to manage at that level without losing sight of their students and courses? After all, the quality and performance of courses should always remain a priority for CLs. It has been decided that future iterations of the development programmes, therefore, should not only involve pedagogically sound content but also inputs from HR teams.

Furthermore, we will be launching a Module Leader (ML) development programme that will focus on topics such as ML role responsibilities, the use of module and engagement data, quality and consistency, and assessment and feedback. These topics were selected at the requests of CLs and LLs because of the need to standardise practices across modules and across staff managed by CLs. The main aim of the ML development programme, therefore, is to ensure that MLs understand their roles, responsibilities and expected behaviours within course teams, which is a prerequisite for effectively managing and leading course teams towards a coherent and positive student experience.

Conclusion: The value of investing in key roles and building community

Our intention in crafting this suite of key academic role development programmes was to offer something back to the wider academic community. Indeed, the emphasis was on community and trying to get the CL and LL communities to recognise each other and work more collaboratively. In doing that the wider University community has become involved in subsequent iterations and want to be involved in shaping it. As such, it has been about empowering the academic voice and providing a catalyst for further collaboration and ongoing community building. While a recent institutional restructuring has provided an opportunity to develop this further, strong community building has only really been possible by recognising, valuing and developing these key leadership roles in contemporary HE.

References

Cunningham, C. and Wilder, K. (nd) 'Programme leaders as invisible superheroes of learning and teaching' (available at: https://tinyurl.com/mpesbw8a).

Gravett, K. and Ajjawi, R. (2022) 'Belonging as situated practice', *Studies in Higher Education*, 47(7), pp. 1386-1396 (DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2021.1894118).

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated Learning. Legitimate peripheral participation,* Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

O'Dwyer, M. and Sanderson, R. (2022) 'It can be a lonely job sometimes: the use of collaborative space and social network theory in support of programme leaders', in Lawrence, J., Morón-García, S. and Senior, R. (eds.) *Supporting Course and Programme Leaders in Higher Education,* Routledge, pp. 111-122.

Taff, S. D. and Clifton, M. (2022) 'Inclusion and belonging in higher education: a scoping study of contexts, barriers, and facilitators', *Higher Education Studies*, 12(3), pp. 122-133.

Mandy Lyons (mandy.lyons@solent. ac.uk) is a Course Leader in Academic Practice, **Sabrina Vieth** is a Professor of Learning and Teaching, and **Karen Heard-Lauréote** is the Vice Provost, Education, all at Solent University, Southampton; and **Fiona Smart** is an External Consultant.

Making it work: A reflection on creating resources for students you never meet

Amy West, University of Northampton

The Resource in a Box project at the University of Northampton was created to enable Sixth Form students to experience university resources within their own setting, without being taught in person by university staff. Physical boxes containing plans and resources can be borrowed by schools, each box having different content. Some of the boxes align with academic disciplines, but as a Learning Development (LD) Tutor supporting academic skills development in Higher Education (HE), I was approached to create a box which would support the development of academic skills. Here, I outline the resource I created, address the considerations of creating resources for independent use in other settings, and reflect on my experience.

How it began

The Schools Engagement team, as project leaders, came to me to discuss the potential for academic skills boxes to loan to secondary schools in the area. Boxes were to be used independently by teachers in schools, offering teachers flexibility, and enabling our connection with schools to extend beyond the practicalities of visits. The intention was to provide Level 3 school students with a 'taste' of Level 4 university learning, and as such, the boxes were to reflect aspects of university learning and teaching.

I began the process of creating the box with initial meetings with the Heads of Sixth Form in two schools, which gave me clear indication of what content would be most useful for Year 12 and Year 13 students. These discussions enabled reflection on approaches to provide a meaningful and relevant resource for the staff and students, and we began to consider which academic skills would be most usefully supported through the box. In order to make the resource relevant for all, the theme of 'Presenting Myself' was chosen. This provided a vehicle for exercising skills of, among others, reflection, communication, critical thinking and editing. The intention was that these skills could be useful in any application, interview or presentation context, whether in education, employment or elsewhere, and would work towards the students' task of self-reflection and communicating who they are. We decided that developing skills for both spoken and written elements of this would be beneficial, and it was with this idea for two 'pathways' that the structure of the resource took shape.

