

Learning approaches, module teams and their impact on student assessment results – Part A

In the poster submission by Yardley *et al* (2014) *‘Flipped learning; placing your students and their employability centre stage’* the authors detailed the significant transformation the transition to registered practitioner module has undergone for the benefit of the student experience. This is further supported by the poster by Yardley and Wilcox-Tolley (2014) called *‘Expanding opportunities for students formative and summative assessment’* which explores three component assessment activities nursing students at Birmingham City University are required to achieve as part of the transition to registered practitioner module. This poster submission comes in two parts, Part A and Part B and will consider the impact of learning approaches, module teams and their impact on student assessment results.

When delivering the module to large nursing cohorts the Core Module Team (CMT) often rely upon the support of colleagues within the faculty to deliver module learning, teaching and assessment related activities; which has not always translated into having a regular and consistent module team.

Faculty staff often support students and module delivery on a sessional basis. A seemingly ad hoc style to modular delivery raised some concerns for the CMT; most notably the potential impact on the student experience. The module co-ordinators (MC) felt that students were not being afforded consistency in terms of who will facilitate their learning nor did they feel the extemporized approach enabled the development of effective student-teacher relationships (Yardley, Malkin and Wilcox-Tolley, 2014).

Yet what the CMT did not know is whether these concerns are valid. To critically explore the legitimacy of this unease the module co-ordinators (MC) choose to conduct an audit of students’ Part C first attempt summative assessment results; alongside a review of the number and consistency of teachers facilitating student learning (Yardley, Malkin and Wilcox-Tolley, 2014).

Three Dip HE nursing cohorts were selected to take part in the audit and for the purpose of this poster submission will be known as group 1, group 2 and group 3. Two cohorts were omitted from the audit, one graduate diploma group and one BSc group. The graduate diploma summative assessment was that of an assignment, making comparison more difficult. Although Dip HE and BSc students part C assessment is the same. Dip HE students part C summative assessment is graded according to level 5 criteria and BSc at level 6. As the criteria is different for BSc and Dip HE cohorts it was decided to conduct the audit based on three Dip HE groups (Yardley, Malkin and Wilcox-Tolley, 2014).

The audit has focused on appraisal of Dip HE adult nursing field student students. These cohorts have a larger number of adult field students that require more facilitators to assist student learning. This is not negating the importance of the other nursing fields rather that the majority of teaching was conducted by their field leads. Overall this has ensured these students have experienced a greater degree of consistency when learning has been facilitated (Yardley, Malkin and Wilcox-Tolley, 2014).

Remaining sections of this poster submission will share a summary of the outcome of group 1, 2 and 3 part C summative assessment. This will be followed by a comparison of group 1, 2, and 3 results as well as share a synopsis and analysis of findings in Part B

Group 1

- There were 178 adult field students in group 1. The module was delivered over a six week period to nine adult sub-groups (approximately 20 students per sub-group) or a combination of sub-group (approximately 40 students per group). The student’s part C assessment was undertaken mid-way through their associated PLO and part a summative assessment.
- Constructivist approaches to learning were utilised in the form of plenary (discussion) and problem based learning (PBL) activities. The student’s part C assessment was undertaken mid-way through their associated placement learning opportunity (PLO) and part a summative assessment.
- Module and assessment launch sessions were facilitated by the module coordinators. Twelve lecturers facilitated themed adult student learning activities throughout the module (excluding mock interview panels).
- All sessions are supported by lesson plans and student/staff resources. Staff did not teach the same group week on week. Meaning students did not engage with a consistent facilitator.
- A total of nine members of staff led student’s assessment activities. The module coordinators MC shared the assessment brief, staff guidelines and facilitated staff assessment preparatory activities with assessing staff prior to students’ assessment dates.
- Student 1:1 or group assessment tutorials were facilitated by the MC due to a lack of wider staff availability.
- Students were not necessarily assessed by a member of staff who had facilitated their sub-group or any learning activities during the module.
- Meaning the assessor may have been unfamiliar to the student and with module content.
- Figure 1 provides and overlay of the grades each student sub-group were awarded per assessor.

