

Working together in the Cloud

Outcomes of a Teaching Intervention to develop Online Collaboration Skills of Undergraduate Midwifery Students.

Manfred Gschwandtner

Learning & Research Librarian (Health & Wellbeing)
Library & Learning Resources

Neil Reynolds

IT Training Partner
Information Technology



Background

Canterbury Christ Church University's
GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES



GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES
LEARNING &
TEACHING
STRATEGY

- ADAPTABLE
- DIGITALLY LITERATE**
- EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR
- INFORMED
- INNOVATIVE
- PROFESSIONAL
- SELF-AWARE

For a full description of the Graduate Attributes Statement and Associated Attributes, and academic case studies to support implementation, please visit:

www.canterbury.ac.uk/graduateattributes



Canterbury
Christ Church
University



Background – University Strategies

- **The University Learning & Teaching Strategy 2015 – 2020**

A key aspect of supporting success for all students is to “[encourage them] to use technology and a wide range of digital media to maximise and support learning.” Creating digitally literate students is one of the key graduate attributes that underpins this strategy (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2015).

- **Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy 2017**

“Our students will be supported to become adaptive and effective users of technology. Our graduates will be able to respond quickly and confidently to rapidly changing technologies in their field, and embrace emerging opportunities in an increasingly digital world.” (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2016b).

- **CCCU’s Strategic Plan for Research & Enterprise 2018 to 2023.**

Research literacy includes a range of digital capabilities such as collaborating in virtual space or accessing digital information and is therefore supported by this strategy.



External Drivers of Digital Literacy

- Increased focus on student **employability**
- Increased **student expectations and requirements**
- To **reduce barriers and increase independence** for students with disabilities

(UCISA, 2019)



JISC Digital Capabilities Framework

“6 Elements of digital capabilities”

“Digital capabilities are the capabilities which fit someone for living, learning and working in a digital society.”



<https://digitalcapability.jisc.ac.uk/what-is-digital-capability/>



CCCU Digital Capabilities Strategy

- Developed by the Digital Capabilities Working Group (Chair: Duncan MacIver, Manfred Gschwandtner)
- Aims of the strategy is to outline how CCCU will develop the digital capabilities of students and staff
- Provides support (e.g. Digital Capabilities Programme Reviews)
- **Online Collaboration was identified as a gap** in reviews we did with Health programmes.



Action Research Project

The aim of the project was to investigate, if a new interactive workshop about online collaboration encouraged undergraduate Midwifery students (Year 2) to create a presentation together in the cloud for a group work assignment.



Action Research Project

The main objectives were:

- to find out if students decided to collaborate online for their group work assignment or if they did not.
- to identify potential benefits and problems/barriers of online collaboration for group work assignments.
- to assess if a positive experience of collaborating online did have an impact on the overall group work experience.

The project was carried out for the Pedagogic, Research and Reflection (PRR) module of the Post Graduate Certificate for Academic Practice.



Action Research

Action research is a research methodology that tries to evaluate and to improve pedagogic practice and to reflect on the institutional and societal context and constraints of this practice (Arnold & Norton, 2018).

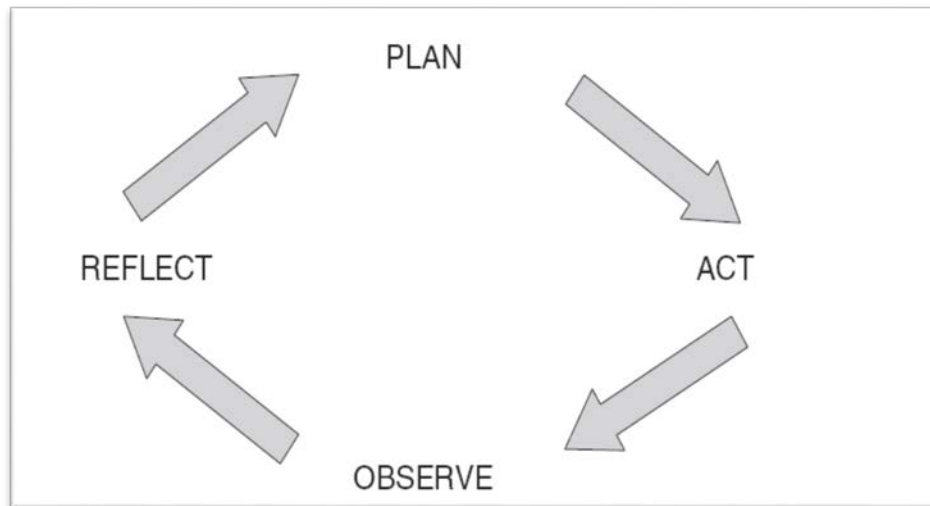


Figure 2.1 The Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect cycle (McAteer, 2013)



