reduce anonymity within tutor groups.

Anecdotal Tutor Observations

Tutor observations strongly aligned with the survey data. Over time, intervention groups displayed increased conversation, laughter, collaboration, and willingness to engage with unfamiliar peers. Improvements were noted in body language, eye contact, and responsiveness during discussions. In quieter groups, progress was more gradual but sustained, particularly where activities were introduced consistently with clear expectations.

Challenges included room layout, time constraints, and varying energy levels. Some students with specific wellbeing needs required alternative approaches, reinforcing the importance of flexibility and differentiation. Tutors adapted practice accordingly, confirming that one size fits all approaches were less effective than responsive, contextualised delivery.

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

Overall, the findings indicate that while standard tutorial provision establishes a baseline of emotional safety, structured belonging focused interventions provide measurable additional benefit. Intervention groups demonstrated higher levels of belonging, stronger social cohesion, and reduced risk of long term social marginalisation.

This comparison provides strong evidence that tutor group cohesion is not an automatic outcome of time and routine, but can be meaningfully enhanced through deliberate, inclusive practice. The project supports the wider implementation of structured, low stakes relational activities as an effective model for improving student confidence, engagement, and belonging within tutorial settings.

Action Research Questionnaire for groups with interventions

* Required

* This form will record your name, please fill your name

1. How nervous / anxious are you about coming to tutorial? *

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all nervous — Extremely nervous

2. How comfortable would you feel presenting something to your tutor group? *

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all comfortable — Extremely comfortabl e

3. How many other students do you feel that you know in tutorial? *

- None
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10+

4. Do you feel that you belong in your tutor group? *

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I don't feel I belong — I very much feel I bel ong

VOCATIONAL BUSINESS

Supporting outcomes for underperforming vulnerable groups'

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We want to get better at understanding the needs of students who claim FSM in order to close the attainment gap, as some FSM students have been identified as not achieving their target grades. There is a wider focus on improving outcomes for underperforming vulnerable groups, including bursary and widening participation students. Key aims include ensuring all students achieve above a Pass in assignment based units and reducing the number of resubmissions required across the cohort. The project will also address the need for greater consistency in behaviour and expectations across the department, including engagement with Huish 30. To support this, silent study spaces will be introduced within classrooms, trialling both open door and bookable models with monitored use, while also tackling issues related to mobile phone distraction to improve focus and learning behaviours. This will be implemented as a 2 year project.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

A Microsoft Forms survey was designed and issued to all students on programme, including Level 2, Year 1 and Year 2 Level 3, to gather detailed insights into support requirements beyond FSM alone. The survey findings will inform a follow up in person student voice, allowing themes to be explored in greater depth. In parallel, guidance has been sought from Student Support and CIS regarding bursary levels and eligibility, including FSM. External national research has also been reviewed to contextualise findings, including government data on schools, pupils and their characteristics and 16–19 Bursary Fund eligibility. Alongside this, the classroom offer is being reviewed, with particular focus on the introduction and effective use of silent study spaces to better support independent learning and engagement.

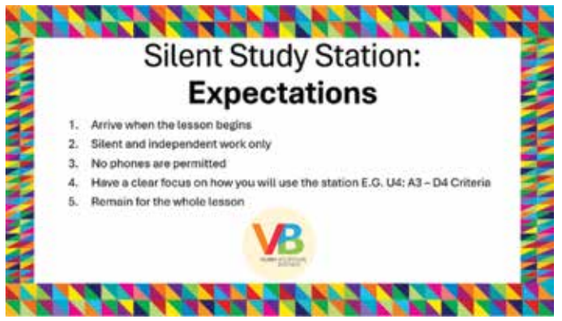
3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

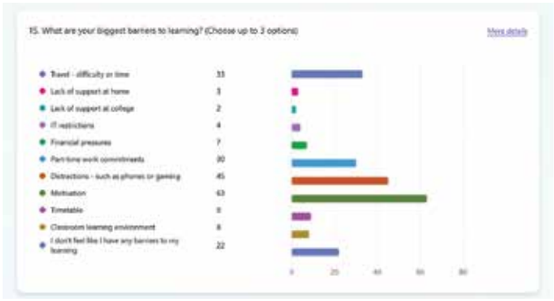
Across the 108 responses, most students (around 80%) are enrolled on Level 3 programmes and 90% have access to a computer at home, with over 70% studying mainly in their bedrooms, though a minority reported sharing devices with limited availability. Only small proportions previously received free school meals (9%), currently claim free college meals (14%), or receive a bursary (23%). Most students' complete assignments using their own personal devices when outside of lesson time, yet 76% were unaware of the college's laptop-borrowing service, while 60% said they would use silent study spaces in a classroom if provided. Progression plans are mixed, with the largest groups aiming for university or full-time work after Huish. Only 11% reported receiving regular support at their previous secondary school, mainly related to mental-health or academic needs, and several students requested additional help at Huish, including more detailed feedback, quiet workspaces, and wellbeing support. The most common barriers to learning include procrastination, motivation, mental-health challenges, and home distractions. Around 31% of students have part-time jobs, with varied experiences of pressure around working hours, and 59% are willing to join a future student-voice group to help shape improvements.

