



University of
BRISTOL



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**The Curriculum
Enhancement Programme**





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THE VISION FOR CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT

Developing an inspiring, engaging, and intellectually rigorous education for all our students is at the heart of our vision for curriculum enhancement. The University has grown by over 50% in the last ten years and the demography of our student population has changed. Our curriculum needs to keep in step with these changes. Our mission is to diversify our educational provision and ensure that all students can achieve their potential as they are challenged by our research-rich curriculum. Curriculum enhancement draws on the central idea that studying for a degree is more than mastering knowledge and skills. It is about students coming

to know their discipline, becoming insiders to its methods and practices, and being transformed to see the world and their disciplines with growing expertise and authority. Curriculum enhancement embraces the idea that higher education is transformative for students and society, and should enable them to be producers of knowledge, critical citizens, and be contributors to addressing global and local challenges. It calls on the kind of teaching and learning that builds both student agency and intellectual humility. A vision for curriculum enhancement must have a practical outworking if it is to have any meaning. Read on to find out how we are realising the vision!

Creating the vision

The first step in our vision was to gather members of our academic, professional services, and student community together to identify our values and aspirations for our curriculum at Bristol. This process articulated the ideas and principles central to the Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework and built on the concepts within Bristol Futures, which had set out our vision for an interdisciplinary education that addresses global and civic challenges. Our curriculum framework is a visual representation of a transformative education. It uses six houses typical of Bristol's cityscape to encapsulate the dimensions which we believe can make a difference to students so that they in turn can change the world for the better. Our curriculum sets out to **inspire students to be innovative** by encouraging them to experiment, take risks, and be active participants in their learning; it builds on our strong research base to foster **intellectual stimulation**, encouraging students to

become curious and critical thinkers; it balances enabling students to become **disciplinary** insiders with a wider understanding of the power of **interdisciplinarity** to solve complex problems. These intellectual pursuits are strengthened when the curriculum attends to students' personal development, creating opportunities for reflection and learning from mistakes, building students' confidence, critical skills, and their appreciation for provisional knowledge; it is further strengthened when students from all walks of life develop a **sense of belonging** through dialogue and empathy in an inclusive learning environment. Our curriculum aims to take students beyond self and the walls of the university to address problems and explore big questions facing the world, challenging them to contribute their time, talents, and knowledge through **global and civic engagement**.



Realising the vision

The University has invested in a five-year Curriculum Enhancement Programme (CEP) in support of the University's 2030 strategic vision to deliver an inspiring education and student experience. A dedicated Curriculum Enhancement team led by the PVC Education and Students and managed by a Senior Project Manager from our Strategic Projects team, lead collaborative design processes with all schools and programmes across the University.

Our vision is to embed the values of the curriculum framework in curriculum and assessment design through a systemic process of implementation. In the first phase of curriculum enhancement, over half of all single-honours programmes participated in at least one of the three enhancement methods:

- TESTA ('Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment') - a proven research and change process designed to enable members of programme teams to use evidence from students and educational principles to make programme-wide changes
- Fast-track TESTA - an innovative approach to gathering student voice data on teaching, learning, and assessment, engaging in a dialogue with programme teams about the implications, and discussing targeted interventions to improve students' academic experience
- Curriculum Festivals - blue skies events to relate and design the narrative of students' intellectual journeys through their programmes linked to the Bristol Futures curriculum framework.

Following initial rollout, we have developed and expanded our programme of initiatives in response to feedback and evolving challenges. We have funded and supported leadership development for Programme Directors, School Education Directors and others involved in curriculum enhancement to support the theory and practice of change at school and programme level. Over three years, six cohorts have participated in leadership development courses, engaging leaders in the process of becoming better equipped at leading change.

In the second major phase of curriculum enhancement, we are implementing our strategic assessment priorities, in tandem with the changing Structure of the Academic Year (SAY) and programme simplification, working with all schools and programmes at Bristol. Our strategic assessment priorities reflect the findings of TESTA and draw together the major developments arising from the global pandemic, as well as seeking to future-proof assessment and feedback in the fast-changing world of generative artificial intelligence. The Curriculum Enhancement team have designed workshops which support teams to embed integrated assessment in their programmes, looking beyond modular walls to see the whole student experience of assessment and feedback; designing assessment 'for all' in ways that play to the strengths of individual students and scaffold their learning; and bringing theory and practice together to address complex real world and disciplinary problems through authentic assessment and feedback.