An outline of the resource

The box itself holds a number of folders. A teacher folder contains an overview document, outlining the aims and scope of the resource, and two plans, one for each of the two pathways: 'Presenting Myself – speaking' and 'Presenting Myself – writing' (Table 1). For each pathway there is a self-evaluation frame. The areas reviewed in each self-evaluation are matched by a folder for each area; these are placed around the learning space. In each area folder there are two pouches. Each pouch contains everything needed for a single activity including: comprehensive instructions; information about context, aims and application; and resources or objects needed for the task.

Main box contains: − Teacher folder containing overview, plans, and self-evaluation activities for both pathways − Lists of the contents − All other folders and resources as outlined in next columns	Writing pathway: Writing folders 1-5	Writing folder 1: Writing enough	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Writing folder 2: Keeping writing within the character count	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Writing folder 3: Getting the tone right	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Writing folder 4: Finding the right words	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Writing folder 5: Editing and proof reading	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
	Speaking pathway: Speaking folders 1-5	Speaking folder 1: Body language and eye contact	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Speaking folder 2: Coming up with content	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Speaking folder 3: Interesting voice	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Speaking folder 4: Speaking with a clear voice	Activity A pouch
			Activity B pouch
		Speaking folder 5: Group discussion	Group activity pouch

Table 1 Structure of the 'Presenting Myself' Resource in a Box

Students begin the session by engaging individually with the self-evaluation activity. They then use this to inform their journey through the rest of the session by identifying areas they wish to work on. Having chosen the area for focus, students access one of two activities in that area. The two activities in each folder develop the same skill, but with contrasting approaches, to offer choice in line with preference. In most cases, one activity is based around speaking and listening, and the other is a more independent or reflective activity. It became apparent that within the self-selection structure, the same activity could be chosen by one student, or a number of students, and therefore the instructions outline how to complete them in either case.

Creating resources for independent use

Teachers in HE frequently create resources for their own students to use independently. However, whereas in these cases students can often seek clarification from staff, or have other mechanisms which support their access to the resource (contextual understanding, course expectations and lexicon, knowledge of the teacher), for the Resource in a Box, students and their own teacher would access the resource without this support. After some reflection and conversations with colleagues, I focused the planning and creating on three elements I felt would facilitate the use of the resource once it left me: clarity of instruction, flexibility and choice. These align with aspects of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines (CAST, 2018) as outlined below.

Clarity of instruction

Instructions which would be used by students independently, facilitated by a teacher who has not created them, obviously needed to provide clarity of intention and of how to use the resource. In line with the UDL (CAST, 2018: 3.3), clear instructions were crafted to enable processing. This took shape through ensuring they were complete but concise, and used a consistent structure, descriptive icons and subheadings (CAST, 2018: 3.2) to support understanding. Sequences were broken into clear steps (CAST, 2018: 3.3) and there was advice for modifying the activities should it be chosen by only one person, or by more. I aimed for an accessible and friendly tone, choosing language for precision of meaning. The resource was piloted by students, and feedback regarding wording, clarity and structure of the instructions led me to modify them.

The instructions also reiterated the relevance of the activity, with a 'how does this apply?' section for each activity (linking with CAST, 2018: 3.4). Clarity about how activities matched the learning aims supported students in doing the tasks, and fostered understanding of how they can apply the skills in their own context.

Flexibility

The academic skills Resource in a Box focuses on developing skills for diverse futures. As this resource was to be accessed

in schools, I felt strongly it should be useful for *all* students, not solely for those who planned to apply for university. It was important the resource was relevant to all, regardless of students' current plans – whether they be HE, apprenticeship, employment, or as yet unclear. Providing the resource to schools purely for future university applicants would not only have excluded a number of people, but would have necessitated students making some level of decision about their future plans in order to engage with the box. The flexibility was also intended to make it a more attractive option for teaching staff, who could use it with entire cohorts rather than splitting groups according to their current plans. There is no limit to the number of students able to be involved, and there is no defined length of time for the session or sessions; this facilitates flexible use.