A student voice session was held on 12 March with 22 students, representing a mix of genders and abilities, to explore study space provision. Students reported using the Learning Centre (LC) where possible, although some felt overwhelmed in that environment or found it unavailable during free periods. All students indicated they would use a bookable study space, particularly if located within a familiar classroom setting, and responded positively to the proposed online booking system as a way to secure access. Students were also comfortable with staff booking spaces on their behalf to support existing support plans or contracts. Concerns raised included lateness, distractions (particularly mobile phones), and expectations around support, highlighting the need for clear rules and consistent implementation.

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

This is a 2-year project and the impact will be measured next year. Action research within Media has demonstrated that reducing mobile phone distraction through structured use of Microsoft Teams and the introduction of a phone cabinet supports sustained focus, especially during assignment work. Involving students in the development of a shared mobile phone policy has increased ownership, consistency, and compliance. This has prompted ongoing exploration of the relationship between GCSE entry grades, phone use, and study habits, to better identify learners who require clearer boundaries and structured support. Culturally, an open door environment continues to promote access to staff and learning spaces across the two year programme, while maintaining a relaxed, social lunchtime atmosphere that supports wellbeing without undermining classroom expectations. Transparency is reinforced through visible staff collaboration and open discussion around progress and improvement. From a systems perspective, consistent use of the student Hub and logging processes strengthens tracking and accountability, with future development focused on deeper use of SharePoint and a move towards a single, teacher owned OneDoc model to improve clarity, consistency, and assignment guidance. Practical next steps include the creation of laminated silent study space signage and the development of a booking system for study spaces to support sustained independent learning.





MARKETING

Increasing engagement in marketing

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to research how we can encourage our subject experts (staff and students) to engage more in marketing the college when they have many priorities.

Students have expressed they want more content featuring students (e.g. short videos, trips etc) which is best captured live and needs more people to capture it as it happens.

We have already been working to align our calendar with academic staff priorities, and this work represents a continuation of that aim. In addition, our QIP focuses on strengthening relationships with staff. The marketing audit also highlighted areas where staff experienced challenges within our processes.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

Our action research focused on improving engagement with staff and students and removing barriers to marketing participation. The Senior Management team ran a session for staff to reinforce that marketing is part of everyone's role and to share key messages.

This was followed by a Marketing Quick Win session in the Spring Term to provide support. A 'Quick Win' session is a 15-minute input on a CPD day, where nominated staff members deliver a short session on a specific area and allow time for questions and discussion. Marketing's session, The ABCs of Marketing, covered accessibility, branding, and content; it offered practical, easy-to-implement guidance, examples of good practice, and signposting to further resources to help staff apply marketing principles confidently and consistently in their day to day work.

Student involvement was strengthened through both consultation and live projects. Prospectus focus groups were held with approximately thirty-six students from across four local schools to gather feedback from the target audience. Current Huish students were given the opportunity to generate graphic designs to help promote Dear Evan Hansen, this year's college production, whilst a photography student assisted with programme photography. Both examples allowed students to see their work in professional settings, gain confidence, and develop industry-relevant skills.

In a similar way, Marketing also worked with the Huish Herald society to support and empower students in promoting the publication of the student newspaper. A member of the Marketing team shared industry knowledge on copyright, branding, and promotion, giving insights into professional practices. This helped to equip students with the skills and confidence needed to promote the Huish Herald effectively, responsibly, and in line with the college's brand values across both print and digital platforms.

Marketing processes were improved following audit feedback, including simplifying the marketing job request form, which reduced complaints. Social media guidelines were shared with staff and student enrichment groups to clearly outline expectations and explain how they could contribute appropriately and consistently across platforms.

Sprout Social, a social media management and analytics platform, was implemented as part of a digital strategy to make better use of the content provided by staff, ensuring it is more impactful. monday.com, a collaborative work management and project planning platform, now works alongside the marketing job form to help the Marketing team organise support requests, oversee progress and provide insights into levels of staff engagement with marketing activity.

Regular meetings between Vice Principals and the Head of Marketing were introduced from January 2026 to align messaging.

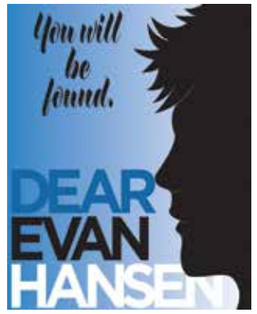
3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

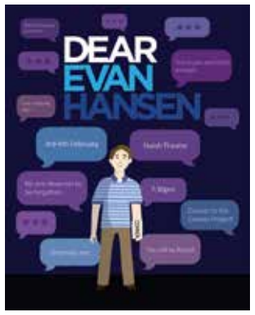
We found that working with students on smaller, clearly defined projects with a specific purpose was more effective than running a general marketing enrichment group. While success varied on a case-by-case basis, we were positively surprised by the level of student skill, engagement, and enthusiasm when projects were focused and outcomes were clear.