An evolving story of evaluation: how we determine impact

We evaluate each aspect of the Curriculum Enhancement Programme to understand and demonstrate the impact of initiatives against our goals and measures of success. We conducted qualitative interviews with programme directors about the usefulness of TESTA which showed its effectiveness in helping programmes to take a programme approach and rebalance formative and summative assessment. We have measured engagement and student satisfaction on the National Student Survey on our three main initiatives: TESTA, Fast-track TESTA, and Curriculum Festivals. Our evaluation approach

identifies changes in programmes using internal measures and links these to improvements in student learning. In evaluating our Curriculum Design Workshops, we use baseline data of curriculum and assessment design and compare this with planned changes, and we will be measuring the effectiveness of these changes. We also use formative evaluation to respond to participant feedback and continuously improve our workshops. An important component of our change strategy is to build the capacity of education leaders to bring about educational change on their programmes.

A STORY IN STATS

81

Total events
to date

1121

Students engaged
across TESTA
Initiatives

24

Schools out of 29
engaged with
Curriculum
Enhancement
to date

WHAT IS TESTA?

TESTA combines evidence of assessment patterns across the programme from the staff audit with data from a student questionnaire and focus group to create a detailed account of how students experience the learning and assessment environment on the programme. The findings are summarised in a written report which is then discussed at a staff debrief.

What are the main steps?

- Programme Audit: a discussion between the Programme Director and the TESTA team to create a picture of assessment at a programmatic level. We also take a sample of feedback writing from across the three years to calculate an average of how much feedback a student might expect (90 mins)
- Student Questionnaire: administered to the whole cohort during a timetabled teaching session (15 mins)
- Student Focus Group: a group discussion with final year students led by a member of the TESTA team (60 mins)
- Staff Debrief: the team present the TESTA findings, make suggestions and encourage discussions between the staff. We encourage as many staff to attend the debrief as possible (90 mins).

PROGRAMME AUDIT

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP

STAFF DEBRIEF

I've been a teaching focused academic for my entire career and I found it a breath of fresh air to actually be able to seriously devote time to those discussions, and suddenly have not just a process but a PVC behind it.

” Programme Director BA Anthropology

The focus group is a safe space where you can have a free conversation about your programme's assessment.

” MSc Education Student

A wonderful opportunity to share my feedback on assessment.

” MSc Education Student



At the time I was concerned it would be a box ticking exercise, but it wasn't that at all. It offered us ways forward, drawing clearly on pedagogic research. What we got out of it was very valuable data and feedback which has both allowed us to make changes but reinforced the way we teach as well.

Jan Wozniak, BA Theatre Studies and performance

FAST-TRACK TESTA

Fast-track TESTA is a lighter touch process that provides an insight into the things students value about their programme, and what they feel could be enhanced. Fast-track TESTA is an effective way to 'check in' with your students to find out how they respond to changes on the programme or identify quick adjustments to make your programme even better!

Student workshop

The TESTA team will run a workshop with your students providing them with the opportunity to reflect on what works well and suggest changes they would find useful. We run the workshop with final year students as they have experience of assessment and teaching across the whole programme.

Staff debrief

In the staff debrief, the team will discuss the outcomes of the workshop and present an analysis of the student feedback. As with full TESTA debriefs, we encourage as many staff to attend as possible to foster diverse conversations about teaching on the programme.

What are the possible outcomes?

- Reduction in the number of summative assessments
- More planned, timely opportunities for formative assessment
- Increased value and prominence of formative learning
- Reduction in the assessment load overall (for staff and students alike)
- Increase in students' engagement and understanding of standards for success
- Improved design of programme-level assessment (both horizontal and vertical)
- Enhancement of the structure of the assessment and feedback cycle
- Improvement in NSS scores and other measures through changes to the student assessment experience.

SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE

Curriculum Festivals

What is a Curriculum Festival?

We have been running Curriculum Festivals with programmes across the University of Bristol since 2019. Targeted towards those who are developing a new programme or enhancing an existing one, Curriculum Festivals are designed to foster transformative programme change that both you and your students can get excited about.

Curriculum Festivals are dedicated time and space for everyone who teaches or supports learning on the programme to think about and plan the 'big picture' in a way that allows all stakeholders to take ownership. We encourage as many teaching staff to attend as possible but representatives from the Careers Service, the School Office, Library Services, as well as Faculty Employability advisers and industry-linked employers who can provide different perspectives and frame discussions, are also encouraged to take part.

