

Just ‘popping in’: the rise of informal peer observation in online teaching

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FDN012 Essential Study Skills Teaching Team

FDN012 Essential Study Skills

2020 - 2021

- Common module for Integrated Foundation Year (IFY) Programme
- Cohort of over 400 students across 9 subject Pathways
- 16 seminars delivered weekly, online live via Teams (unknown online landscape)
- Teaching Team of five academics
- Implementation of Instructional Design principles, including the use of storyboard technique
- Team ethos: **'teach, reflect/report back and improve for the next session'**



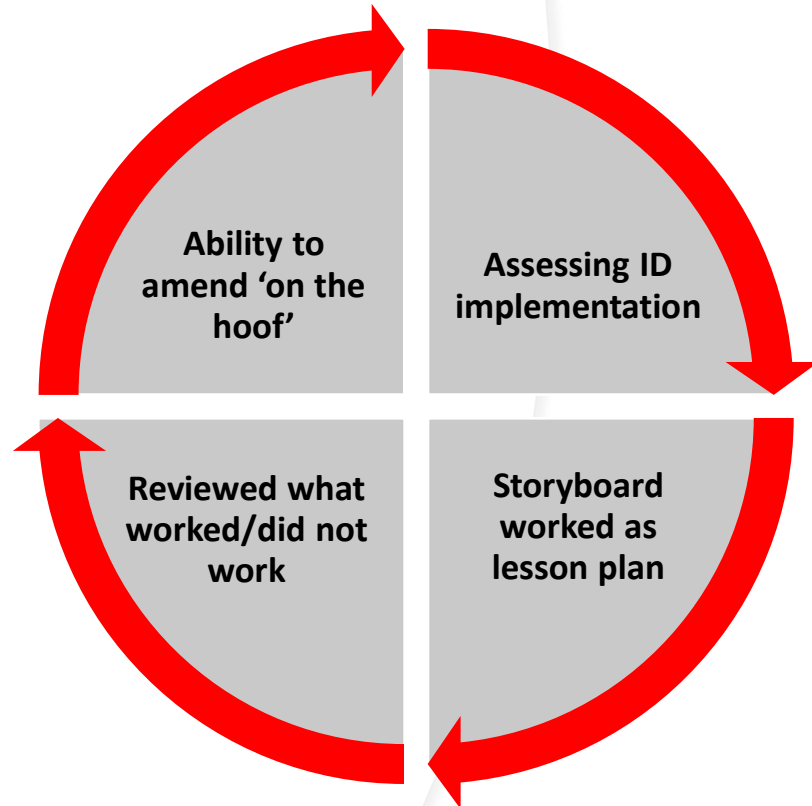
Observer / Observee

- Easy to 'pop in' online (as opposed to more formal process)
- Less obvious to the observee having observer 'lurking' in the background
- Students less aware there was another tutor in the class
- Observing tutor gets an idea of what to do before their 'turn' to teach, in a crowded timetable of sessions
- Confidence builder – reassuring to know it was not 'just me'
- Useful to feedback to Module Leader / Teaching Team via Teams, before next seminar
- Monday morning tutors felt like 'Guinea Pig'
- Informal observation was less intrusive though prior warning for the observee would have been appreciated, initially
- Emphasis was on supporting colleagues with new tech/content rather than assessing teaching ability