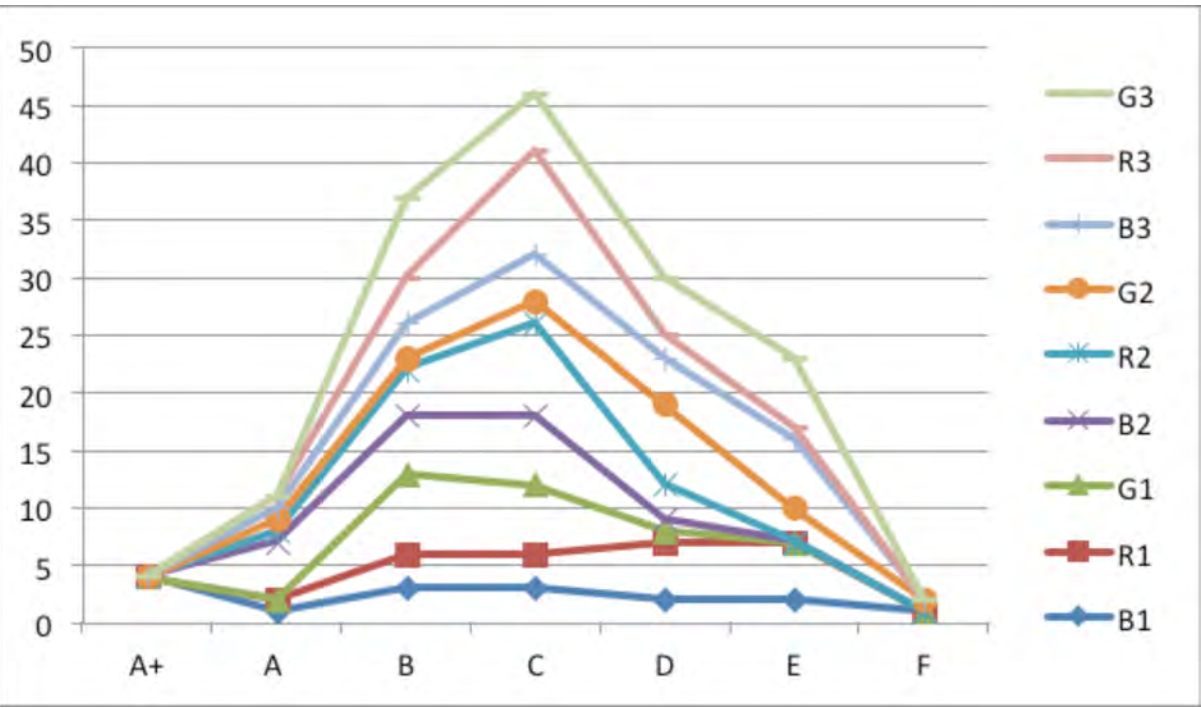


Figure 1: Group 1 part C presentation results per student sub-group

References
Yardley, L., Malkin, B., and Wilcox-Tolley, C. (2014). *Learning approaches, module teams and their impact on students assessment outcomes*. Birmingham: Birmingham City University.

Group 1: Analysis

- Of the total number of group 1 who sat their first summative presentation attempt 84% passed (N=127) and 16% failed their first submission (N=25). Of all adult students in the cohort 3% achieved an A+, 7% an A grade, 24% a B grade, 30% a C grade and 20% grade D. Of the students who failed at first attempt 15% achieved grade E and 1% an F grade.
- The graph reveals inconsistency in the variety and distribution of grades awarded per assessor.
- Notably the lowest grades awarded were afforded by staff with a visiting teacher contract and/or those who had no experience of teaching on the module.
- There were a higher percentage of C grades (30%) and D grades (20%) awarded overall.
- Group 1 were the first cohort who had undertaken the module since the module had bee reviewed and updated. The main form of learning was that of Problem Based Learning (PBL). At this stage the module coordinators/field leads were yet to introduce flipped classroom activities.
- The module exceeded first attempt university benchmarks at first attempt with a score of 68%. However concerns remained with the apparent lack of depth of learning as was evidence in the general mid-low range of grades students attained.
- The CMT questioned the extent to which learning approaches and/or a lack of an identified module team had contributed towards these student results. As a result the MC set about implementing flipped classroom approaches.

