# Good Practice in Teaching Podcast Ep.02 Melanie Giles, automated transcript

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Welcome to the second podcast in our podcast series. Good Practice in Teaching.

I'll be talking to Melanie Giles, a senior lecturer in Archaeology in the School

of Arts Languages and Cultures. Melanie talks about her experience of using it.

Of ATIV assessment, in particular her use of groupwork to get students to produce

a collaborative radio programme.

Hi Becki. It's Dr. Melanie, Giles here from the Department of Classics, Ancient History Archaeology and Egyptology, and thanks very much for inviting me to talk to you today about the challenges I faced last year with adapting my teaching online and how I was helped by the eLearning facilities on offer through the University of Manchester.

Thanks so much mail for coming. We really

Shades it. So and if you just tell me a bit more about the these challenges and

I think it's around assessment to just tell us a bit more about what happened and

how you overcame those challenges. So I run a module which is taught jointly between

level 2 and level 3 students called dealing with the dead. And I would normally

teach it in a classroom environment where the students would get together in small

groups or to produce one component of their assessment, which

is a joint assessment and the normal challenges I faced with that or getting them

to get to know each other and getting them to work together. Well in the classroom

and then set up meetings outside of that to plan their piece of work and the assessment

is is a radio program or a podcast. I suppose as we would describe it today and

they're supposed to go off and do some background research, put together a script

and produce a final digital recording. So, the way

In which the Mark was awarded to these groups was this assessment was worth fifty

percent of their grade. 25% of it went on a group, Mark the group project which

was shared between all of them. But 25% of it went on a set of minutes that they

had taken of the meetings. They've been to where they describe their role in the

process and what they contributed towards it. Now this obviously relies on a little

bit of honesty because some of them were Keen to promote the amount of work they

done to

Towards the radio program, but it became very obvious through the other minute books.

For that group. You know, who had really borne. The burden of the work where people

have gone above and beyond and those who are perhaps played unless a roll. So overall

though that 25% was generally a very good Mark. Then the minute books help temper

that with individual performance towards the final product so that I didn't have

any student complaints about, you know, feeling that, that was an unfair grade.

So when covid hit and we were all online.

The very first challenge I had, I suppose was was getting them to know each other

because many of them had not been on campus together. They haven't bumped into each

other in the corridor and the normal activities we would do in archaeology, like,

fieldwork working in the archaeology Labs. We have some lovely experimental archaeology

sessions. None of that happened. So I was using obviously, the kind of digital learning

environment to do that. Zoom meetings, I found

Really helped because I randomly assign these groups. They don't get to choose who

they work with because I like to mimic the workplace setting. So, I set them into

random groups of mixed second and third years, and there are quite separate learning

objectives there. The third is take a kind of leadership role and the second years

are given specific roles within the group. So actually, the zoom breakout rooms

really helped me there because I put them into those rooms, very immediately and

they had

introduce themselves and start to plan their project. But one of the things I know

can happen that other staff reported is that if you leave them alone, in their Zoom

rooms, they can be very quiet. And so one of the things we had to decide right at

the start, the module is how we wanted to conduct ourselves online. Now, the university

is very sensitive to the fact that some students found this very difficult. Some

students don't want to share their screen. They don't want to see themselves online.

They don't want to share their background and

That's not something that we can enforce. So we just had to try and create a really

supportive environment where people felt comfortable and confident to share with

each other. And they were nervous at first, but we did find by encouraging that

atmosphere. That it happened quite organically and once one or two of them. Did

it everyone else thought it was normal and that really helped actually form a kind

of sense of a friendship group that crossed the year groups and they did get to

see each other and they got kind of interact. So there's a lot of humor.

And I tended to leave him alone for a little bit, but then I would tell them that

I was going to drop into the group's quite you know for 10 minutes or so to discuss

what was going on each session. So that's how we did. It sounds amazing. It sounds

like you actually got some real positives out of going online and that Zoom helped

in some ways. Would you say that going online was was positive in terms of trying

to build those groups and those connections between the students.

Yeah, I think it was I mean I this is a module that can have up to around 50 students

on it and in a classroom. It's easy for some people to look at the back and even

when you rearrange the groups and you get them sit together, you know, some people

hang back a bit. So in a strange way, being put into a tiny digital environment

together where you know, might have four or five people. I think that that encourage

them to share their screens and to talk a little bit. And also, for the more shy

students. I've noticed that the

Function works really? Well. People who don't like speaking up, are far more comfortable

and confident expressing ideas or putting in links or putting ideas in the chat.