Methodology – Group

- 68 Year 2 undergraduate Midwifery students.
30 students came from CCCU's Medway campus (SM 17), and 38 from its Canterbury Campus (SC 17) as part of their “Public Health & Wellbeing” module.
- The summative assessment of this module was a group work assignment in which students had to prepare and deliver a presentation in small groups of 3 and 4 on a topic related to public health and wellbeing.
- In total, there were 17 groups (8 in Medway and 9 in Canterbury).



Methodology - Workshop

- In the workshop students learned how to create a presentation together in the cloud using Microsoft OneDrive and Microsoft PowerPoint
- Two workshops were offered in December 2018 by the Learning & Research Librarian (Health & Wellbeing), an IT Training Partner and an Academic Support Librarian. The workshop lasted for 2h.
- The workshops included discussion on working in the cloud and hands-on training to start the process of creating a presentation on OneDrive collaboratively.
- In the workshops, students already worked in the groups they were allocated to by their module leaders.



Methodology - Evaluation

- Online survey after their assignment in January
- 4 semi structured interviews with two students from the Canterbury group and two students from Medway group.
- An additional email was sent out to all students to verify if their group collaborated online or not.



Results

Survey responses: 32 out of 68 (47%)

Number of groups: 17

75% of students said they didn't create a document together in the cloud before

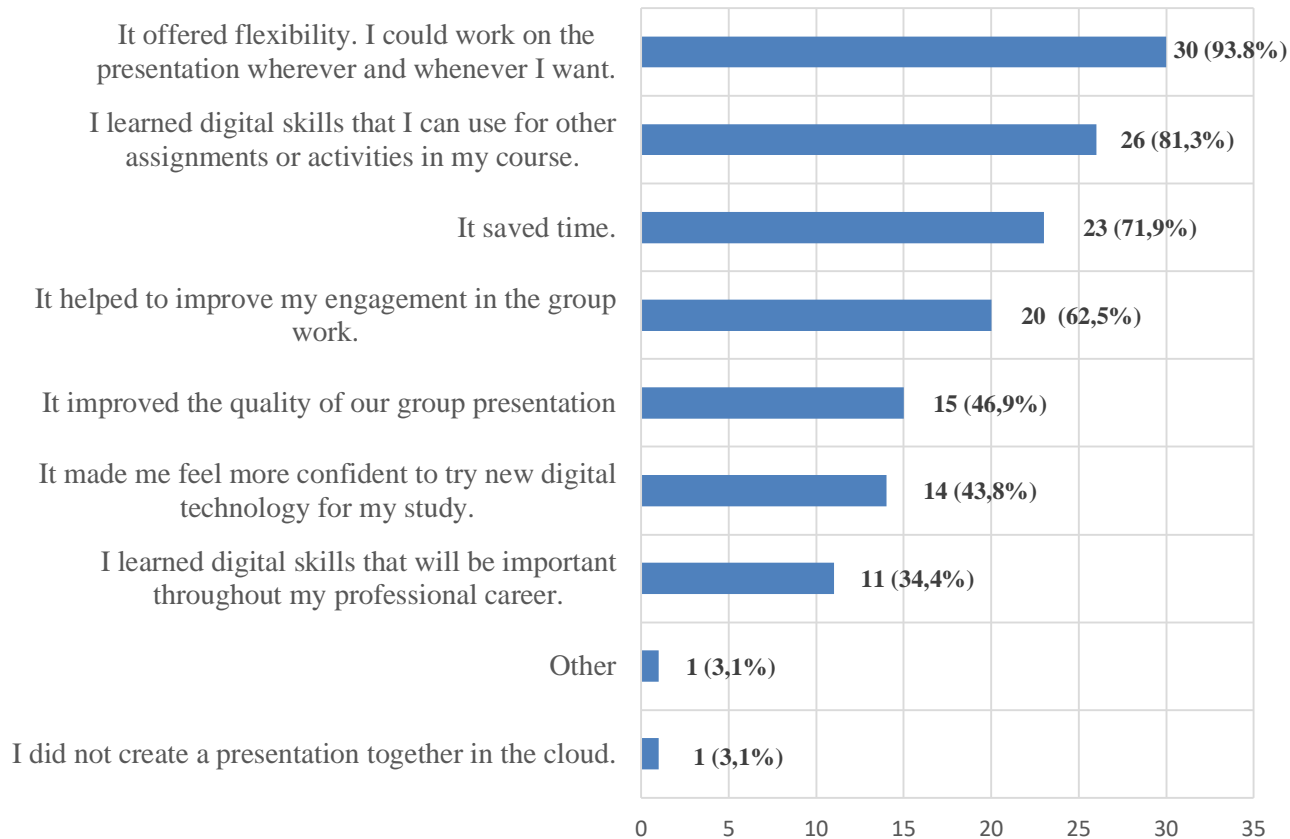