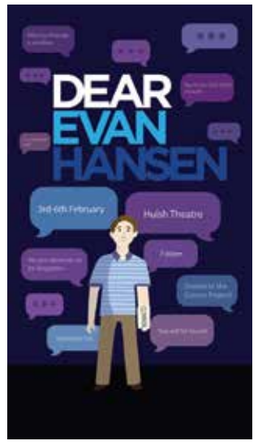
We also learned that effective engagement needs to be driven from management level down. Staff respond better when messaging from Marketing and SMT is clear, consistent, and aligned; cohesive communication helps build confidence, avoids confusion and supports staff participation more effectively.

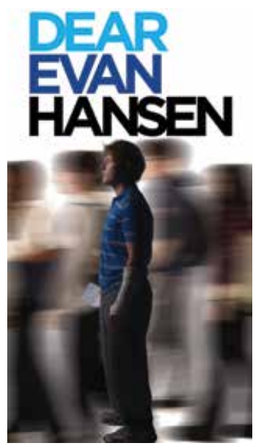
4 WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUR FINDINGS ON YOUR LONG-TERM PRACTICE?

We will continually adapt our processes to better support staff. Currently, we are looking to enable staff to share content college-wide through a central platform. Future plans include developing how we collect testimonials via a simplified online form. We are also looking at how we work with students further – considerations include podcasts, EnRICH Instagram accounts and the college musical.









BIOLOGY

Student informed revision strategies

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our research set out to identify the most effective revision strategies for students. Feedback highlighted that students find the transition from GCSE to A level challenging. They need to re-evaluate revision strategies that have previously been effective, as the volume and complexity of content increases. Our aim, therefore, was to support students in adopting revision approaches that reliably enhance performance across a range of abilities and learning preferences.

The study was informed by Dunlosky (2013), who reviewed ten learning techniques and evaluated their effectiveness. They identified active retrieval and distributed practice, as the most impactful, whilst highlighting, rereading, and summarisation showed limited benefits. More recently, Donoghue and Hattie's (2021) meta-analysis of the same strategies emphasised that all revision techniques can be effective, but that "motivation and emotions are involved in the selection, persistence with, and effectiveness of each technique." This reinforced the importance of student ownership: strategies are more likely to be sustained when pupils feel they are choosing methods that work for them. For this reason, we positioned Year 2 students as mentors to advise Year 1. We considered a range of revision techniques as Hattie and Purdie's (2002) work on metacognition, highlighted that students with strong awareness and control over their learning, who can strategically select from a repertoire of approaches, are more likely to adapt effectively when a particular strategy is not yielding results.

Finally, the research aligns with our Quality Improvement Plan, which prioritises effective revision support for students. By grounding our approach in both evidence-based practice and student voice, we aimed to empower students to choose revision resources that are academically proven to be effective and provide the variety required to maintain attention.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

To gain a deeper understanding of learners' experiences, a questionnaire was sent to Year 2. The purpose was twofold: first, to identify the topic areas they had found most challenging, and second, to explore the revision strategies they use. Students ranked these strategies according to perceived effectiveness and reflected on which approaches they would recommend. A parallel questionnaire was distributed to Year 1 to determine whether their areas of difficulty aligned with those highlighted by Year 2 and to gather insight into the revision methods they currently employ.

Following this, Year 2 were invited to develop one revision technique or resource they considered effective. Year 2 students volunteered to act as mentors, presenting their chosen revision method to small groups of Year 1 students. During Year 1 Academic Tutoring sessions, the Year 2 mentors showcased different revision approaches. Year 1 students rotated in small groups, enabling them to engage with a wide range of techniques and to consider which methods might best support their learning. The session concluded with a Q&A led by Year 2, focusing on exam preparation, planning, and effective study habits. To evaluate the impact of the session, Year 1 students were invited to leave comments reflecting on the usefulness of the activity.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Students in year 1 and 2 both continue to struggle with meiosis, mitosis and protein synthesis. Year 2 also found plant transport conceptually difficult.

Students in year 2 have modified their revision strategies as the course has progressed. Changing from more note writing and summarisation activities to structured past paper questions and blurting or flash cards. Verbally, students reported that this occurred gradually over year 1 as they found the traditional techniques were not working well.

In year 2, students now rely on past paper questions for most of their revision once they feel confident with the content. Year 1 had a greater focus on revision videos online and flash cards but were starting to use past paper questions more heavily as they became more confident with the style of questioning on OCR resources.

Students need more help early on to identify a range of revision resources and to give them the confidence to try different techniques to fit with different subject matter.

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

Our understanding of effective revision approaches has improved, and this will directly inform how we teach revision in AT sessions. Analysis of assessment data has highlighted several conceptually challenging topics, which require more explicit teaching of exam technique and more frequent opportunities for recap and retrieval. To address this, we will adjust the timing of tests to allow for more structured revision and build in additional retrieval practice time.

FINALLY, ANY TOP TIPS FOR OTHERS?

Students should start exploring a range of revision techniques early in Year 1 so they can discover what genuinely works for them, developing a flexible approach is key.

Different units benefit from different revision strategies.

- Exam-style questions – for topics that rely on applying knowledge or problem-solving
- Flash cards-for content – heavy topics that require memorisation
- Mind maps – helps with understanding big ideas.

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Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K. A., Marsh, E. J., Nathan, M. J., & Willingham, D. T. (2013). Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 14, 4–58.

