Student journeys through hybrid teaching and learning

This paper presents three personas and speculative learner journeys based on imagined students joining the University in September. Our intention is to make these and other student learning journeys available through the Edinburgh Hybrid Teaching Exchange blog site to support staff and student communication, engagement and orientation with hybrid teaching and learning. We have developed a template and guidance for colleagues that Schools and Programme Teams can use to create their own personas and learner journeys as a planning and design tool and as a resource for student orientation and engagement. This paper includes a draft of this template and guidance together with a plan and timeline for the development and dissemination of additional examples.

Action: Members of the Adaptation & Renewal – Student Reference Group are asked to read and provide feedback on the first set of three student journeys, the template and guidance, plan and timeline. Will these be a useful resource for your students and colleagues? We'd also appreciate your suggestions and offers to contribute additional personas and student learner journeys.

Siân Bayne, Jon Turner and Ros Claase, 27th May 2020

Three student journeys through hybrid teaching and learning

These personas and speculative journeys are based on imagined students who choose to come to Edinburgh to study, and covers semester 1 only. I've focused on undergraduate teaching but these can be extended to PGT, and to semester 2, easily enough. As these are semester 1, I've assumed physical distancing restrictions based on phase 2 of the Scottish Government roadmap out of lockdown.

Almost all activities described can be conducted asynchronously and online, but all have hybrid on-campus and synchronous elements for those who are able. It's assumed that all students have access to a device, either their own or provided by the university. WP students will have particular challenges that aren't yet covered here – further personas based on what we know WP students will be dealing with will be needed.

What's offered here is a starting point only and doesn't aim to cover every kind of teaching we do. In particular further work is needed regarding programmes involving placements, years abroad, practice-based and studio work. It doesn't yet attempt any detail on student support (for example, how we will support students in quarantine or isolation, organise welcome week activities etc) – the focus is on teaching and learning, with the assumption that more detail on the broader support picture will be added later.

It will be important to build on these initial three by developing additional personas based on further groupings, for example WP students, PGT students and PGR. It will also be important to develop parallel personas for the academics doing the teaching to understand the pressures on them and the likely increased capacity that will be required.

There are three personas in this document:

1. A lecture and seminar-based programme: Euan (UK, new entrant)
2. A programme with lab-based practical elements: Jiăn (international, continuing)
3. A programme including fieldwork: Jo (UK, continuing)

Siân Bayne, 25 May 2020

1. A lecture and seminar-based programme: Euan

This persona relates to a UK student enrolled in a large undergraduate programme offered primarily through lectures and tutorials or seminars.

Euan is new to the university, joining straight from school and choosing to come to Edinburgh to study. He is living in university accommodation for his first year.

Before he arrived at university he was able to orient himself by accessing welcome videos from his School and introductory readings online, and he also took part in some online peer-group activities with his cohort. He was connected to a 'buddy' continuing to later years of the same programme who was willing to answer questions about what it was like to study on the programme, and about Edinburgh generally. Along with some social media connections he has made himself, he has arrived with a fair sense of connectedness to his cohort.

On arrival at Edinburgh, social distancing is still in place. However Euan is able to attend welcome week activities where he meets with small groups of other students, with physical distancing observed. Some socialising is possible on the Meadows and in his accommodation, and there are also online meet-ups and events organised by the university. The peer group he connected with before arrival continue to be in contact, and regularly meets up online. During his first weeks in Edinburgh he also takes some online skills courses on how to study online and staying safe in a digital world. While the library has reduced study space, it is open and Euan gets accustomed to signing up for study space when he needs it.

In normal circumstances Euan's programme consists of independent study with regular lectures and smaller group tutorials every week. With social distancing still in place, it isn't possible to attend **large lectures so these have been replaced with active learning based on short videos and collaborative work with his peers. For some courses he watches videos created by his tutors and does independent work around them – for example doing quick short answer questions for his tutor to mark. Others are connected to group work activities – for example structured team debates, using the university's online discussion forum. All the videos are permanently available online with subtitles and transcripts.**

Euan attends tutorials on-campus, held in rooms large enough to allow students to be physically distanced from each other. Others in his cohort are not able to attend because they are not yet able to travel – parallel online tutorials each week are organised separately for these remote students, running twice to allow for participation across time zones.

