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Partnering with Students Through Peer Video Learning at University College Dublin.

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Abstract.

This paper reviews the experience and outcomes of video creation for peer learning within an online, self-paced undergraduate module centred on building digital research skills for social science students. The project was inspired by the '*students as partners*' model and allowed students to contribute to future students' learning through original resource creation. This paper explores the background and context for the project, the process of student engagement and video creation, and project outcomes and future directions. Because student participation was at the heart of the project design and intention, the paper also includes reflective contributions from two students who participated as well as the experience of the Master's student who served as the Video and Project Assistant.

Keywords: Collaboration; Partnership; Peer-to-peer; Students-as-partners; Student engagement.

1. Introduction.

The inclusion of students as partners in learning offers a critical means of encouraging students to engage more deeply in their learning. A collaboration which included the Library, the School of Information and Communication Studies and the School of Psychology produced multiple resources for undergraduate learning about digital research skills in the Bachelor of Social Sciences programme at University College Dublin (UCD). This paper reviews one of the unique features of the project, video creation for peer learning, from the perspectives of all collaborators.

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2. Students As Partners Model (SaP).

The emerging model of '*students as partners*' (SaP) is gaining momentum in higher education (Gravett, Kinchin, & Winstone, 2019; Matthews et al., 2019). Researchers and practitioners view the model as an opportunity to nourish transformative learning in multiple ways (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014), including increased engagement, a sense of belonging, ownership of learning, confidence in teaching and learning, employability, shared understanding, creativity and a sense of agency (Gravett et al., 2019; Green, 2018; Humphrey & Lowe, 2017; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Moore-Cherry, Healey, Nicholson, & Andrews, 2016).

The approach creates more egalitarian, inclusive learning environments, where students and staff shape university teaching together (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Gravett et al., 2019; Matthews, Cook-Sather, & Healey, 2018). SaP allows students to contribute to the curriculum and their own learning differently from formal curriculum processes (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Matthews et al., 2018) and recognises the value of students' experiences (Green, 2018).

3. Student Engagement with the Creation of Learning Objects.

The foundation for this project was a recently developed module, Research Accelerator for the Social Sciences (Fulton, Bustillo, McGuinness, Guerin &, Browne, 2020). For the original project, funded by UCD's College of Social Sciences and Law (CoSSL), a unique collaboration between the university Library and academics from the schools of Information and Communication Studies and Psychology supported undergraduate acquisition of digital research skills needed for their final year research studies. The module was delivered fully online in a self-paced format with tutor support. Importantly, the content, which comprised a range of reusable learning resources from academics and the Library, external sources, and original staff videos on key research topics, offered students a structured learning pathway.

We then developed the module further in 2020 with funding from the National Forum's Learning Enhancement Project (LEP), by inviting students in the module to create short videos, which would become peer learning for other students. We envisioned that students might deepen their understanding of digital research by creating original content. As they explained complex concepts to others, students could enhance their digital skills. We hoped the approach would

"*be transformative, developmental, and fun*" (Gravatt et al, 2019).

Videos were integrated as a component of the module assessment. The assessment required students to complete activities such as readings and e-tutorials, to develop their understanding of a given research topic, after which they completed tasks such as developing a research question and writing a reflection on their learning experience. To help students succeed with producing their videos, a professional videographer provided training, guiding students through the process of developing, filming, and editing short videos. Students chose a critical digital research skill, method, or approach from the module content (e.g., research ethics), scripted, and recorded a brief 1-2 minute video describing their learning experience in relation to that topic. Students had agency to use whatever filming and editing tools they had available and preferred. We provided specific training on how to film using a standard smartphone or laptop and how to utilise various editing software packages recommended by our videographer (Final Cut Pro, iMovie, and DaVinci Resolve). Students had the option to utilise more advanced tools, such as microphones, ring lights and professional cameras; however, our training focused on the most readily available turnkey tools and most students took this approach. Students provided written permission for their videos to be included in future iterations of the module and five students returned signed consent forms. The project team reviewed videos to ensure high quality in both content and presentation. To acknowledge the students' excellence, the team offered a prize for the best overall video; the winning student received a €50 voucher; runners-up received €20 vouchers. Videos that students agreed we could use were subsequently embedded as learning materials in the Autumn 2021 offering of the module, providing other students with peer learning opportunities to consider a research skill discussed in a particular video, as well as serving as exemplars by creating their own videos.

4. Impact of Student Video Production.

The focus on video production provided a focal point for digital research skills development. One criticism of undergraduate research skills development has been that learning tends to be scattered throughout the curriculum, with students not always recognising where and when they have been exposed to the research knowledge they require, or how they can acquire the specific skills they will need for their studies and the workplace (UCD College of Social Sciences and Law, Teaching and Learning Committee, 2019). Our project provides key digital skills opportunities to help students develop as emerging researchers, in this case with video skills

offering a significant learning area for presenting research effectively in the digital environment.

The immediate impact of this project has been proactive student participation in the development of module content. In traditional teaching and learning preparation, learning materials are conceived, created, and structured by academic teaching staff for student consumption. Our project flips that approach; students become co-creators of their learning, as opposed to consumers only.