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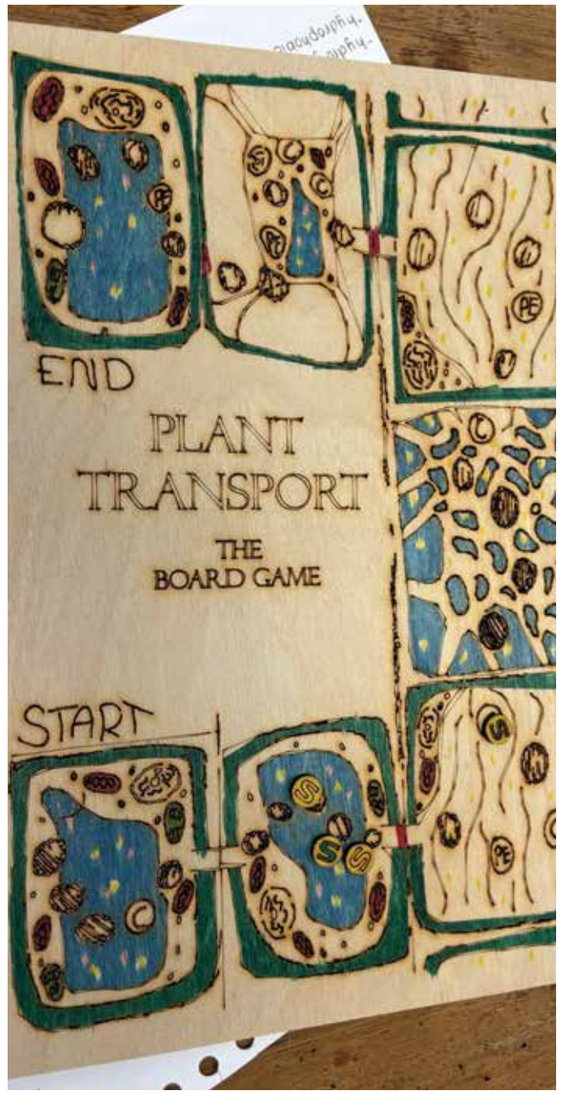

MATHS GCSE

Impact of Huish 30 engagement on outcomes

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This project aimed to investigate the impact of Huish 30 (independent study) on GCSE Maths outcomes. By monitoring student engagement, completion rates, and the quality of work submitted, we sought to evaluate how effective the initiative has been in supporting improved attainment. The purpose of this research was to assess the overall effectiveness of Huish 30 and to determine whether it should be refined, adapted, or further developed to better support student progress and outcomes.

Research suggests that there is an impact on effective homework on GCSE Maths outcomes, but it is based on quality rather than quantity of homework. March (2025) suggests that an additional 5 months of progress can be achieved through effective homework. Of significance is the impact that effective homework has in STEM subjects and specifically mathematics (Bas, et al, 2017). We are using this to encourage our students to engage with their Huish 30 as evidenced from the previous year.

The data that we will be collecting will be statistical data from Dr Frost on completion rates, time spent and quality of the Huish 30, along with focus groups with students, an online survey and GCSE results.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

The action research project is split into two cycles. The first cycle involved all the GCSE Maths students taking the November resit, totalling 129 students. All students were encouraged to participate in the Huish 30 programme which incorporated a GCSE past paper and a revision work sheet each week. This was delivered using the Dr Frost software package. Teachers utilised the use of the Hub for those students who were not engaging as well as use of academic tutorial time to have discussions about the usefulness of this work. In addition, students were provided a daily Maths workout via Dr Frost which was optional in the four weeks running up to the exam.

Cycle 2 discussed with students what they want the Huish 30 to look like and to adapt it based on their feedback. This was put in place for the June GCSE exams and the outcomes from the June exams will be reviewed at the beginning of September to see if the changes implemented had any impact on outcomes.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Comparing the results from the November GCSE with performance on Dr Frost, those students who were regularly using Dr Frost did either achieve a grade 4+ or came close. The top student achieved a grade 5 on the foundation and is now studying for a higher grade on the Higher paper. There were however those students who did work hard in Dr Frost but were unsuccessful, some cases for the second time. For those students it is unclear whether using Dr Frost is the right format of revision for them or whether they are using Dr Frost effectively.

After the January results we carried out a student voice about the Huish 30 we provide, their thoughts and what we could do differently. Most liked Dr Frost, but some preferred to have a paper copy and mark scheme. They also discussed extending the Huish 30 so that it allowed for independent study. In addition, we talked about accuracy rather than quantity.

From the mock results, the students in the top 10 users of Dr Frost, 5 of them achieved a grade 4 and the other 5 came much closer. This illustrates the importance of structure to the Huish 30, whatever form that takes. This was echoed by the students in the recent curriculum survey, an important change to the ethos and structure to Huish 30 in GCSE Maths.

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

It is not possible to say whether the engagement with Huish 30 meant that more students passed. However, those that did engage have done well, though we have highlighted that it may not work for everyone. What is clear is that by building in the structure and expectations of Huish 30 into the programme students can cope with the demands of revision and are also being prepared for moving onto a level 3 programme. The use of Dr Frost has enabled us to provide the structure and for students to obtain useful feedback, but without increasing workload for the teachers. In the long term we would like to incorporate more of the students' ideas into Huish 30 and to continue to monitor Dr Frost usage against outcomes.