Why is the student voice important?

The student voice is essential when designing curriculum and we encourage you to invite students to your Curriculum Festival to enrich conversations and foster co-creation – staff are often surprised by their contributions.

I enjoyed the interactions with both my lecturers and the admin team, as we strived to better the course using a variety of activities

Crispian Morris
MEng Engineering Maths
Course Rep

What will we do?

Led by one of our Senior Academic Developers, Curriculum Festivals involve a series of creative and thoughtful activities. We will engage you in:

- Thinking about what attributes you want your students to develop during the programme and how the design of your curriculum will deliver that
- Exploring and expanding the meaning of curriculum to reflect on ways you can transform how students think and practise their subject
- Developing with your programme team your overarching story/masterplan for the programme.

Curriculum Festivals are a full-day event. Lunch will be provided and refreshments are available throughout.



What do participants say?

“ I was very engaged throughout. The team were professional and worked well together. ”

“ We very rarely get the opportunity to have everyone involved in programme delivery from all levels, schools and divisions of the university. It's good to meet everyone and have the opportunity to get out of a narrow disciplinary lane a little. ”

“ I was expecting to enjoy it. I *really* enjoyed it. ”

“ I found the dedication and passion of the staff attending quite inspiring. ”

Curriculum Design Workshops

New in 2023, the Curriculum Design Workshops are school-wide events to support teams to bring about curriculum and assessment changes in readiness for the revised Structure of the Academic Year (SAY), programme simplification, and the University's new Assessment and Feedback Strategy. The workshops bring together your ideas, best practice from across the University, and discipline-based ideas. It is productive, fun, and helps you to make decisions about your programmes in light of the University's three interrelated strategic developments.

These in-person workshops typically run for a full day and include lunch and refreshments for all attendees. As many teaching staff as possible are encouraged to attend, especially Programme and Unit Directors, as well as representatives from the School Office, Careers and Faculty Employability Advisers, critical friends and industry-linked employers. Just like Curriculum Festivals, we particularly recommend inviting current students or recent graduates to your workshop.

What will we do?

We will engage you in activities, discussions, and productive tasks which enable you to:

- Understand the rationale for University-wide changes and their anticipated benefits
- Identify the kinds of graduate qualities your programme is aiming to develop in your students
- Become familiar with the University's assessment priorities and what they look like in practice (using examples from colleagues and externals)
- Undertake team-based activities to understand your programme's current assessment in relation to the assessment priorities and to generate fresh ideas which align more closely with it
- Work productively on planning unit and programme level changes to align with programme simplification and SAY changes, with a particular focus on assessment
- Take away actions from the workshop and have a clear understanding of timelines, your role and team responsibilities.



The workshop was a positive learning experience that included useful and stimulating group activities to help us to get to grips - as a team with the upcoming changes. Before the workshop, the team worked with us to determine the specific needs of our School. The facilitation team were knowledgeable, friendly and have helped us to feel supported beyond the workshop.

Catherine Kelly, LLB Law



WRITING RETREATS

If you had to make an elevator-pitch to a student on an open day about your unit, what would you say? It would likely be jargon-free and aimed to motivate students to study your course. However, in practice, students don't get excited reading unit descriptors and are sometimes left feeling uninspired by their curriculum.

Writing Retreats help you to develop student-focused, genuinely engaging unit descriptors. If your programme has recently held a Curriculum Festival or Curriculum Design Workshop and you are in the process of re-structuring your units – a Writing Retreat is for you.

Writing Retreats are half-day, in-person events that include lunch. We encourage as many of the programme team to attend as possible, especially Unit Directors.

What will we be doing?

One of our Senior Academic Developers will lead you in activities which will allow you to:

- Share with others what the vision of the units is and see what excites them. What do they hear?
- Discuss the new way of writing unit descriptors and how it compares with the old and consider the importance of the language that we use
- Collaborate in teams to capture the ideas and write the new descriptors.

The outcome of these activities is imaginative and engaging descriptors for a student audience.

Even after the Writing Retreat, our team are available for continued support.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT

Our Leadership Development Programme is a bespoke training course delivered in partnership with our external partners, MY Consultants.