Self-directed peer learning groups have been created to mix on-campus and online students, working together to complete course tasks, to prep for their live tutorial sessions and to work together on assessments. Euan's group meets regularly in live video chats and also has its own discussion forum online, as well as its own document sharing and blog spaces for collaborating. As restrictions ease, more of Euan's peers are able to locate to Edinburgh with a sense that they are already part of a cohort.

There are no exams for Euan in December as his final marks are all allocated on the basis of the coursework he has completed over the semester.

2. A programme with lab-based practical elements: Jiǎn

This persona relates to a returning international student on a large undergraduate programme that includes lab-based practicals.

Jiǎn is returning to study for her second year at Edinburgh, having made the decision to return to Edinburgh from China despite a 14 day quarantine for those entering the country. She has a place in university accommodation for the year.

During the first two weeks of semester Jiǎn isolates in her accommodation, supported by the university. While she can't attend any classes on-campus, she is able to study online during these first two weeks – she accesses lectures which have been pre-recorded, subtitled and put online, and is active in the discussions around each lecture. These take place in discussion forums where students can pose questions to the lecturer and discuss issues raised with their peers. She has a short one-to-one online catch-up with her personal tutor every few days while she is in quarantine.

Jiǎn also connects with her course peer-learning groups while she is working online – this includes a mix of those who are studying remotely and on-campus, and they have regular meet-ups online in which they work on tasks together. When Jiǎn comes out of quarantine, she feels well-connected to her group.

As well as the peer-learning groups, Jiǎn's programme runs tutor-led small group tutorials. As there are quite a few students studying at a distance on Jiǎn's courses – either because they are in quarantine or because they are unable to travel – the tutorials are run live online for the whole cohort with no on-campus meetings. When Jiǎn is out of quarantine she still looks forward to these as they bring her together with friends who haven't been able to get to campus as well as those who are based in Edinburgh.

The labs that are an important part of her programme have been organised differently this year to allow all students to learn practical skills while staying safe and physically distanced. Data-handling and experimental design workshops are given online and Jiǎn works with her course peer group to develop shared outputs for assessment based on these. Lab work is covered by labcasts pre-recorded or streamed live – on- and off-campus peer learning groups work together on these with demonstrator guidance. While in-person lab work isn't possible for most of the semester, once out of quarantine Jiǎn is able to attend discussion groups on campus to discuss issues arising from the online lab work, and as physical distancing restrictions ease, she is able to attend a few in-person lab sessions later in the semester. The intensive work to teach Jiǎn the required practical skills and competencies she needs as she continues her studies are shifted to take place in 'boot camps' at the end of semester two, ensuring she has the necessary hands-on experience before progressing into year three of her programme.

Assessment of Jiǎn's work this semester is mainly on the basis of her course work, but she has one 'open book' exam which gives her 24 hours to complete – she does this remotely.

A programme including fieldwork and computing-lab practicals: Jo

This persona relates to a returning UK student on an undergraduate programme that includes fieldwork.

Jo is returning to university for her third year of study. Her programme includes fieldwork elements this year. She will be living with two friends in privately-rented accommodation.

Jo's programme is delivered through a combination of lectures, tutorials, laboratory practicals and fieldwork, as well as independent study. With physical distancing still in place, Jo's lectures are organised slightly differently, though the relatively small size of her courses means that most of them can still run on-campus with physical distancing after the first few weeks of semester. For each week of lectures a limited number of places are available for on-campus attendance, and all students present in Edinburgh have the opportunity to attend these every other week. The lectures are streamed live for those who can't attend on-campus, and recordings are also available with transcripts. Some students aren't able to get to Edinburgh at all, including some of Jo's friends, but they are able to connect with each other and discuss their lectures through live lecture chat and in the online forums.