Lois Kerrison and Jo Northcott

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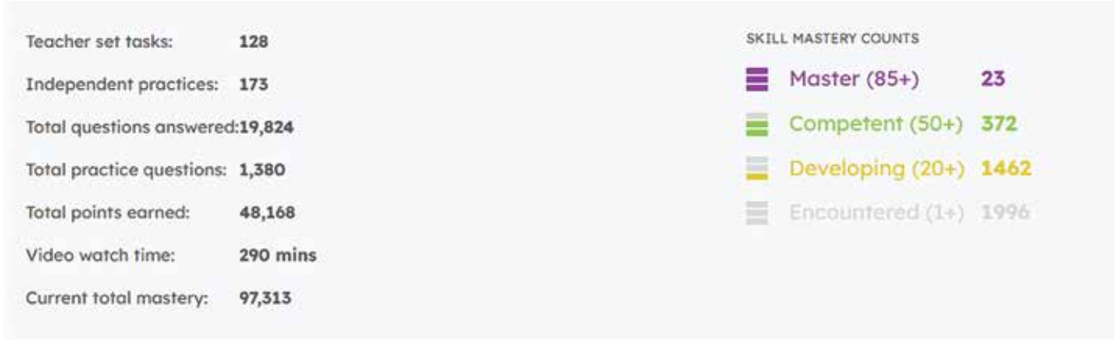

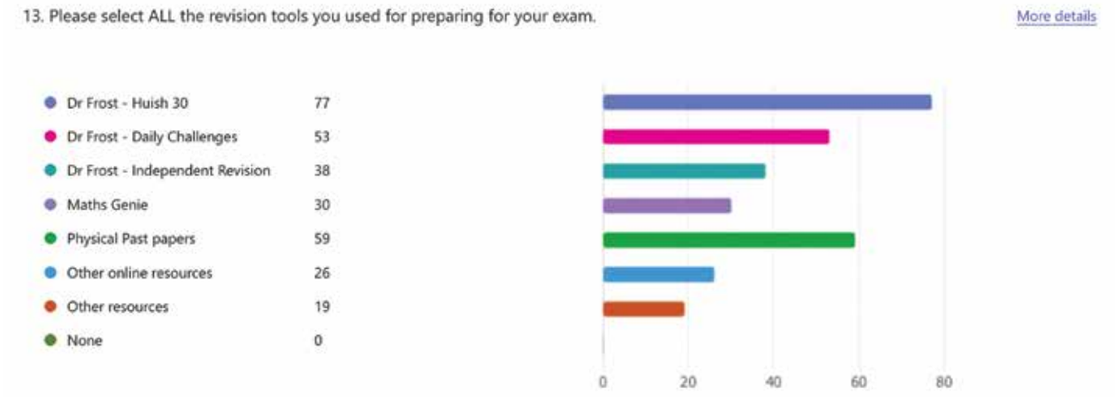

LEARNING CENTRE

Student views of the Learning Centre

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

We wanted to follow up findings from our 2024/25 quantitative research by conducting qualitative research with groups of current students. The focus was the student voice in relation to the provision of Learning Centre services.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

A colleague from a related team experienced in moderating student discussion, visited a sample of tutor groups from all levels of the college. Students from the selected tutor groups were invited to take part. Care was taken to create an environment in which students felt comfortable to speak openly. Interviews were recorded with students' agreement and understanding, with clear reassurance that individual identities would not be identifiable in any reporting. To encourage open discussion, the interviews were carried out by someone independent of the LC team.

It was important that no incentive was offered to students to participate as the purpose was to obtain unbiased feedback.

Ten tutor groups were sampled: four Upper Sixth, four Lower Sixth and two Level 2 groups. The groups were small, ranging from 1 – 6 students. The recordings were listened to and transcribed into Word documents for analysis by the LC team.

Focus group questions were adapted from questions found in a similar study.[1]

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

Please find underneath each question a summary of the responses.

1. *Where do you usually find information for your college work? (e.g., class resources, Teams/Hub, textbooks, Learning Centre, online)*

   Most students relied on teacher provided resources from Teams or SharePoint. Google was their default research option. A couple of students were not aware they could borrow textbooks from the LC.

2. *Is the LC useful to you? Why or why not?*

   Most students had used the LC. The main use was as a study area. There was more comment about the importance of access to the books by the Upper Sixth groups. For students who did not use it, the barrier identified was how busy the LC is.

3. *How can/does the LC help you with your college work e.g. space to work, provision of resources, access to online resources/eBooks?*

   A quiet study space was the most important use identified with access to PCs and a printer. The Silent Zone was also identified as an important space for study.

4. *What do you think is the single most important service for the library to provide?*

   A quiet space to study with access to computers and access to the textbooks.

5. *In your opinion, how can the library be improved?*

   More study spaces. A better layout to provide easier physical access to the books. Places to charge devices.

6. *In the age of the Internet and AI, what do you see as the role of the college library?*

   Students expect more resources to go online. Students also expected to be able to access physical copies of their course textbooks.

