

SEDA Autumn Conference 2024



Session Title: Evaluating a framework for microcredential design and delivery

Session Type: Research Papers (20 minutes)

Main presenter(s): Jack Hogan, Abertay University

Co presenter(s): Julie Blackwell Young, Abertay University

Session Summary: This presentation outlines the findings of the SEDA-funded evaluation of a framework developed by the Abertay Learning Enhancement Academy for designing and delivering online microcredentials. The framework integrates various pedagogical models to support staff in creating student-centered learning experiences. Findings show improvements in teaching practices, digital skills, and educator confidence. The framework aligns with themes like curriculum design, professional development, and educational innovation, offering a model for institutions to effectively implement microcredentials.

Session Outline: This presentation outlines the SEDA-funded evaluation of a new framework created by the Abertay Learning Enhancement Academy (ABLE) to support the design and delivery of online microcredentials at Abertay University (see Millard et al, 2023 for more details on the initiative itself). In response to the growing demand for flexible, personalised learning opportunities, the university introduced a suite of mandatory, 5-credit microcredentials aimed at enhancing first-year students' social and academic skills. To facilitate this, ABLE developed a comprehensive framework that integrates Laurillard's (2012) Conversational Framework, the ICARE model (Hoffman & Ritchie, 1998), Universal Design for Learning principles (CAST, 2023), and other pedagogical models to guide staff in creating high-quality, engaging online courses.

The framework was designed to shift the focus from content delivery to student activity, helping staff create rich, student-centered learning experiences within a small credit structure. It included a range of support resources, such as asynchronous and synchronous workshops and practical templates, all of which emphasized activity-based learning. The evaluation of this framework, conducted through semi-structured interviews with six staff members, reflective dialogues, and thematic analysis, revealed several key outcomes. These include significant improvements in staff understanding of online pedagogy, enhanced digital skills, increased confidence in teaching, and a greater sense of community among educators.

The findings highlight the framework's effectiveness in fostering continuous professional development and enhancing curriculum design within an online environment. As such, the framework offers a replicable model for other institutions seeking to integrate microcredentials into their offerings and adapt to evolving educational needs.

This paper aligns with the themes of the SEDA Autumn Conference 2024, particularly in curriculum design, approaches to learning and teaching, continuous professional development, and educational technology and innovation. Future plans include sharing the framework through a handbook and other resources.

References: CAST (2023) About Universal Design for Learning.
<https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

Hoffman, B., & Ritchie, D. C. (1998). Teaching and learning online: Tools, templates, and training. SITE 98: Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference Proceedings. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED421092.pdf>

Laurillard, D. (2012). Teaching as a Design Science: Building Pedagogical Patterns for Learning and Technology (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203125083>

Millard, L., Blackwell Young, J. & Hogan J. (2023) 'Designing personalized student development through microcredentials: An institutional approach' in Willison, D. & Henderson, E. (eds). Perspectives on enhancing student transition into higher education and beyond. IGI Global, pp. 122-142.