

Blogging and Academic Practice: Learning from *Teaching Matters*

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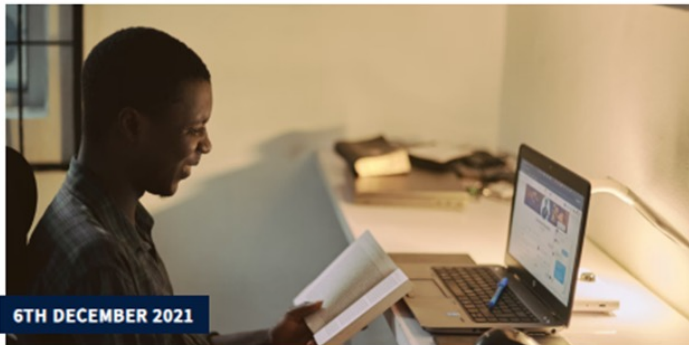
Teaching Matters blog

Promoting, discussing and celebrating teaching at The University of Edinburgh



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A student's views on teaching during the pandemic



2ND DECEMBER 2021

Podcast: Wikimedia and Academia (24 minutes)

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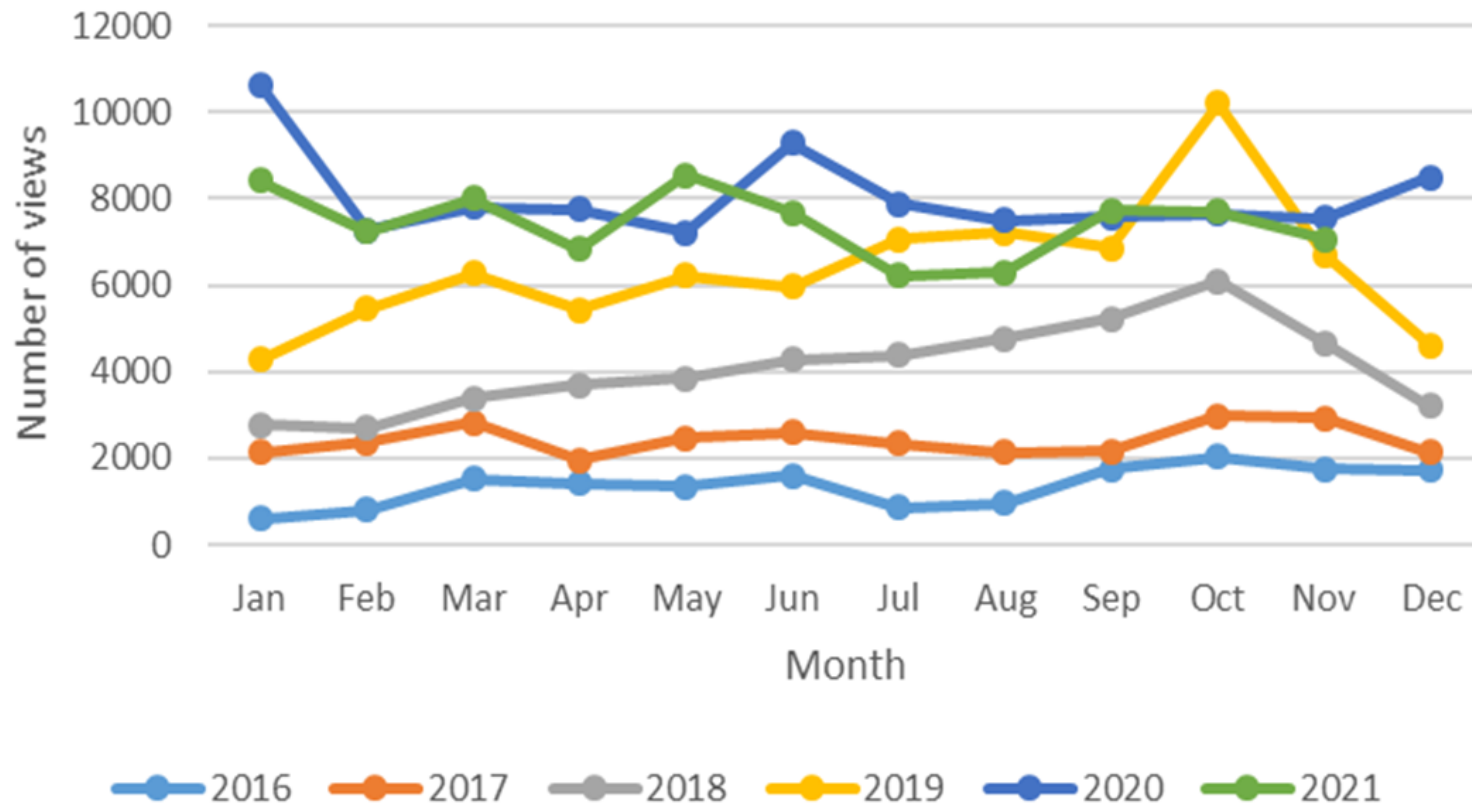


Sign up to receive email notifications when a new blog post or podcast episode is published

- Two themes: Hot Topic & Learning and Teaching Enhancement (last 2 months)
- Weekly podcast episodes
- Monthly newsletter

www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk

Teaching Matters blog view: 2016-2021



Some stats for 2021

858 posts; 650+ contributors; 3,083 Twitter followers

Most popular month – May (8,600 views)

- Reflections from the last year
- The Edinburgh Teaching Awards

Most read posts

- Pedagogy and technology from a postdigital perspective (1700 reads)
- Decolonising the Curriculum – Sharing Ideas: The Podcast Series (1300 reads)

Newsletter

- Around 500 views/newsletter
- Collegiate commentary – 5 external institutions

Podcast

- 7,000 total listens; 60%+ of listeners weekly/returning listeners
- 37 episodes published
- Most popular episodes:
 - Student mental health and online engagement (268 listens)
 - Feminist teaching (349)
 - Episodes from the Learning and Teaching conference series (690)

Beyond the metrics...



