

# Inspera on Campus at the University of Leeds, 18 April 2023

Our latest Inspera on Campus took place at the University of Leeds on the 18th April during the Times Higher Digital Universities UK conference.

Speakers and topics:

'How to Engage Academics in Digital Transformation' Dr Dee Scadden and Dr Marie Kilkenny from the University of Cambridge

'Widening Participation and Digital Poverty' Professor Deval Capps from Leeds Beckett University

## **How to Engage Academics in Digital Transformation: Dr Dee Scadden and Dr Marie Kennedy**

Why?

- Access, enhancing the student experience, supporting progression, enhancing student engagement, personalised learning, improving the quality of teaching and learning

What?

- Digital assessment, lecture capture, virtual reality, practical simulations, webinars, seminars, Zoom, interactive online practical classes

What are the main challenges when introducing a new digital platform to academic staff?

- Resistance to change
- Lack of familiarity
- Concern about the time needed to learn a new platform
- Change fatigue
- Tech fatigue
- Prior experience if it hasn't gone well
- Fear
- Personality and previous experience
- Leadership
- Cynicism due to regular changes
- Poor change management

- Cynicism about the aims of leadership (i.e. the desire to make a mark rather than actually create lasting and worthwhile change)
- Us vs them perception of transformation
- Change being imposed instead of supported
- A lack of understanding
- Not enough time

How might the resistance barrier be lowered and how can engagement be increased?

- Work on people's perceptions of roles and knowledge. I.e. academics sometimes perceive IT staff as being too enthusiastic about technology and not really understanding the practice of teaching and learning
- Getting the right people behind the project
- Helping to make the change from thinking about how to put your existing assessments onto a platform, to looking at the platform and thinking about how you can take advantage of it to transform your assessments
- Dig into the why/why not properly - find out why there is resistance, don't assume - dispel the myth of there being one perfect system for everything
- Explain that the assessment burden is shifted because of machine marking, the ease of not marking handwritten exams, the simplified adjustments process, etc. the many things that will make people's lives easier in the long run

## **'Widening Participation and Digital Poverty': Professor Deveral Capps**

Inclusive assessment: designed to be accessible to as many students as possible

- E.g. 24/48 hour coursework, unless it is information that as a professional you should have at your fingertips. Some things you can look up, for other things you will be expected to know there and then
- The difference between equality and equity needs to be kept in consideration at all times
- With face-to-face exams it is very difficult to support individual student needs, which are increasing across all cohorts. Is there a place for high stress, high risk exams? Or should exams be more inclusive by design?
  - We need to provide a sense of safety

- We need to consider alternative assessments, but some delegates voiced concerns about regulatory bodies and difficulty with scaling these - it will depend on the discipline and pedagogy
- We spoke about letting students choose their mode of assessment. While we need to ask our students, they might not always be the best judges of how to assess and will need our guidance and help

Digital poverty: defined by the Digital Poverty Alliance as ‘the inability to interact with the online world fully, when, where and how an individual needs to’

- As well as tech, we need to consider access to appropriate physical environments for study and exams
- 2.5 million people are behind on their broadband bills
- 53% of people who are offline can't afford broadband
- 26% of young people don't have access to a laptop or similar device (2022 data)
- Also consider the ability to use tech - not everyone knows how to use online platforms and tools

Other concerns mentioned:

- Access to hardship funds is not standard
- Allowing student flexibility over the mode they use to submit an assessment means some students have more flexibility than others as they have a better phone for taking photos, making videos, etc - one solution for this could be to offer recording facilities
- Concern was voiced about lack of access to similar equipment. We need systems to find out what students have access to and whether they know how to use it so that we can build appropriate assessments and support
- We need to make assessments more authentic, critical and reflective