Table 1: Technology used by groups

	Groups using OneDrive and PowerPoint after the workshop	Groups using Prezzi	Groups using Google Slides and Slack	Groups that already used OneDrive and PowerPoint before the workshop	Groups not collaborating online	Total Nr. of groups
SM 17	5	1	1	0	0	7
SC17	7	1	0	1	0	9
	12 (75%)	2 (13%)	1 (6.3%)	1 (6.3%)	0	16



Results - Benefits

**Figure 3: After you created a presentation together in the cloud for the group work assignment, what do you think are the benefits? (n=32)
(Multiple Answers)**



Results - Benefits

Qualitative Feedback supported “Flexibility”, “Transferable Skills” and “Improved engagement”:

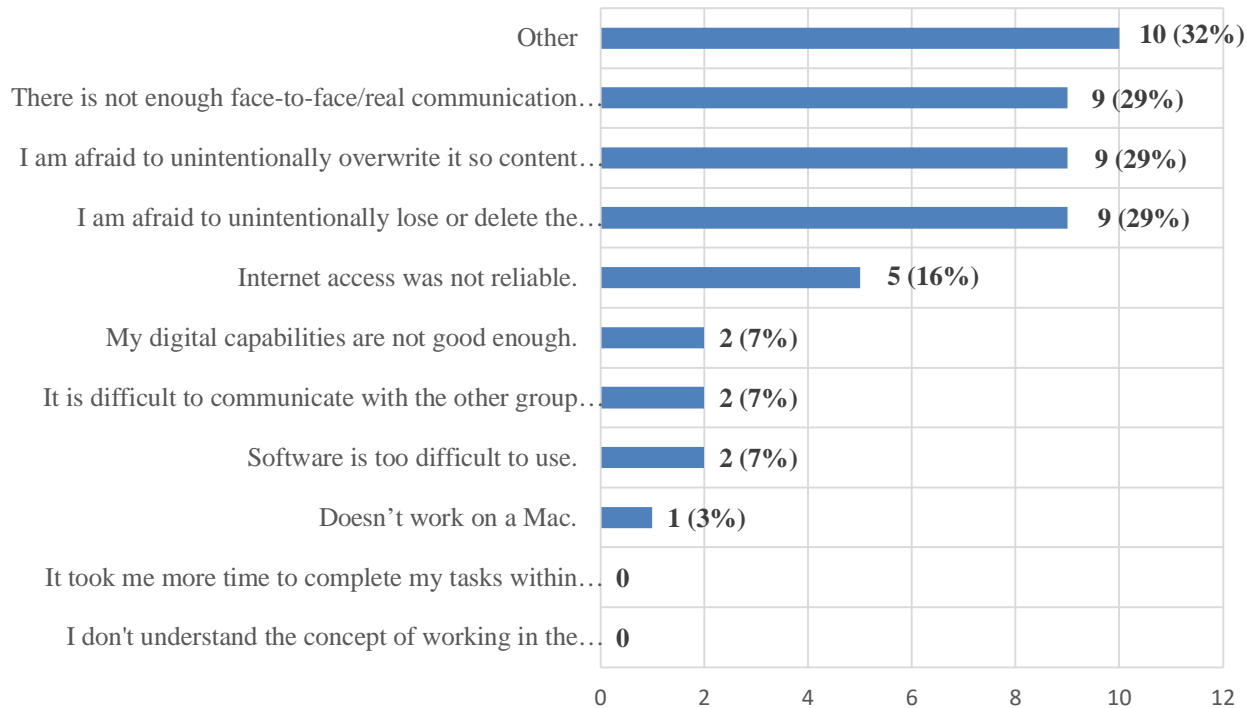
- Participants mentioned that they could *“edit the presentation at any time”* and *“you don’t have to come together, you can work on it on placement, when the group members have different shifts”*.
- They emphasised that it is much easier to meet online than to meet face-to-face mainly because often *“group members are geographically dispersed”*.
- *“I will use the skills and tools again for other group work in other modules.”*
- Working in the cloud made it easier for a student to contribute because she is usually a shy person in face-to-face group work, but online she could *“do it at home without anyone breathing down my neck.”*



Results – Problems/Barriers

Figure 4: After you created the presentation together in the cloud for the group work assignment, what do you think are the problems? (n=32)

(Multiple Answers)



The free text answers to “Other” showed the the problems were merely technical problems.