Group 2

- There were 238 adult field students in group 2. The module was delivered over a six week period to six adult sub-groups (approximately 50 students per sub-group). The student’s part C assessment was undertaken mid-way through their associated PLO and part a summative assessment.
- Smaller action learning sets (groups of 3-5 students) and group work was introduced as a core feature within the module via the investiture of learning activities known as the ‘flipped classroom’. Through the inauguration of these constructivist approaches students were afforded three formative attempts at their summative assessment as they engaged in modular learning activities.
- Module and assessment launch sessions were facilitated by the module coordinators. Lead module staff tried to introduce more regular and consistent facilitators although the implementation of this proved to be incongruent. For example groups R1, R2 and R3, R4, R5 and R6 had the same facilitator each week for the duration of the module (100%).
- Groups B1, B2 and B3 and B4 B5 had two facilitators sharing student teaching throughout the module (50%).
- Yet groups G1, G2 and G3, and G4 & G5 had four staff facilitating student learning during module delivery (25%).
- This meant some students had a consistent facilitator and others did not. There were a total of nine lecturers who facilitated themed adult student learning activities throughout the module.
- A total of nine members of staff led student’s assessment activities. The module coordinators shared the assessment brief, staff guidelines and facilitated staff assessment preparatory activities with staff prior to students’ assessment dates. This included recording the students’ assessment launch (which was subsequently housed on the module module page) and circulating a staff preparatory video by email.
- Assessment tutorials were offered by the MC as 1:1 or small group assessment support due to a lack of wider staff availability.
- Students were assessed by a member of staff who had facilitated their learning at some point during the module. Yet this did not mean students were familiar with the assessing member of staff; on some occasions the student had only met the assessor once.
- Figure 2 provides an overlay of the grades each student sub-group were awarded per assessor.

