

Title: The Holy Grail for HE – how do we achieve transformational learning (gain) through excellent teaching?

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

1. Provide definitions of teaching excellence and learning gain
2. Explore the relationships and processes that link these areas
3. Understand the limitations of measures and metrics used to quantify these

Session Outline

In their review, Gunn and Fisk (2013) identified the need for robust methods for analysing the links between teaching excellence and student outcomes and challenged the universality of the link given the diversity of culture and disciplinary practice. Hughes (2015) noted that 'excellent teaching extends beyond the classroom' where the relationship between staff and students fosters an environment conducive to learning. Furthermore, Jensen et al. (2014) argued that it is not excellent, but inspirational teaching, that leads to transformational learning, where outcomes are focused on student learning rather than the teacher performance, that cannot be reduced to a defined set of characteristics or practices.

Yet, with the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework and Learning Gain projects as part of the wider HE Bill, the sector is being challenged to reconcile the relationships between these two concepts through various qualitative and quantitative assessments.

Kent is engaged in the national mixed methodology Learning Gain project (HEFCE) based on the work by McGrath (2015), that will track and assess the growth of students' knowledge, skills and abilities develop during their studies, using both cognitive testing (critical thinking & problem solving skills) and reflective surveys (changing attitudes to studies and academic engagement). To be assessed over 3-4 years as part of a longitudinal survey, the implementation of this survey of students will be assessed alongside the impact of the TEF on staff, to identify both the relationships and limitations of these metrics.

The 'holy grail' will be to agree definitions and measurements that capture the multivariate student experience with rigour and relevance, in ways that are valued and lead to transformational experiences for our students. This workshop will explore through our own

experience with TEF2 and NMMLGP pilots, whether these will provide appropriate ways of conceptualising and differentiating the sector as intended.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Definitions and measurement of teaching excellence and learning gain (5mins)

In groups (10 mins):

Compare the ways in which teaching excellence and learning gain are measured within your institutions to identify address areas of similarity and difference (post-it activity).

Key lessons from pilot studies (10 mins) – plus achievements and challenges

In groups (15 mins):

Which metrics provide the most valid measures of teaching excellence and learning gain? (post-it sorting exercise)

How could/should these be included within the TEF and Learning Gain to positively benefit the student experience?

Summary (5 mins)

References

Key texts mentioned in the outline, please use the Harvard referencing system.
(Web references accessed on 11/11/16)

Gunn, V. & Fisk, A. (2013) Considering teaching excellence in HE: 2007-2013
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/telr_final_acknowledgements.pdf

Jensen, K, Adams, J, and Strickland, K (2014) Inspirational Teaching: Beyond Excellence and Towards Collaboration for Learning with Sustained Impact
Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice; **Vol 2**, No 2 (2014)

McGrath, C, Guerin, B, Harte, E, Frearson, M, and Catriona Manville, C (2015) Learning Gain in Higher Education
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR900/RR996/RAND_RR996.pdf

Hughes, A, (2015) Essay on the meaning of teaching excellence in higher education
<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/14/essay-meaning-teaching-excellence-higher-education>