# FE and Apprenticeship staff development.

Our approach to learning at UWL is predicated upon the concept of social constructivism where by students, through active learning, develop their knowledge and understand of their subject by engaging in activities and learning from each other, their teachers, their employers and the wider literature. This approach builds the self-confidence and motivation for learning desired by employers. In order for this approach to be effective, academic staff must understand the need to support and direct student learning beyond the classroom. We refer to this as scaffolding. This term refers to a variety of teaching strategies used to progressively move students toward stronger understanding of a topic or subject aiming to achieve a greater independence in the learning process. The teacher provides successive levels of temporary support through designing learning activities that help students reach higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) that they would not be able to achieve without assistance. ZPD refers to what students are able to achieve with support of others (peers or teachers). The lower the level of a learner the more likely they will need more scaffolding. Thus, level 3 and 4 students will need more scaffolding than other students. Likewise, first-generation students as well as students with a less academic oriented education, may also require more scaffolding.

Scaffolding may result in activities centred in topics that are discipline based or in activities that increase students’ confidence and learning skills (critical thinking, reading skills or academic writing). It may also result in better narratives that make more explicit what students need to do and why. This is particularly relevant as students from different backgrounds are studying at a range of levels and need to learn what is to be a student in HE.

**School of Computing and Engineering.**

We developed this approach with the School of Computing and Engineering targeting students on Foundation courses and Apprenticeships. We intended to help improve the retention rate and the academic success rate by improving the existing teaching practices within this school.

* The work was co-led by the School and any decisions were taken after discussions with the HoS and the Quality Lead. The ExPERT Academy role was to provide support, co-lead the workshops and monitor and evaluate the impact.
* Training sessions were delivered at a team level to foster capacity building and team cohesion

# Areas covered

**Online assessment and feedback**

* Reflecting on the NSS – what are we doing and what can be improved
* Looking at the School – exploring what is being done and what the school wants to achieve
* Types of assessment
* Exploring what students want with assessment and feedback
* Exploring online assessment strategies and features
* Exploring effective feedback
* Scaffolding assessment
* Explore the use of Rubrics (with case studies)

**Learning design and scaffolding with learning technologies**

* What do we plan and how do we plan a lesson?
* How students learn (active learning Vs passive learning)
* The conversational framework (five types of learning)
* Identifying key principles of learning design
* Designing a weekly learning plan for your students

# Feedback from the school (Quality Lead Fehmida Mohamedali)

**Online assessment and feedback**

The overall aim was to give SCE staff an overview of online assessment methods and ways of ensuring consistency in marking and giving feedback to students.

Due to the very demanding role that teaching staff have within the school, given the range of academic levels at which staff teach, the workshop provided a good introduction to the tools and techniques that are available within Blackboard. The development of online rubrics and deployment in Blackboard was of particular interest to staff who had attended the workshop.
It is our intention to have a set of standard rubrics that we can choose from, depending on the nature of the assessments. i.e. for reports, practical engineering, development of software applications etc. We will work further with the Expert Academy to seek support on deploying these rubrics on all Blackboard templates so that staff can choose relevant ones for their specific subject area.
I am confident that we now have an effective and consistent assessment-feedback process in place. This saves staff time and the school has a consistent approach to giving feedback to students.

**Learning design and scaffolding with learning technologies**

This workshop focussed on learning design and how to improve the use of Blackboard templates in order to create better learning narratives and more scaffolding. Staff were exposed to learning technologies within Blackboard such as Panopto, Quizzes and Journals.
Some staff have requested further support on developing Blackboard Quizzes and the Expert Academy team have kindly offered to facilitate a workshop to help staff if they brought along examples of questions, they would like to create so that different question types and feedback opportunities could be explored.

On the whole, the workshop sessions arranged were very informative and those staff who were able to attend found it extremely beneficial. Our main constraint within the school is making time to come back and explore further. As Quality Lead for the school, I am very keen to ensure that all staff are encouraged to put into practice the useful tips and features that are available for us within Blackboard and through the Teaching Hub. Our forthcoming teaching observations have been deliberately designed to allow staff to review assessment and feedback methods and to scrutinise the organisation of learning materials on Blackboard.