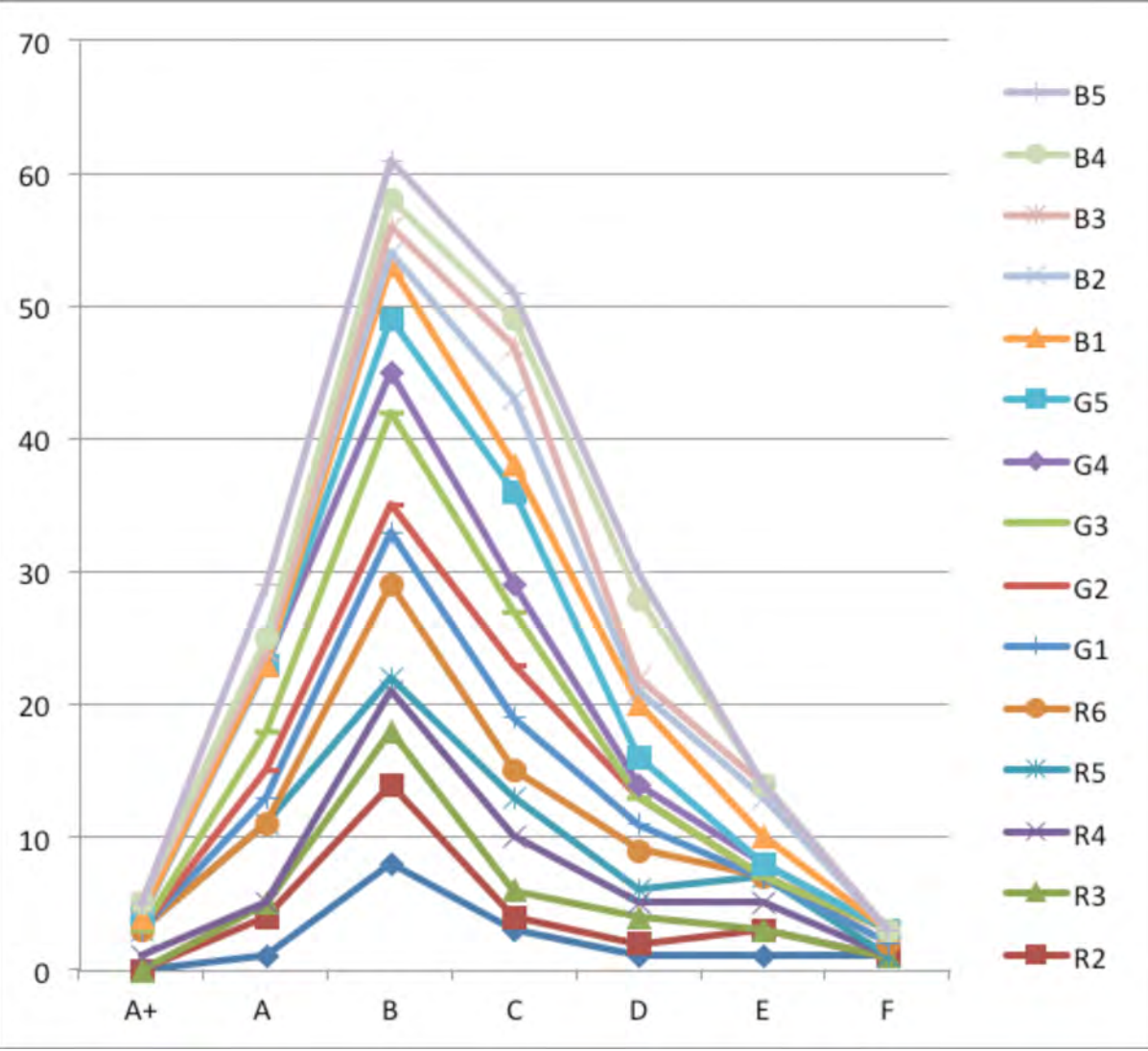


Figure 2: Group 2 part C presentation results per student sub-group

Group 2: Analysis

- Of the total number of adult students in group 2 who sat their first summative presentation attempt 92% passed (N=177), with 8% failing their first submission (N=17). This was a 12% increase in first attempt submissions and an 8% decrease in the number of students who failed their first attempt when compared to group 1 results.
- Of all adult students in the cohort 3% achieved an A+ grade, 15% an A grade, 32% B, 26% C and 16% grade D. The amount of A+ grade remained the same as group 1 (3%) yet the number of A grades achieved rose by 7% and B grades by 8%. The number of C and D grades afforded decreased by 4%.
- Of all adult students in the cohort 3% achieved an A+ grade, 15% an A grade, 32% B, 26% C and 16% grade D. The amount of A+ grade remained the same as group 1 (3%) yet the number of A grades achieved rose by 7% and B grades by 8%. The number of C and D grades afforded decreased by 4%.
- Of the students who failed at first attempt 7% achieved a grade E and 1% an F grade. While the percentage of F grades awarded remained the same (1%) there was an 8% reduction in the number of students who were awarded an E grade.