Jo's tutorials are mostly run entirely online, bringing groups of on-campus and remote students together in peer groups. Her practical computing classes also take place online accessing software packages remotely for self-study. However there are also drop-in sessions on-campus which students can sign-up to attend, bringing their own laptops – it is still not safe to use shared equipment. With numbers attending these limited to allow for physical distancing, they are complemented by online-only virtual drop-ins which allow students to get support on areas they are struggling with. Jo's tutors also offer virtual office hours which she can use when she needs one-to-one help and advice.

Jo's overseas field trips have had to be cancelled, but the group are given opportunities to connect with distant communities virtually, and local trips are able to go ahead, though transport and field work activities are constrained by physical distancing. Part of Jo's fieldwork involves recording video blogs and collecting data that can be shared with students studying remotely, and others who aren't able to attend. These student-made records inform peer group work which all students do post-fieldtrip.

Part-way through semester 1 one of Jo's flatmates develops Covid-19 symptoms, so she finds she has to isolate for 2 weeks. During this period Jo is unable to attend any lectures or trips, but is able to keep studying by tuning into recorded lectures and practical class online drop-ins.

Jo does not have exams at the end of semester as all her marks are given on the basis of her course work – she has had regular hand-in deadlines every couple of weeks.

Draft template and guidance for further personas

Hybrid Teaching: the learner experience

Template & Guidance for preparation of personas & student learning journeys

Working with colleagues from across the University we are developing a set of personas and vignettes intended to describe the experience of hybrid teaching from the perspective of our students. These personas will be developed and refined during summer 2020.

They are intended as a planning and design tool for programme teams, as a reference point for teaching and support staff, and as a resource to support student orientation, communication and engagement.

These slides provide step by step guidance and a template for the production of personas.

This is a draft – we would be grateful for your feedback.

Step 1 - About your students

Please start by describing your students – how many, what backgrounds, level of study and key challenges.

Then focus in on a particular student persona and provide some context on how they will experience hybrid teaching. Where will they be living, how will they experience their degree programme (in person and/or online), what constraints they may face (e.g. IT, travel, access to campus, confidence, prior experience). The persona will reflect some but by no means all of your students (more on this later). In the next step please try to see, experience and describe your degree programme [or course] (teaching, assessment, learning community and support) as that persona.

Example:

The BA Enlightenment Studies Programme (made up I think) takes a multidisciplinary approach to exploring and understanding the cultural and historic significance of the Enlightenment in Edinburgh. Around 50 students proceed to Honours and graduate each year. In first year students take two compulsory core courses each semester, supplemented by one outside course. We also have a large number of students from outside Enlightenment Studies participating on two of the core courses (one each semester).

Most of our first year students come from Scotland or elsewhere in the UK (~80%). Our other students come from a wide range of other countries, with a particularly strong take up from the USA and Japan (usually 10-15% each year).

Euan is joining the University straight from school. He is from the north of Scotland and will be living in University accommodation from September. As with many of our new students, his final year of high school was severely disrupted and he did not sit his final exams. He is worried that he may not be academic enough to study at Edinburgh and nervous about the step up from school to University study. He is looking forward to moving to Edinburgh and to life at University. His teaching at school was quite traditional – he has not used much digital technology to support his learning to date.

Step 2 - What will Hybrid Teaching mean for [*persona*]?

Please describe the hybrid teaching journey from the perspective of your student persona. How will they experience and engage with different courses (e.g. teaching & assessment) and other elements of their degree programme (e.g. peer support, programme level activities or support)?

Example:

At the beginning of the semester Euan is in Edinburgh, living in University accommodation, ready to study in hybrid mode.

On arrival at Edinburgh, social distancing is still in place. However Euan is able to attend welcome week activities where he meets with small groups of other students, with physical distancing observed. Some socialising is possible on the Meadows and in his accommodation, and there are also online meet-ups and events organised by the university. The peer group he connected with before arrival continue to be in contact, and regularly meets up online. During his first weeks in Edinburgh he also takes some online skills courses on how to study online and staying safe in a digital world. While the library has reduced study space, it is open and Euan gets accustomed to signing up for study space when he needs it. etc

Alternatives to traditional examinations (including open book/24 hour exams), blogging and production of video reflections and reviews are being developed for all of Euan's semester 1 courses.