Importantly, students involved with this project have recognised not only the potential of their new digital skills for their own academic studies, but also the importance of a peer approach for embedding skills in learning as the module continues. Two of our undergraduate students who created videos and agreed to share with their peers in the next offering of the module reflected on their participation as follows:

4.1 Undergraduate Student 1.

As a third-year social sciences student, I decided to take this module to prepare myself for much bigger research projects in my final year. I decided that it would be most beneficial to focus on research skills, which would increase the overall quality of my academic work. The idea that the module was entirely online and self-paced was another reason why I selected it. Without strict deadlines, I was able to manage my time and assignments in a way that suited me.

The final assessment in this module, which involved the creation of a video outlining a specific section of the module contents, was a fun and beneficial experience. Initially, I was nervous about this assessment, as I had very little experience in content creation. However, the provided information, seminars, and training videos eased my worries. While it was a learning experience, it was made considerably easier with all of the support provided.

The experience of scripting, filming and editing was also useful in improving my critical thinking skills. Having only a few short minutes to determine what was the most valuable information was a test. Picking a video topic allowed me to re-evaluate what I felt were the most important skills when conducting academic research. Ultimately, I chose the topic of evaluating sources and literature, because having accurate sources is the backbone of reliable research. I scripted the video by going through my notes and assignment for that module portion and established what methods I thought were the most essential. My first draft was much too long, but again, cutting it down forced me to prioritise the information that would be most beneficial to future students. The editing process and learning how to present information in a concise,

understandable way was also enjoyable. Video editing was an entirely new skill to me, which I hope will be useful in the future.

I hope my video will be useful for future students, because I believe that I presented an important topic in a clear manner. Should future students be required to complete a video, my video is a good example of how you can create high quality content with little previous knowledge on video editing. Just as previous students' sample videos reassured me, I hope that my video will also provide reassurance while teaching something new.

The skills that I utilised while creating my video will be beneficial in a future work environment. Video creation is a fun, engaging way of creating content, and should I carry out training roles in the future, I will absolutely use the skills I have learned. Prioritising information is another skill that will be used in future assignments and the workplace.

4.2 Undergraduate Student 2.

I took this module because I was interested in learning more about the module aspects. The video assessment gave me a great opportunity to apply the new skills that I learned in the module, such as how to cite correctly. I also learned about filming, scriptwriting, and editing.

I learned how to create my video by participating in two group Zoom training sessions with a videographer. I learned a lot on these training calls, such as the proper film lighting and the importance of natural light or ring lights, which I ordered from Amazon after they were recommended. Before attending these sessions, I had no idea how much planning was involved in recording and editing videos. It has given me a whole new appreciation for video creation.

I hope my video will help future students by showing them what I had learned about how to correctly cite, which is the topic of my video. It is extremely important to cite correctly to avoid plagiarism, so I hope students learn something that may help their assignments. Secondly, I hope other students see that I really enjoyed scripting, setting up the correct lighting, and filming the video. I think it is quite apparent by how smiley I was while recording it. Finally, I hope they appreciate the editing, such as how I added in a title before each section. This could open future students' imagination to cool edits when creating and improving their videos.

Creating the video has already helped me in my workplace. I am currently in a marketing internship and have participated in photoshoots. The skills I learned about lighting and tone have helped me to decide what images work best and complement each other for social media

and websites.

The Video and Project Assistant was such an encouraging, great, fun person to work with for this project, and I am really happy I got involved.

4.3 Observations from the Video and Project Assistant.

Additionally, a Video and Project Assistant, who was a Master's student in the School of Information and Communication Studies, played an integral team role in guiding undergraduate students through their videos and working with the team and videographer to organise training resources and live sessions. Her observations are central to understanding the student experience:

As the Video and Project Assistant, I acted as a second touchpoint for the students, coordinating, scheduling and joining all of the video production training sessions on Zoom. Additionally, I served as a sounding board to ensure that each student felt prepared and clear on their topic. Collaborating with the undergraduate students and serving as a resource was immensely rewarding. The Zoom sessions provided an opportunity to connect with fellow students and engage in fruitful discussions around video production. Students approached the project with a variety of skill levels, which led to a diverse collection of student-created resources. Some students incorporated highly technical and creative elements within their videos while others stuck to the basics. Overall, each student crafted a highly personal account of their module experience, which demonstrated insightful reflection, new knowledge and presentation skills. This experience has provided me with a variety of project management skills that will be instrumental in future employment. Most importantly, it has fostered a keen interest in building student-driven collaboration and the value of exploring different teaching models. It was reassuring to see students who approached the project with little confidence to then produce a reusable video resource of which they were proud, and it has taught me techniques for empowering others in both their learning and career path.

5. Conclusion.

It is clear from the students' accounts that the video project has been beneficial, not only to their digital research skills development, but also to their personal sense of achievement and

contribution to the module. The SaP model clearly imbues students with a sense of ownership of their learning, while also encouraging staff to take heed of important student perspectives. Furthermore, UCD's College of Social Sciences and Law has formally adopted our digital research skills module as an option for students on the BSc Social Sciences programme (Stage 3). The module has been renamed Digital Research Skills for the Social Sciences and features the student video content produced in this project.

The student videos will support future student cohorts in their learning about digital research skills. The incoming students will watch previous students' videos as a required part of module content. The video training and student video assessment will remain part of the module moving forward, which will contribute to the growing body of student-driven resources.

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