Group 2: Analysis continued

- These results demonstrate a general improvement and shift towards higher end grade being achieved.
- Group 2 were the first cohort to experience a combination of flipped classroom and PBL activities as well as being afforded three formative assessment attempts as part of modular learning.
- The introduction of these combined constructivist learning approaches and increased formative assessment opportunities are likely to be the rationale for the general student grade enhancements.
- Interestingly those students in r-groups and who had their learning facilitated by the same facilitator throughout the module achieved the greater degree of higher end results. For example R sub-group students achieved 60% of the A+ awards, 40% of A grades, 50% of B grades and 30% of the C grades afforded. These findings suggest that students who are supported throughout their learning by the same facilitator achieve better results.
- Conversely the findings suggest that there remains to be inconsistency in the variety and distribution of grades awarded by assessors. This appears to depend on the amount of time a facilitator spends facilitating student learning and thoroughly understanding module content, learning outcomes and the assessment brief. An increased number of lower end grades are awarded by assessors who are not regular members of the module learning and teaching team.
- Although the MC was pleased with increase in statistic evidence in support of enhanced university benchmarks (81% at first attempt) further work was needed to explore the benefits of a consistent facilitation team.

Group 3

- There were 168 adult field students in group 3. The module was delivered over a six week period to four adult sub-groups (approximately 40 students per sub-group). Smaller action learning sets (groups of 3-5 students) and group work remained a core feature within the module through activities such as the flipped classroom and PBL; as did the students three formative summative assessment attempts. The student’s part c assessment was undertaken mid-way through their associated PLO and part a summative assessment.
- Module and assessment launch sessions were facilitated by the module coordinators. Enhancements were made in terms of facilitator consistency. For examples groups R1, R2 and B4 and R3, R4 and G1 all had a consistent facilitator throughout the module (100%).
- Groups G2, G3 and G4 had two facilitators each sharing 50% of facilitated learning activities.
- B1, B2 and B3 had a consistent facilitator for 70% of facilitated learning yet four lecturers shared facilitation activities in the first two themes due to unavoidable circumstances. Additionally all students had their lead facilitator on their mock interview panel.
- A total of four members of staff led student’s assessment activities. Each of whom had spent the majority of time with the students since the module commenced; meaning students were assessed by those with whom they had the greatest consistency.
- The lead assessors discussed and agreed the assessment brief and grading levels prior to assessment activities. Furthermore each principal facilitator led student tutorial activities, as either 1:1 or small group activities, for their student assessment sub-groups. Additionally a newly improved student feedback form, including the level 5 marking criteria was introduced.