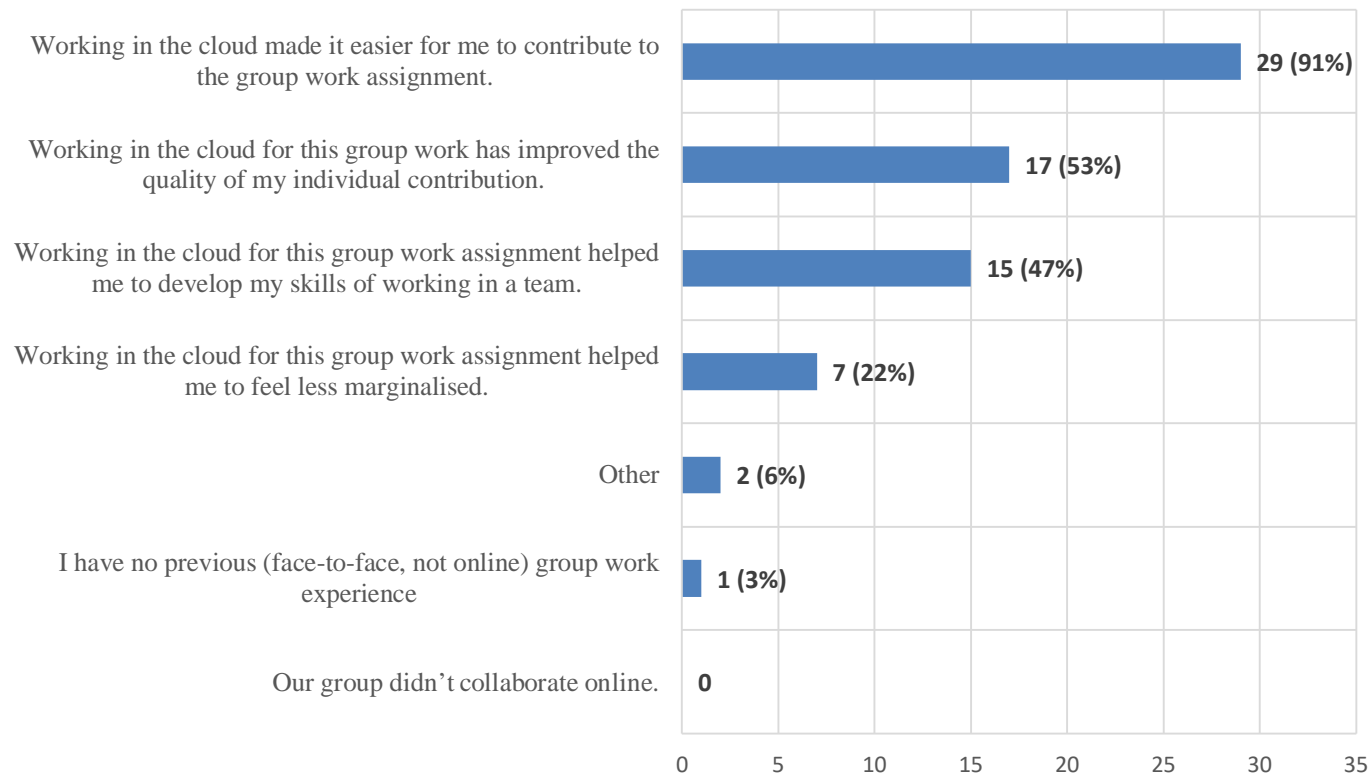
Results – Problems/Barriers

- The free text answers to “Other” showed the problems were mainly technical problems.
- Examples:
 - *“Sometimes it was stuck on “saving” then when reopening it had lost the stuff that had been worked on.”*
 - *“We were unable to add a video from computer storage within the online mode”*
 - *“Not all the PowerPoint options are available on the online version, i.e adding animations. Plus it was so much slower”*



Results – Impact on Overall Group Work

**If you compare a previous group work experience - that was face-to-face and not online
- with this online group work experience, which statements are true? (n=32)
(Multiple Answers)**



Results – Impact on Overall Group Work

In the interviews, students confirmed these results, but stating that

online collaboration *“evens contribution out. Because before it usually was the case that one person ends up to do the presentation and they had most work. All contribute to the academic work but then there is the visual aspect (pictures, make it nice) and this can take a lot of time. Online everyone contributes equally to the layout and the look of the presentation”*.