Step 3 - Reflections

To what extent will your persona's experience reflect that of other students on your programme? Would it be useful to consider the learning journeys of other personas (i.e. from different backgrounds, with different constraints, following different paths & course choices)? Has this activity identified any major gaps in provision, opportunities for enhancement, risks for student learning or concerns for staff?   Does it surface issues of concern around estates, learning technology, training and support that need to be addressed at School, College or University level? What would be the implications of a change in circumstances (e.g. easing or tightening of physical distancing)?

Example:

The approach that is being developed has been designed to allow flexibility over time and for individual students (based on their personal circumstances) to adjust the balance of on-campus and online activities. The approach is pretty robust with recordings and asynchronous learning activities always available should students have connection problems.

It would be useful to produce a second persona for an international student unable to travel to Edinburgh this year (Japan or USA).

One of the courses that Euan would normally take includes an element of independent project work, based in local schools, museums and art venues. This will be impossible if physical distancing rules remain in place. We need to develop alternative activities and approaches (potentially using archive material or video-conferencing or focusing on a smaller number of external partners with group rather than individual projects).

We are intending to add some additional programme level activities and support for students. Many of these will be peer-led while others will provide additional support and engagement with academic staff (e.g. exploring cross cutting concepts or common challenges and questions). A key focus of these activities will be on building and maintaining a sense of belonging and engagement for students.

Key outstanding issues include clarity on the arrangements to book on-campus spaces for tutorials, training and support for tutors (both in running sessions online and safely running on campus tutorials). We would also like to know what University level resources and support will be available to support students in their orientation for University study and hybrid teaching.

Timeline, plan and next steps

Phase 1 (to 28th May)

- Draft three broad example personas and speculative learner journeys
  (get sense check initial feedback) - completed
- Prepare draft guidance & template - completed
- Seek feedback from members of the Adaptation & Renewal – Student Reference Group

Phase 2 (to end June)

- Refine initial examples, guidance & template and add to Edinburgh Hybrid Teaching
  Exchange blog site (by 14th June)
- Share template and guidance with selected colleagues (mostly from Adaptation & Renewal –
  Student Reference Group) and invite them to produce an initial set of contextualised
  persona and student learner journeys:
    - Arts & humanities – Sian, Jeremy Robbins & Sabine Rolle; and Esther Mijers (HCA),
      asking Esther to consider Honours year; Juan Cruz (ECA) studio and practice based
    - Social Science – Velda McCune & Richard Baxstrom
    - Science & Engineering (laboratory based) – Michael Seery and Judy Hardy Hardy;
      SE (non-laboratory) – Iain Gordon and Judy;
      SE (fieldwork) – Simon Kelley and Andy Dugmore
    - MVM – Neil Turner & David Kluth (medics);
      Michael Shipston/Phil Larkman (Biomedical Sciences – lab based)
- Add these and other contributions to Edinburgh Hybrid Teaching Exchange blog site
  (they can be added as draft/work in progress)
- Prepare high quality visuals for expanded set of general personas and make them available
  to all staff, including use to complement university level communications with students and
  staff.
- Begin to work with more Schools, Programme teams and others to develop additional
  personas. These may be for specific programmes (and pedagogic/educational contexts), for
  other elements of the student experience, and to focus in on the experience and needs of
  different groups (e.g. returning 2nd year students; new entrants at second year; honours
  students; new Scottish/UK students in Edinburgh; international or other students based
  outside the UK; students in Edinburgh but being screened or otherwise unable to be on
  campus; WP students; Students with declared or undeclared disability).
- Explore opportunities to link development of personas to programme design work (including
  ELDER). Explore potential to use growing persona collection in staff development activities
  and to inform planning by ART groups and central University Services.
- Develop designed template suitable for sharing with students (web, email etc)

Phase 3 (to September)

- Continue to support development, sharing and use of personas (as noted above)
- Additional focus during July on preparing persona templates and resources that can be used
  to support student orientation, communication and engagement (at University, School and
  programme levels).