Tim Fawns
@timbocop

Of about 150 @UoE_Teaching blog posts in 2020, I wrote or co-wrote the top 3.

Recognition is rare. Stuff modesty, I'm tweeting about this! 😊 (also, thanks for reading the posts!).



Top Ten Teaching Matters Posts of 2020
teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk

07:37 · 16/01/2021 · Twitter Web App



www.ed.ac.uk/iad

10:44



Mary Jacob L&T
@MaryJacobTEL1

Clear summary of seminal pedagogical lit to help make learning meaningful, good for new #AberPGCTHE folks. Learning and teaching approaches in Higher Education: Promoting deep learning through constructive alignment teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/learning-and-t... @UoE_Teaching



teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk
Learning and teaching approaches in Higher Education: Promoting deep learning through co...

09:45 · 26/11/2021 · Twitter Web App



Tweet your reply



Oh my gosh, this is so exciting!!! It looks great, thank you so much!! We did it, yeay! My first ever blog, I can't believe it. 😊 Thank you both so very much!! With best wishes, and a definitive boost to keep working on the journal article.

Data Collection

- Two online surveys (Summer 2019)
 - N=101 contributors; 39 readers
 - Reader habits, barriers and benefits, conversations with others, and impact of blogging.
- One focus group (Experienced Teacher network)
- One editor interview (Charlie Jeffrey)
- Twitter trace pilot

Upcoming (PTAS award: *Conversations, community and collegiality: Exploring the effect of blogging on teaching and learning practice*):

- 20+ Interviews (internal and external readers, and contributors)

2-3 twitter trace case studies

Motivations to write blog posts

- Invitation
- Reach & engagement of topic
- Inspire others – enthusiasm of topic
- Disseminate research findings
- Share teaching practice
- Shameless self-promotion! (CV addition)
- Engaging with wider community of practice
- Enjoyment of writing
- Stir-up discussion
- To be heard: “Frustration about lack of visibility of teaching in institution and no coherent academic voice for educators to inform policy”

Benefits of writing a blog

(compared to other forms of academic communications)

- Immediacy: “It gets new ideas out into the public sphere faster than does academic publishing.”
- Reaching a wider audience; jargon-free
- Helpful writing exercise: “Forces you to simplify and tighten up your ideas.”
- Freedom: of format, of conformity, of opinion, of academic voice.

“It **covers a middle ground** that is/was largely unrepresented in academic writing, namely that between idea generation/brainstorming/initial discussion and published work”

Benefits of reading a blog post

“Digestible, easy to read, more personalised”.

- Accessible
- Informal
- Personable
- Brevity/short
- “Easy to read on the bus”

“Blogs are an informal form of reflection. Instead of being bound by academic conventions requiring references, blogs allow the flexibility of expressing thoughts”

Unexpected benefits of blogging

Invitations: “I have entered into many collaborations with individuals who first met me through my blog: for example, I authored several papers with a Finnish colleague who read a blog post of mine and commented on it. I have been approached to do consultancies in much the same way.”

Cathartic, enjoyable, sense of achievement: “The pleasure of expressing fresher ideas in a non-peer-reviewed format yet still doing so in writing and publically.”

Generating connections: “I guess the positive conversations were nice! I was not expecting that.”



Contd..

- Raising academic profile (externally)
- Served as record of professional development
- Gained a new skill
- Increasing visible presence/Exposure to senior management
- Raising awareness of a new practice
- Promotional evidence
- Sense of achievement/recognition

Barriers to academic blogging

- 18% contributors said **there was** a barrier
- **Time**
- Fear of putting opinion 'out there'
- Ruffling feathers/internal politics
- Stepping on colleague's academic territory
- No writing support for staff
- Lack of value in allocation times
- Revealing results before publishing journal article



Barriers for readers to engage with blog posts

- **Time**
- Formatting: Too long, bad layout.
- Content: Dull, unclear/misleading title, outwith interest area, self-important

Reappropriating blogging as academic development practice

- Repurposing editor role for academic development: not a transaction approach - we get the output *and* the process, not just the output.
- Education developer as nurturer: Adding value through the act of developing the podcast episode and blog post; draws on co-creation
- Upskilling practice one person at a time. It's not about the downloads, it's about the development practice.

Discussion

1. What do we mean when we use the words/terms:
 - Accessible
 - Informal
 - Personable
 - Sharing practice

Discussion

2. What does practice of sharing practice look like?

- How can we trace it and make it visible?
- What materialities are invoked?
- What counts as sharing practice?... Raising awareness, new ways of thinking, new ways of doing, new shifts in institutional culture?

How to sign up to...

- Blog: <https://edin.ac/2GpQdPF>
- Newsletter: <https://edin.ac/3oocXGh>
- Podcast: <https://edin.ac/2ZXgZMn>
- Twitter: @uoe_teaching
- Instagram: uoe_teaching
- LinkedIn: Teaching Matters

Interested in being interviewed?

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