7. *Do you use library resources for your own research and interest? Please explain how and what.*

   A couple of students had used the LC to research outside or beyond their curriculum.

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

In the next academic year, we are planning to proactively promote the book provision in the LC. It was clear from the interviews there was a lack of knowledge regarding the book stock and the borrowing process.

This academic year (2025/26) we reviewed the book and DVD stock and will create more study space by reducing the shelving whilst maintaining a relevant collection of physical resources.

There is a need for more electrical points for students to charge their own devices, but we are constrained by the existing infrastructure.

We actively encourage the students who are using the LC to focus on their work. Students who are not working are asked by LC staff to move to a more appropriate area of the college. However, in poor weather during break and lunch it can be exceedingly difficult due to the number of students entering the LC. Students commented on the busyness of the LC and identified break and lunch as the busiest and noisiest times in the LC.

There is little in addition to what we already do to address the space issues during the winter as there is a cross-college shortage of indoor social space. The Senior Management Team are aware and working to provide more space across the whole campus.

We will continue to maintain the Silent Zone as a completely silent area in the LC for those who need that environment to study.

References:

[1] *"What Do Students Want? A Focus Group Study of Students at a Mid-Sized Public University," Michael A. Weber, Robert K. Flatley. Library Philosophy and Practice 2008 (March) 2*

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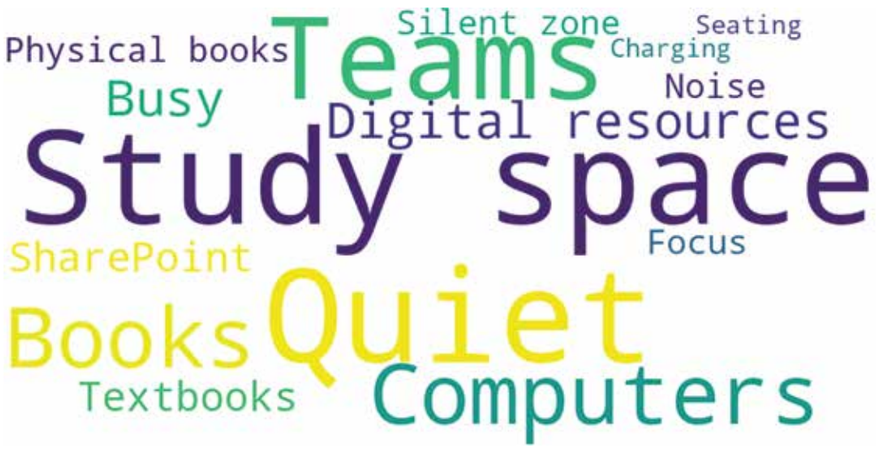

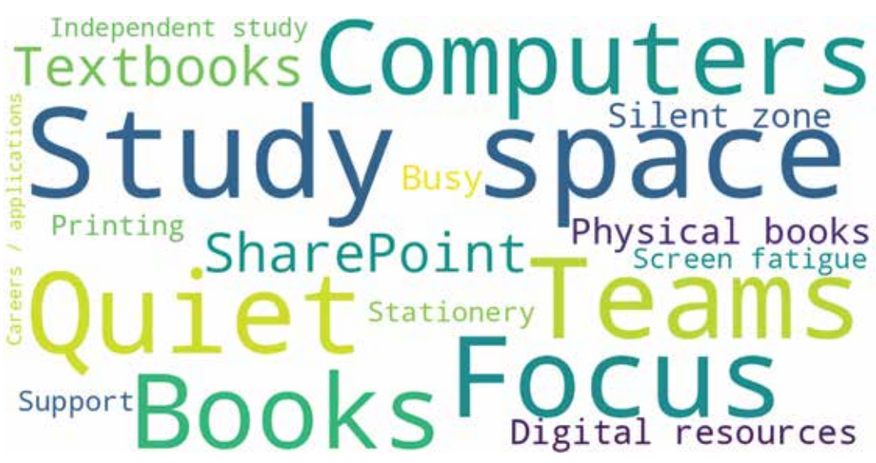

LAW

Questioning in Mooting

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

Our Action Research focused on improving A Level Law students' questioning skills in examination in chief (EIC) and cross examination (XE) during mooting. This was chosen because students consistently reported that courtroom questioning felt unfamiliar, daunting, and largely absent from the curriculum. Analysis of previous mooting competition results and 2024–25 student feedback highlighted gaps in their understanding of how advocacy techniques operate in practice–particularly how to structure questions, avoid leading in EIC, and think reactively in XE.

Our action research therefore aimed to build students' confidence, deepen their practical legal skills, and strengthen preparation for competitions such as the Bar Mock Trial. This aligned directly with the Law QIP and our departmental priority of improving applied legal skills.

2 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

The literature demonstrated that effective questioning–whether in a classroom or courtroom–depends on clarity of purpose, structured technique, and opportunities for repeated practice. Cambridge International and Bromley emphasised purposeful questioning to stimulate critical thinking, while legal resources reinforced how questioning shapes courtroom narratives through control, tone, and adaptability.

Through implementing training workshops, role plays, and weekly mooting preparation, we learned:

Students benefit from explicit teaching of courtroom questioning, rather than assuming these skills emerge naturally from theoretical legal study.