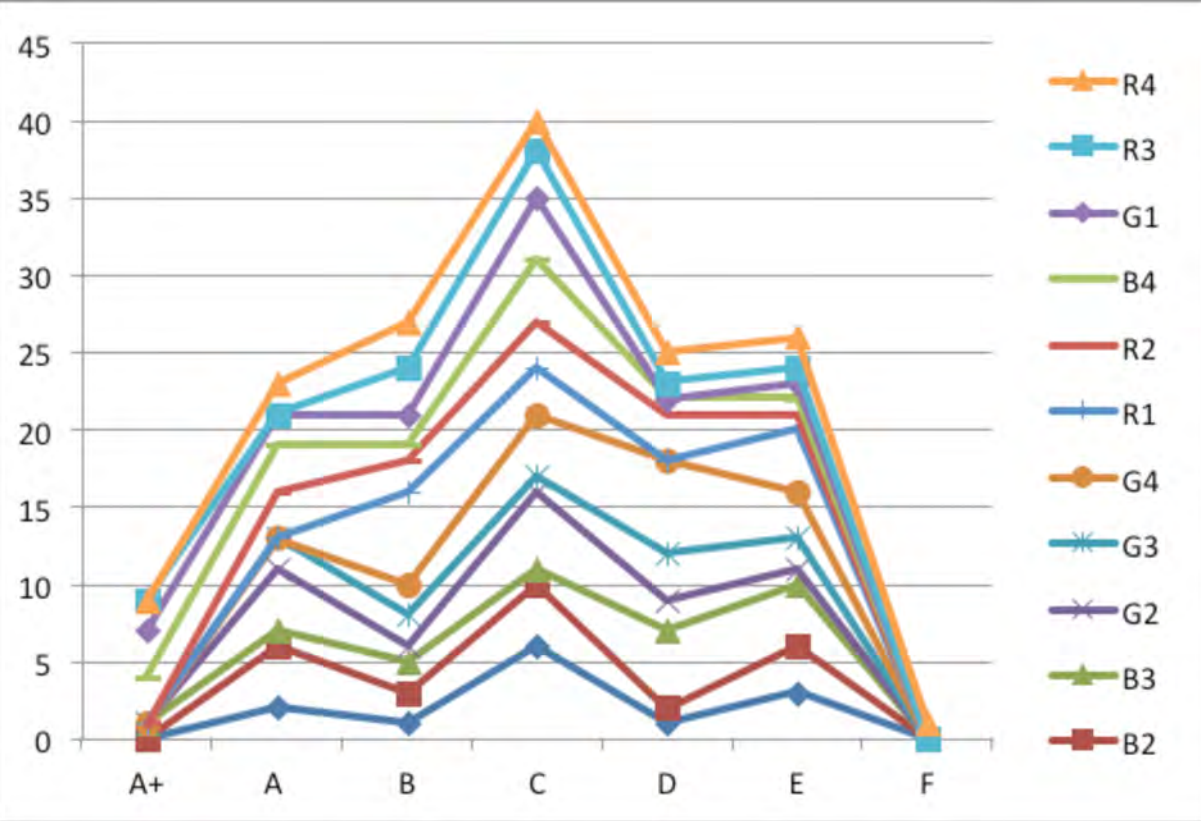


Figure 3: Group 3 part C presentation results per student sub-group

Group 3: Analysis

- Of the total number of adult students in group 3 who sat their first summative presentation attempt 82% passed (N=124) and 18% failed their first submission (N=27). This was a 10% decrease in first attempt pass and first attempt fail rates when compared to group 2 results.
- Of all adult students in the cohort 6% achieved an A+ grade, 23% an A grade, 17% a B grade, 25% a C grade and 16% a grade D. The amount of A+ grade rose 3% when compared to group 2, and A grades awarded rose by 2%. The number of B grades given reduced by 15% yet the number of C and D grades afforded remained the same at 26% for C grades and 16% for D grade.
- Of the students who failed at first attempt 17% were awarded a grade E and 1% an F grade. The percentage of F grades remained the same as groups 1 and 2 at 1%. There was a 10% increase in the number of students who were afforded an E grade when compared to group 2 results.
- Interestingly Groups B1, B2 and B3 in Group 3 and those who were afforded the least regular engagement with consistent facilitating staff attained a higher number of fails at first attempt. This is consistent with preceding cohorts results as indicated in figures 1 and 2.
- In group 1 14% of students DNS and group 2 18% DNS at their first attempt. These students missed the opportunity to undertake the assessment and to gain valuable feedback on their attempt, be it a successful or unsuccessful submission.
- Although the first attempt fail rate has increased by 10% in group 3 the number of DNS has decreased by 8% overall. Those students whose submission has been unsuccessful at first attempt are now more familiar with the assessment process. Additionally with the introduction of the new student feedback form (see 2.5n) they have greater guidance as to what they need to do to retrieve their unsuccessful first result at their next attempt.
- Interestingly all four principle assessors afforded similar grade ranges across all three of their student sub-groups achieving a grander bell curve when compared to figures 1 and 2.
- The overall percentage of A+ and A grades were higher, demonstrating a continued improvement and shift towards students achieving higher end grades.
- Most notably the general range of grades awarded were increasingly consistent.
- This has afforded a greater level of parity of marks for adult students across the cohort.
- All assessing staff facilitating student learning in this cohort had a thorough understanding of the module learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities, student resources, module content and the assessment brief.
- There is an increased confidence in the assessment team that those students who were unsuccessful at first attempt did so because they did not meet the required standard for the assessment brief and associated module learning outcomes.