The UDL (CAST, 2018: 7.2) identifies the importance of relevance, and how learning should support the journey to specific goals. The box needed to offer opportunities for the teachers, rather than be restrictive. The structure of the resource enabled teachers to adapt the session to suit their own context, reflect the needs of the learners, and draw out particular relevance for them. The in-built flexibility around how the box and its contents can be used provided teachers with a malleable resource which could be tailored to their group – keeping it relevant.

Offering choice through self-evaluation

The resource needed to cater for students I would never meet, meaning I had no knowledge of their individual circumstances and needs. There would be students with varying levels of academic confidence; providing options for learners supported this, enabling them to make choices to meet their needs and preferences. The UDL suggests 'offering learners choices can develop self-determination, pride in accomplishment, and increase the degree to which they feel connected to their learning,' (CAST, 2018: 7.1), which felt all the more important given I would not meet the students. Choice may also promote greater inclusivity, allowing learners to adopt the methods or strategies that suit them. Schmidt *et al.* (2018, p. 33) found choice had a positive impact on full engagement for high school science students, who were also less likely to be reluctant in their engagement when choice was offered; I used choice to maximise potential for engagement. The design of the box enabled learners to have low-risk experience of flexible learning, potentially helpful when encountering similar decision-making experiences in future; this may be useful to develop in itself (Wanner and Palmer, 2015, p. 366).

Starting with self-evaluation promotes reflection demonstrates that student input is valued, and enables students to choose how they gain from the session, working towards their own specific goals. The self-evaluation tool enabled this choice to be built in whilst providing structure to the session. However, there are, of course, considerations around the accuracy of self-evaluation. It relies upon developed and inquisitive self-awareness and clear understanding of the concepts one is being asked to evaluate oneself against. Students may benefit from being taught *how* to self-evaluate effectively (Dunlosky and Rawson, 2012) in order to do so. However, in the Resource in a Box context, even if a self-evaluation is inaccurate or non-representative, the activities chosen in error are still likely to be of value to the student. The session also asks students to choose more than once within a rotation, so there is an opportunity to re-evaluate, to respond to their own experiences, or to change direction based on the post-activity reflections of peers.

Personal reflection

The experience of creating the Resource in a Box has impacted my own teaching in HE, particularly in the three areas outlined above. Creating the resource was an excellent exercise in giving clear and effective instructions. This proved especially relevant when teaching moved online during the Covid-19 lockdown. Clarity of instruction links to engagement in online learning (Palmer *et al.*, 2017, p. 8) and, anecdotally, I found in early online sessions particularly, some students were reluctant to clarify their understanding of instructions in the digital classroom, where it is perhaps more exposed. The instructions I give for online activities now have been prepared to offer concise but complete information, including what to do if technology fails, if students do not feel clear on expectations, and what happens once the activity has been completed. I aim to offer instructions which give students clarity to remove confusion and stress, and to maximise the learning potential.

I have also adapted my teaching in terms of flexibility and choice. In the LD sessions I teach in university, a specific focus has often been requested by the module tutor, in response to the needs of the students and the nature of their assessments. After creating the Resource in a Box, I began to explore ways to implement choice within these parameters. I have found this has worked particularly well with postgraduate students, who have come to Level 7 study from a variety of prior experiences, and may be confident with their academic writing, or conversely may feel they have lost touch with it since their last episode of study. In these sessions I follow a similar pattern to the Resource in a Box, offering a self-evaluation task followed by activities to choose from, with one being teacher-led and the others independent. Independent activities remain available after the session for students wishing to complete the set, and all students are given the opportunity to explore the concepts further with a tutor in individual tutorials. The choice element allows learners to take ownership of their learning path, exercise independence and maintain relevance.

Working with colleagues in any context can provide inspiration and learning. This was a valuable opportunity to work with colleagues across phases, enabling me to benefit from their knowledge and perspective, and consider how this can impact my own practice. Those initial conversations with teaching staff outlined the common challenges faced by students in Years 12 and 13 in terms of writing and speaking about themselves, and that alone informs my teaching of Level 4 sessions in university. Hearing about preferred learning environments, and discovering suggestions of what students at Level 3 may enjoy, not only impacted the design of the resources but also developed my understanding of learners at this stage. Simply having the space to discuss learning with colleagues from a different context gave rise to reflection, and evaluating the resource with those staff members enabled me to see their perspective and priorities. I feel that working collaboratively improved the quality and relevance of the resource.