Confidence grows significantly when students practise live questioning, especially when asked to adapt to witness answers rather than read from scripts.

A staged, repeated practice model works best–moving from theory, to controlled practice, to live application.

The Avon and Somerset Police partnership with CID officers, had a transformational effect

Students highlighted in feedback that working with real, experienced officers was invaluable:

a. "I gained more confidence in forming questions based on the witness' answer–it tested my ability to think on the spot."

b. "It was great to practice questioning without a script and see how real witnesses responded."

c. "The officers were great examples of how a witness behaves in court–this will help me in the Bar Mock."

Students clearly identified improvement in three core skills:

- Active listening–responding dynamically to unexpected answers
- Confidence in public speaking–feeling prepared and less intimidated
- Oracy/communication–structuring questions, tone, clarity, courtroom etiquette.

Feedback following the January and March CID officer questioning moots also provided actionable suggestions for future delivery, such as:

- Allowing more preparation time
- Ensuring statements contain clear areas to explore
- Increasing opportunities for feedback
- Giving more opportunities for one to one discussion with officers
- Allowing multiple questioning attempts

Overall, the findings showed that structured questioning training significantly improved student readiness for competitions, academic assessments, and real world legal scenarios.

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

The AR has confirmed that explicit, progressive training in courtroom questioning should become a permanent component of the A Level Law curriculum and enrichment programme. The findings will shape long term practice in several ways:

- Integrating questioning frameworks (Pose Pause Pounce Bounce, question matrix, non leading questioning grids) into regular teaching, not just mooting preparation.
- Building a formalised, staged questioning curriculum beginning early in Year 12 and revisited throughout the course.
- Embedding more authentic role play with unscripted responses to develop adaptability.
- Using real world partnerships (A&S Police, legal professionals) to provide authentic experience and feedback.
- Revising assessment rubrics to reflect key advocacy skills, aligning them more closely with national competitions.

This long term shift ensures students consistently develop practical skills that complement theoretical study, improving both exam outcomes and career readiness.

4 HOW HAS YOUR AR SHAPED YOUR PRACTICE, AND HOW WILL THIS AFFECT FUTURE YEARS?

This Action Research has fundamentally reshaped how we think about teaching advocacy. Previously, mooting preparation was largely an "add on"; now, it is clear that questioning requires structured pedagogy, regular rehearsals, and interdisciplinary skill development.

As a result of this AR:

Next year's mooting programme will begin earlier, with EIC introduced first, followed by XE, before moving into full cases.

More real world witnesses (especially police officers) will be brought into sessions to maintain authenticity.

Students will complete more mini moots to improve fluency before the main competition period.

Feedback loops will be strengthened, using grading sheets, self reflection logs, and witness feedback.

Curriculum sequencing will change, ensuring advocacy skills are built gradually and repeatedly, rather than taught intensively over a few weeks.

Students' competition outcomes and confidence gains show that this approach is working. Their comments–particularly around real world interaction, thinking on the spot, and understanding witness behaviour–show that the AR has created a sustainable, impactful model of skills development.

In the longer term, this AR project will continue to shape a practice rooted in experiential learning, professional collaboration, and the belief that legal education must combine knowledge with authentic skill building.

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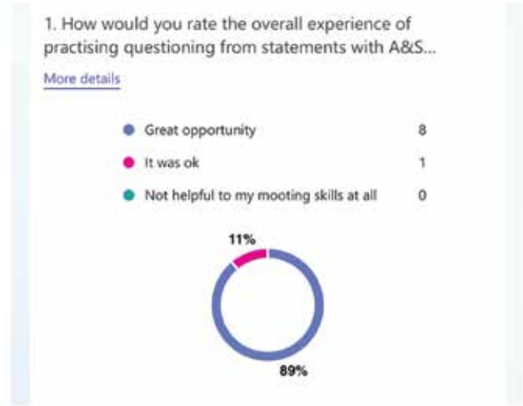
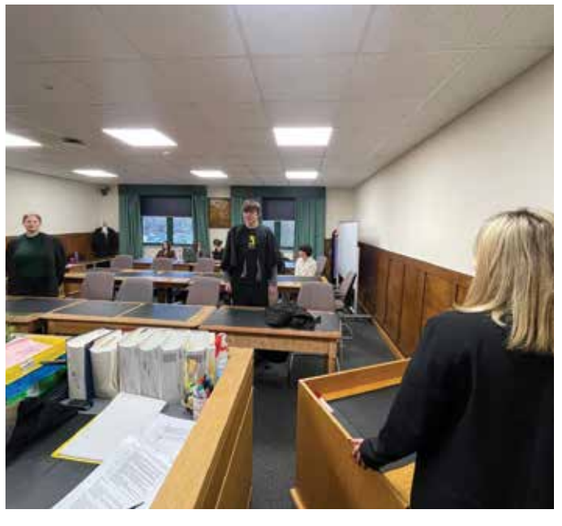




IT AND COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS

Revision using local AI

1 WHAT DID YOU WANT TO RESEARCH AND WHY?

This action research focused on the use of locally hosted revision tools using AI and large language models (LLMs) supported by Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG). This builds on research conducted last year in IT, which showed a mixed response to AI-supported revision. While students with lower prior attainment demonstrated improved performance, students with a higher prior attainment who relied on AI underperformed relative to expectations.

