



Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience

Learning Analytics Collaborative Cluster: Year 2 Summary Report

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Introduction

There are three strands to the Learning Analytics Collaborative Cluster work:

- Learning Analytics Framework
- Engagement
- Applications of Learning Analytics.

This summary report provides an overview of the activity and outcomes from the Year 2 Collaborative Cluster work proposed to, and funded by, QAA Scotland where funding was sought for the Framework and Engagement strands of work.

Learning Analytics Framework

In year 2 of the Theme, two student interns were recruited and based at the University of Strathclyde to develop an online resource (wiki) that would be populated with the research gathered by the Year 1 Framework student interns. The Year 1 student interns, based at the University of Stirling, conducted interviews with all 19 Scottish higher education institutions, and produced a report outlining the current landscape of learning analytics and anticipated future developments.

To enable the sharing and promotion of good practice across the sector, the collaborative cluster proposed the development of an online resource to make the content from Year 1's report more accessible. As such, the two interns, Rhiann Fowlds and Julie Regamey, designed, developed and implemented a wiki based on the information contained within the report. They divided the information by institution and also by theme.

Each institution's page gives a comprehensive summary of the status of learning analytics within that institution, the systems that are currently in place, the institution's journey so far, and future goals. The five key themes emerging from the year 1 work were: engagement; improve learning design and pedagogy; retention; student attainment and progression; and student experience. The wiki also provides information on three other aspects of learning analytics: research; policy; and virtual learning environment/learning analytics tool.

The resulting wiki, Scottish Tertiary Education Learning Analytics Resource (STELAR), can be found at the following webpage: <https://stelar.strath.ac.uk>

Evidence of impact could come from the website statistics, and enquiries made to institutions regarding their learning analytics' journey and approach.

Engagement

Four student interns were recruited and based at the University of Edinburgh, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, and the University of Stirling. The interns designed and delivered a number of sector-wide student focus groups to obtain Scottish higher education students' views, expectations and concerns on learning analytics and how institutions might use and police student data. This is a previously unexplored area.

15 Scottish HEIs were contacted, with five arranging for focus groups to take place at their institutions. Another institution had conducted a similar study recently and shared output with the student interns in place of conducting more focus groups. The student interns (Diego Rates, Niklas Bals, Jason Sell, and Laura Bryce) conducted the focus groups with a number of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Collectively, the student perception

was an overall positive stance towards learning analytics. Caution was advised around ethical issues on advanced analysis of student data. Key findings of the work include:

- the expectation of learning analytics providing reflective tools to improve student performance through a hybrid of personalised, automated feedback and individual face-to-face support
- the suggestion of using past student cohort experiences to develop and enhance current/future student experiences; and to provide staff accountability
- the desire for learning analytics to identify and support academically-struggling students and mitigate the risk of them dropping out
- learning analytics being desired to advance higher education institutions' performance with regard to student wellbeing and students' professional development
- a need for transparent use of learning analytics and continuous conversation with the student body about the regulation and expectation of how learning analytics are used to enhance student experiences
- the growing student concern of the misuse of student data to support other agendas - other than the sole purpose of enhancing the student experience
- the probable disapproval of learning analytics if used unethically, from the student's perspective.

This report is expected to allow the relevant stakeholders from higher education institutions and sector agencies to access a first reference of the views of students about the topic at a national level. While it is expected to allow institutions to be better positioned to build sector-wide agreements (standards/foundation) about the best ways to use students' data to improve their learning and experience in the future, the report suggests additional research with additional institutions to further validate this first representation of the student voice.

In the short to medium-term, staff and students will benefit from the awareness-raising and conversation-starting arising from the dissemination of the project outcomes, which form comprehensive cross-sector evidence of student attitudes and engagement. Over the longer term, institutions will be able to use the evidence to both reflect on and plan their institutional approach to learning analytics, informed by sound evidence of how students perceive and interpret different approaches. Changes to policy, or introduction of policy, are more likely to be student-centred using this approach.

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