So I found that organically, they were beginning to use those Zoom Technologies

to help with their own skill set and where they fell within the group. There was

usually one very chatty person who took on the formal role of the chair. So I told

the group they could decide on their as roles between them and in a way.

A way that helps those those roles Fallout quite naturally. Once they found out

who was the person prompting people, the little groups that they were in vary between

around about seven to eight students and what also helped. I think along the line

was, you know, inevitably some of them got ill during that period, some of them

had care responsibilities or things that meant, they couldn't attend the odd meeting.

So sometimes that group attendance would fluctuate a bit, but it was much more obvious

when

Raps and somehow from those Zoom groups and I could keep an eye on that and Chase

students, where they were missing. But also the students, you know, having got into

the zoom habit, found it really easy to organize their extracurricular activities,

because it was much easier to get everybody together on a zoom meeting than it was

on campus and find a place in a coffee shop or in a spare classroom. So, I think

they met each other a lot more in between. Certainly, you could see that in the

volume of work, they put into the final pieces of the

Assessment, that's great. I wonder if if there are any things that you can do from

that online experience that you might use. Now, we're back on campus. So we often

find that the same sorts of things happen when we're on campus that, we've got groups

that don't necessarily work together very well. The shy ones often dust becoming

visible sometimes, and we don't even know they're there. So, what if there was anything

from this experience that you might take from to try and build that?

Sense of group work and Community when we're back on campus, you know, we must model

that good practice. This is what the workplace is going to be like in the next decade.

So I think I will keep that notion that the group work happens online in a zoom

meeting partly. Because we must ensure, there's parity there for the students who

are off campus or isolating or ill or just can't attend because of other reasons

because it's much easier to do that Zoom meeting. I think. Now the students have

got access to that technology.

EG wherever they are. They can join in and I'm sure that will help with that, the

more even balance and workload in attendance and I'll be doing a lot less chasing

the individual students than I used to do. So I'll be building that into my handbook.

That they're outside of the classroom. Sessions are Zoom sessions together and that

they take responsibility for organizing that. And for me, that means that on their

CV, they can show that they can work in a digital workplace and that they can organize

meetings. And

They've developed the netiquette protocols and principles and ethics of good group

work and respectful sharing. I think there are life skills here. I've certainly

learnt. Like if everybody talks over each other in a zoom meeting. It's impossible.

And actually maybe that's going to develop slightly better more respectful skills

in the classroom to that people speak with Clarity and with purpose, but they, they

let each other speak and there's much less muttering going on.

I hope so, anyway.

They were all really proud of what they've done by the end of it, and then they

got to share that, you know, normally they don't read each other's essays. They

don't go and look at each other as assignments, but they really loved listening

to what each other has produced. And of course, they learn much more than just doing

this solo assessment. So it really has gone on to inspire some to station topics

and hopefully some careers in the future. And when I develop this assessment, it

was very selfishly with an eye to the BBC down the road and

I thought you know, I need to train my students to go off and promote themselves

as researchers or medium workers. But we've got quite a tradition in, in our subject

areas of people who do quite a lot of media work, film television advice work, radio

programs, and television documentaries. And so I devised this assessment to give

them something that was very different and that they could take to the BBC. And

I didn't realize, I think in the world of the the post pandemic, how

Absolutely vital. An audio experience is and they are plugged in most of the time,

they are listening to stuff. We know that they're soaking up a lot of their academic

resources digitally. So, actually training them to produce that themselves in a

professional manner, I think is really valuable now in the small groups, what they

decide is, they'll be somebody who will take the final bits of sound effects music.

Some of them can pose their own music tracks, for example, they go away and they

do.

A Foley artist stuff chopping melons in half and crunching over gravel or do recording

an echo environments to mimic a museum, but they also create these wonderfully lyrical

and poetic scripts where the emphasis is upon the voice and the experience that

somebody is soaking up from their research and somebody puts that all together.

So they all have their own little digital Suite of skills. They develop through

this assessment, but the final product, absolutely speaks to the world. They live

in where they've

Music or podcast on all the time. So unwittingly. It's got a new lease of life in

a way in this contemporary world and we've seen that have a big impact on our students.

They're going off and making their own podcast. Now, they don't need us to help

them and that, you know, they're out there in the real world with their own podcast

series, getting their own audience, and that's up. That's a wonderful Testament

to where they might go next and a wonderful Testament to the work that you've been

doing. I think we can see your passion.

For it, but I'm, I'm sure the students really enjoyed it and I can see how much

they must get out of it. So, thanks so much again.