Working with colleagues outside of one's own institution can be difficult to organise, and it can feel awkward asking for time from those you know are extremely busy. Finding shared ground for collaboration and establishing trust (Muijs *et al.*, 2011, p. 151) could be challenges in themselves. However, the project has led me to consider other opportunities for working with colleagues in cross-phase settings, knowing what I can gain from the perspectives of those in other contexts, and how enjoyable and valuable the experience was.

It became clear this was an opportunity to advocate university academic skills support in post-16 settings. Students, even when at an institution, may be unaware of the support services in place for them, or unsure of their remit (Woods *et al.,* 2019, p. 10). The very fact that this project alerted students and staff to the existence and nature of this support is valuable in itself. Students at this stage of their education may be considering their options for further learning, and discovering more about the support available in university may help allay some fears, or encourage students to seek out Learning Development services when they are in institutions.

Evaluation and conclusion

Informal evaluation of the resource was ongoing, but more formal evaluation was planned. Unfortunately, in the event, this was very limited, partly due to Covid-19, and partly due to the difficulties of gaining evaluation from students I had no ongoing contact with. However, in the limited student evaluation survey the responses were positive, with all participants identifying an increase in confidence in one or more skills after using the resource compared with before. Pre- and post-session interviews were conducted with one Head of Sixth Form; feedback focused on the design of the resource itself and its perceived usefulness. The teacher described the resource as engaging and felt that instructions had indeed come across with clarity. The flexibility and choice within the resource was identified as beneficial for the students, but interestingly, it was suggested that teachers may sometimes prefer a more prescriptive plan so that they can be clear about timing and structure. The academic skills box, along with another created by a Learning Development colleague, were shortlisted for the university's Staff Changemaker Award, highlighting the opportunities they afford for learning outside of the institution.

The Resource in a Box project created valuable opportunities for schools and students, the relationships between schools and the institution, and for me as a practitioner. The process of planning and creating the resource, and of working with cross-phase colleagues, led to my own reflection and application of strategies within my teaching in university. The resource itself appears to hold value for students and teachers in schools, and further feedback will be acted upon in its development. Creating resources for those who we may never meet is a valuable exercise for reflection on one's own practice, providing the need to think differently about planning and resource creation. Collaborating throughout this process augments not only the resource but also professional development, and in cross-phase cases may also help others understand more about the settings they are working with – in both directions.

References

CAST (2018) 'Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2', CAST [online], (available from: https://tinyurl.com/dzrxveaw).

Dunlosky, J. and Rawson, K. A. (2012) 'Overconfidence produces underachievement: inaccurate self-evaluations undermine students' learning and retention', *Learning and Instruction,* 22, pp. 271-280.

Muijs, D., Ainscow, M., Chapman, C. and West, M. (2011) *Collaboration and Networking in Education*, Dordrecht: Springer.

Palmer, E., Lomer, S. and Bashliyska, I. (2017) 'Overcoming barriers to student engagement with Active Blended Learning: interim report', University of Northampton [online], (available from: https://tinurl.com/2unxev98).

Schmidt, J. A., Rosenberg, J. M. and Beymer, P. N. (2018) 'A person-in-context approach to student engagement in science: examining learning activities and choice', *Journal of Research in Science Teaching,* 55(1), pp.19-43.

Wanner, T. and Palmer, E. (2015) 'Personalising learning: exploring student and teacher perceptions about flexible learning and assessment in a flipped university course', *Computers and Education,* 88, pp. 354-369.

Woods, L., Dockery, R. and Sharman, A. (2019) 'Using UX research techniques to explore how Computing undergraduates understand and use library and student guidance services', *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education,* 16, pp.1-23.

Amy West (amy.west@northampton.ac.uk) is a Learning Development Tutor at the University of Northampton.

Information for Contributors