“in a face-to-face meeting there is limited time and often I don’t have an idea. If online, I have more time to develop ideas, and to add them when they come to my mind.”



Results

Figure 6: Overall, do you think that creating the PowerPoint presentation for this group work assignment together in the cloud was a positive experience? (n=32)

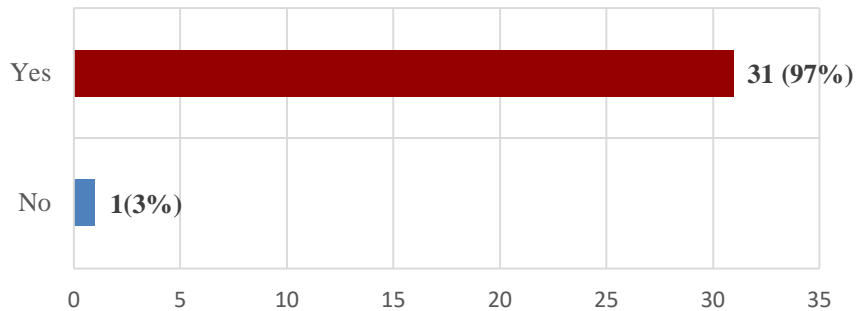
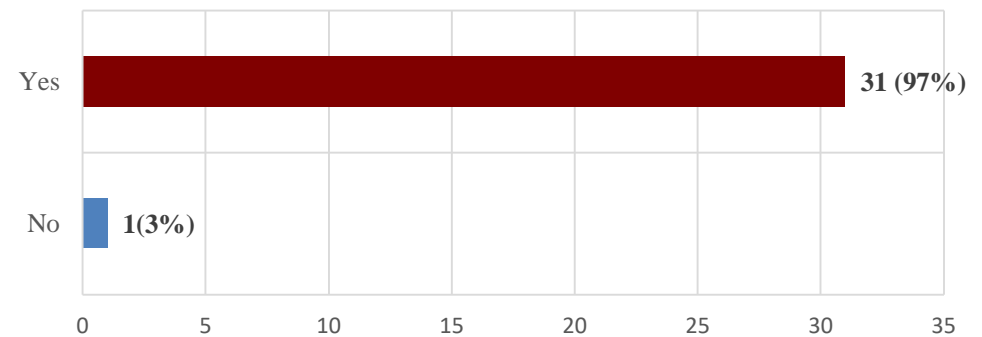


Figure 7: Would you recommend new students to create the PowerPoint presentation for this group work assignment together in the cloud? (n=32)



Outcomes

- The main learning outcome of the workshop was achieved and most students developed their digital capabilities.
- For most students it was a positive experience and they recommend it to other students
- Flexibility and developing transferable skills were seen as the main benefits.



Outcomes

- Technical problems and not enough face-to-face time where seen as the main problems.
- Embedding the workshop into a specific module with a group work assignment made it relevant and contributed to its success.
- Engagement from the Programme Director and the lecturers was essential to embedded it.



Shortcomings and further research

- No data on groups that did not work in the cloud together
-> Next iteration of the action research project should focus on this aspect.
- Possible impact on retention
 - Liz Thomas (2012) found out that “The primary times for considering leaving are immediately before and after Christmas” (p. 86)
 - Providing formative or summative assessments that include online collaboration over the Christmas period could potentially have an impact on retention because keeps the students connected to their peers (which enables peer support) and their university.



Contact

Manfred Gschwandtner

Learning & Research Librarian (Health and Wellbeing)

Library and Learning Resources

Augustine House

Email: manfred.Gschwandtner@canterbury.ac.uk

Tel.: 01227922414



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Outcomes

Group Work - 7 key challenges (Hassanien 2006):

- poor communication
- different grade expectations
- poor attendance at group meetings
- getting credit without doing equal work
- varying work ethics
- culturally different approaches to work
- lack of formal leadership

*“chat is good,
because it allows
you discuss topics
live, like real
discussion”*

A student said that it made her feel *“better about the group work because as soon as you hear about group work you think about the stress related to organising different people”*.