The aim of the programme is to support Programme Directors (and other colleagues with similar responsibility for curriculum) in tackling common challenges and issues faced, and empower them to get the most out of the Curriculum Enhancement process.

Although this is primarily designed for Programme Directors taking new programmes through the Curriculum Enhancement process, the training has proven useful for a range of colleagues engaged in working with curricula. Previous participants have included School Education Directors, Heads of School, and Faculty Education Directors.

Programme structure

The programme consists of six two-hour workshops over the course of approximately ten weeks, and three action learning sets, all facilitated by our expert consultant Dr Robin Henderson.

There is no additional preparation or reading time outside these sessions required. Overall, the programme takes approximately 18 hours.

The workshops are themed but the focus is down to the experiences of the participants.

Outcome:

Following the programme, we hope to see participants feeling more comfortable and confident in their own curriculum work – whether

that's getting a new programme up and running or supporting colleagues engaged in curriculum review.

Approximately six months after the programme is complete, participants will be invited to a final workshop to discuss the impact of the training and feed back to us about their experiences.

What previous participants say:

Robin was a brilliant course leader – he was engaging, friendly, and excellent at communicating with us all.

It was good to hear about challenges other people are facing and think through ways they could handle the situation.

The team have been very supportive and responsive.

Lots of practical tips with theoretical background.



To find out more or register
an expression of interest,
scan the QR code below:



Meet our expert:

Dr Robin Henderson is a higher education consultant with a strong track record in delivering leadership and management development, and in supporting change-management initiatives within higher education. He works with a wide spectrum of staff within HEIs and has worked with over 30 universities within the UK and Europe. Within this work he brings a detailed understanding of the HE sector combined with direct experience of both academic and professional service (in learning enhancement) roles.

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

If your team requires targeted support on a specific area of learning, teaching or assessment we can provide bespoke workshops for all faculties, schools and departments at the University. These can be standalone events but often complement other initiatives like TESTA when teams want further support on something specific and we work closely with the Programme Director to ensure that we deliver an engaging session tailored to your needs.

A Bespoke Workshop in action:

In January 2023 we ran a workshop with BSc Veterinary Nursing on Formative Assessment to explore how they could implement it within the subject

During the workshop our team engaged participants by:

- sharing experiences of using and participating in formative assessment
- disseminating examples of good practice, supported by literature
- planning how to implement formative assessment in taught units.

As a result Veterinary Nursing are:

- introducing two-stage exams
- changing from individual peer feedback to group peer feedback to create a more dialogic and reflective approach
- looking to publish the outcomes once there is student evaluation data.

What did the Programme Director say?

“The formative assessment work filled the team with enthusiasm and a range of innovative assessment ideas which we couldn’t wait to try. The facilitators were very informative and tailored the workshop to our needs. Their support after the event has also been valuable”.

Gemma Irwin Porter, BSc Veterinary Nursing

How did students feel about the new two stage exams?

“Worth giving to all years”.

“I really enjoyed the session and enjoyed working in a group so I could learn from my peers”.

“Very worthwhile, helps to teach exam question layout and boost confidence”.

BSc Veterinary Nursing Students

Other examples of workshop topics might include:

Group work

Feedback

Team work

**Designed
for all
assessment**

**Integrated
Assessment
Design**

**Assessment
marking
criteria**

**Internalising
Standards**

Workshops can take place in person or online depending on advice from the Programme Director or Head of Department/School. They vary in length but generally run for a few hours.

MEET THE TEAM

Curriculum Enhancement sits within the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching. We frequently collaborate with the BILT team on our project.



Professor Tansy Jessop
Pro Vice-Chancellor
Education and Students



Elena Christie
Senior Project Manager



Dr Mark Allinson
Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor
Learning and Teaching



Professor Paul Wyatt
Senior Academic
Developer and Chemist



Dave Gatrell
Academic Developer:
Evaluation lead



Professor Alvin Birdi
Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor
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Dr Joel Ross
Senior Academic Developer
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Andy Moss
Programme Support Officer



Professor Kate Whittington
Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor
Education Quality and Standards



Dr Sheila Amici Dargan
Senior Academic
Developer and Biologist



Sarah Davies
Director of Education
Innovation



Ros O'Leary
Head of BILT



Joe Gould
Research Associate:
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Get in touch:

To contact or book an event with us, email the team:
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For more information, scan the QR code or head to our website at bristol.ac.uk/bilt/our-work-and-who-we-are/curriculum-enhancement