Module Leader Perspective

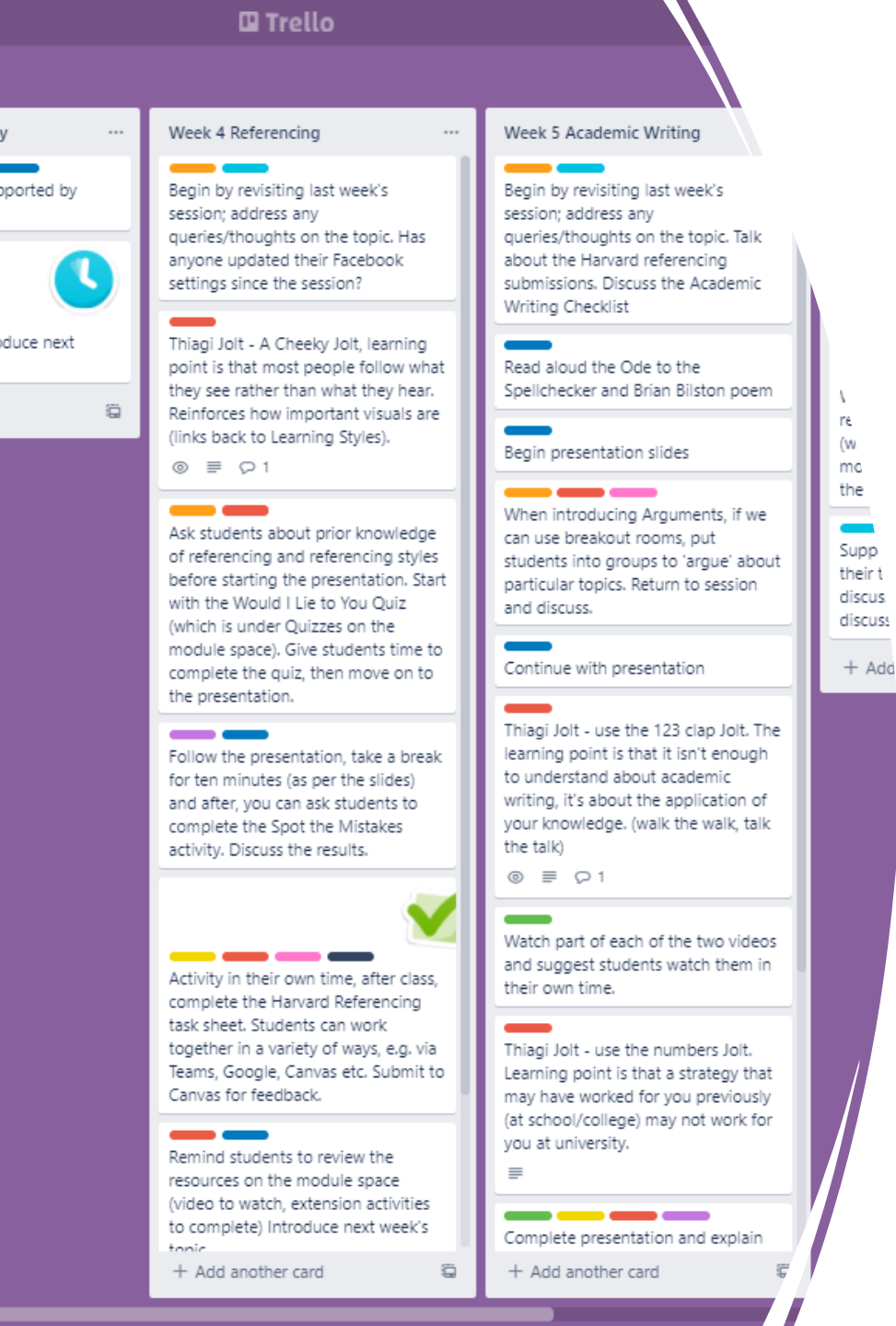
Instructional Design (ID)



Support for staff

- Using new technology (Teams)
- Ability to assess implementation of new module content/delivery
- Ensuring parity of student experience across all 16 seminars
- Basis for weekly team round-ups
- Ability to step in if lecturer was delayed





FDN012 Trello board

- Detailed plan for the teaching team to work to
- Promoted parity of student experience across all 16 weekly seminar sessions
- Colour coded ID principles
- Easy to update based on observer /observee experience
- Basis of Friday tutor round-up



Benefits for the Teaching Team

- CPD 'on the hoof'
- Live online sessions facilitated immediate discussion/feedback on content, tools and delivery – reflective practice on the go
- 'Teams' space worked well, sharing experiences prior to the next tutor's seminar
- Improved team collegiality during a time of very little face-to-face interaction
- Reassuring knowing it was not 'our' teaching at fault, when tasks did not work as planned
- New team member felt supported by colleagues as observers

Bringing it all together

Friday round-ups

- Regular meetings at the end of the working week built on observations;
- An opportunity to discuss what went well and what could be/was improved on during the week;
- Opportunity to go over following week's planned session activities;
- A social time to get together and relax before the weekend, which improved team cohesiveness online;
- Teaching Team ethos: **'teach, reflect/report back and improve for the next session'**.

Friday round-ups proved so valuable, we aim to continue them next academic year.

Informal observations were key to optimal module delivery in an unknown teaching and learning landscape.

