

## **Learning and Teaching Conference 2010**

Abstract 1B

### **Online Reflexive Diaries: Embedding Deep Learning and Personal Development Through Assessment and Feedback**

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Reflexive writing activity through the use of diaries, blogs and portfolios are increasingly used within higher education, particularly among professional development and vocational courses (e.g. medicine, dentistry, education) as a means of facilitating and assessing learning. This is not readily reflected in mainstream academic teaching, despite growing evidence which suggests that diaries have multiple benefits, including: (1) supporting independent learning, (2) providing a space for students to locate and order their thoughts, (3) counteracting possible 'spoon feeding' associated with detailed handouts/lecture notes and (4) encouraging reflective or reflexive practice associated with deep learning and self assessment (Moon 2003: 7-8). The encouragement of reflective practice is itself fundamental in the transition to lifelong learning; embarking on a journey where learning is perceived as an integral part of life, and previous experiences are used to inform future decisions and choices. Utilising joint research undertaken by staff from LBSS and FBLS, this paper will outline the student and staff experiences of diary writing and online facilitation technology (Mahara) to provide some evaluation of two cases where diaries have been used as formal assessment in undergraduate courses. The cases reflect different types of courses, the first being an intensive two week course (Business and the Biosciences) and the other running as a two semester course with weekly seminars (Central and Eastern Europe: perspectives on Security Since 1945). Bearing in mind the University of Glasgow's own learning and teaching strategy to engage students with teaching and approaches to learning which support their development as motivated learners, independent and critical thinkers and promote confidence and awareness in their skills, the paper will evaluate the benefits of diaries as an alternative assessment method which combats surface learning, offers enhanced feedback mechanisms and embeds personal development within the undergraduate curriculum, all of which serve to facilitate the transition to lifelong learning.