The research was also driven by a decline in exam performance among Computer Science students last year, particularly in examination technique. The project explored whether a locally deployed AI model could support students' independent learning within a flipped learning framework, while also improving their ability to respond effectively to exam-style questions.

Specifically, the research aimed to investigate whether such a model could be:

- Accurate when responding to exam-style questions
- Repeatable across different subject areas and a range of question styles.

2 WHAT DID YOU DO FOR YOUR ACTION RESEARCH?

Students Alex Gratwick, Evie Edwards, and Raffi Norris undertook a structured investigation into the development and use of LLMs. Their work included evaluating different LLM models, researching legal considerations around the use of resources, and deciding whether students should use a modified Copilot Agent or develop a model from scratch that could be stored and run locally.

The team explored the use of local storage either as a RAG system or through machine learning approaches. Two potential use cases were identified:

- Automated mark scheme checking, where students input an exam question and their response and the LLM provides accurate marking
- A tutoring system designed to improve both conceptual understanding and exam technique through scaffolding.

The system was also to be compared with TeachEdge as part of the evaluation. Content quality and student progress were scheduled for review in January.

The LLM development formed part of an enrichment activity for a small group of students with a genuine interest in understanding how LLMs function. Alex, Evie, and Raffi were also involved in reviewing the effectiveness of the tool, as the intended users are Computer Science students.

Next stages identified were:

- Testing the LLM for accuracy and reliability
- Exploring whether the system can be deployed across multiple machines in M2
- Piloting the system with volunteer students to assess impact on learning, with the intention of rolling it out more widely if successful.

3 WHAT DID YOU LEARN OR FIND OUT?

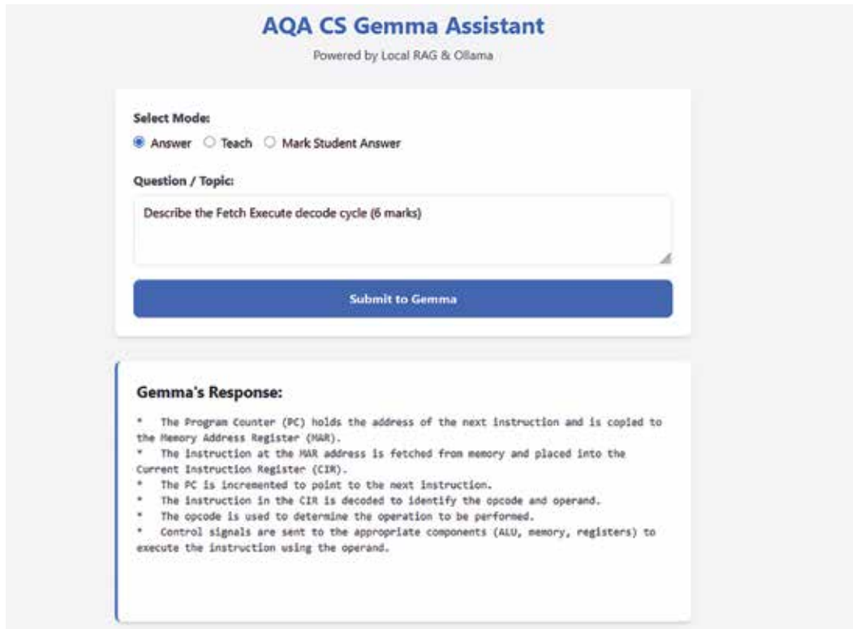
"Early testing has shown that the model runs reliably offline and produces responses quickly. Students who tried the system said they found it helpful for generating prompts and explanations, although they also noticed that inaccuracies occur quite often and sometimes the model sounds more confident than it should – this is quite typical of AI generated answers and is something students need to be aware of in general. For now, the prototype demonstrates potential but is not accurate enough to be considered a marking or teaching tool. It does not have any advantages over tools such as CoPilot Teach."

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

The project has demonstrated that students can successfully develop a functioning offline LLM capable of supporting A level Computer Science revision. However, the model is not yet consistently accurate, meaning it is unlikely to be embedded directly into teaching practice at this stage. The work has nevertheless provided valuable insight into the challenges of replicating the functionality and reliability of commercially available online AI tools.

A key learning point is that even when the underlying information is tightly controlled, inaccuracies persist. Any future development would therefore need to prioritise improving accuracy before considering classroom deployment. The research has also highlighted the significant workload involved in creating a subject-specific AI model. Initial aspirations around cross-subject adaptability were challenged by the reality that adapting the model is not simply a matter of transferring data between subjects.

As a result, next steps include deciding whether further development is worthwhile, particularly when compared with emerging tools such as TeachEdge. Alternative approaches may include focusing the model on a much smaller area of the specification where students commonly struggle, or continuing to use established AI agents in a more structured way. There is also potential to explore whether such tools could support non-specialist teachers in developing accurate, curriculum-aligned AI resources.



'What the teacher does'

"The biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers."

Professor John Hattie
Visible Learning.