Report from a LearnHigher promotion and evaluation event held at the University of Plymouth, UK, January 2010

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1.0   Introduction

The LearnHigher CETL (Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning) is a 5 year HEFCE funded project which has now entered its final year. Since 2005 leaning developers from the 16 LearnHigher partner institutions have been developing and evaluating a range of resources for staff and students across 20 different learning areas. Feedback from users is essential for the continuing evaluation and review of all LearnHigher materials. Over the past year the partners have been promoting their resources locally and nationally in a number of ways. Hosting launch events at their own institutions has been one method which has proved successful. The University of Plymouth hosted an internal event to promote its Writing for Assignments E-library (WrAssE) in June 2009. This is described in a report which can be found at: www.learningdevelopment.plymouth.ac.uk.

'WrAssE' is an online learning resource developed at the University of Plymouth. Its aims are to provide examples of students' academic writing, accompanied by notes giving guidance for learners; and to engage academics in the process of improving feedback about the functions and qualities of good student writing. In its most recent phase WrAssE has been supported by funding from the LearnHigher CETL.

In September 2009 a second event to promote the LearnHigher resources and WrAssE was held in Plymouth and participants were invited from across the HE sector. Both events were well attended and generated some very constructive feedback. This report concerns this second event and presents the comments and feedback received.

2.0   Promoting LearnHigher and WrAssE (September 2009)

On 18th September, 2009 more than thirty participants from eight UK institutions attended the event held in Plymouth. The majority were from the University of Plymouth and included a number of postgraduate students. The day was very successful in gaining critical feedback and promoting the LearnHigher and WrAssE resources. Professor Brian Chalkley (Plymouth's Director of Teaching and Learning) welcomed participants and set the scene for the day. This was followed by an introduction by John Hilsdon, Head of Learning Development and LearnHigher area coordinator. The morning activities focused on promoting the LearnHigher resources and gave participants a 'hands-on' opportunity to explore and discuss the website.

After lunch the focus of the day shifted to WrAssE. Outlining the history, development, and underlying principles of the resource, John explained how it was developed through practice-based inquiry by the learning development team at Plymouth (Hilsdon, 2007; Hilsdon & Magne, 2008). An outline of the history of WrAssE can be found in a report from 2008 at:
http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/Download-document/759-WrAssE-case-study.htm

Participants at the event were asked to keep a 'log' of their experiences of the day, providing their opinions on both the LearnHigher resources and WrAssE. Preliminary analysis of the data has revealed a set of key themes and the participants' comments are available in the appendices. Appendix 1 presents the general feedback received

on the LearnHigher site and resources. Comments on specific learning areas have been sent to learning area coordinators for them to consider in future website and resource design and development. Feedback received on WrAssE is presented in Appendix 2. A summary and discussion of the findings is given below.

3.0   LearnHigher website and resources

The LearnHigher website consists of twenty learning areas, sixteen of which were visited as part of the hands-on session at this event. The learning areas each address a different aspect of academic study and provide resources and strategies for their effective use. The site also contains reports on practice-led research, literature reviews and links to other non LearnHigher resources. Participants at the event offered some very constructive feedback on the LearnHigher CETL site and the resources.

3.1   Summary of findings and discussion

Although many of the comments made at this event were complimentary, initial analysis of the feedback shows that there are clearly some areas of the site which need improvement. The key points which emerged from the analysis was the need for better signposting and differentiating of staff/student pages; the need for uniformity across the learning areas; less 'dry' text and more visually attractive features such as pictures and the use of examples/case studies, videos and interactive materials. Navigational and design features were also found to be lacking in some places.

At the time of the event the site was clearly not entirely student friendly, nor did it seem clear to users what was available and how to find the information they required. The original site was designed to hold staff resources; the student facing pages being relatively recent additions. We know that students like and do use electronic resources, particularly if they see them as relevant (Verity *et al,* 2007). Therefore a more balanced approach is now being developed and the feedback received at this, and other LearnHigher events will prove invaluable in achieving a more student friendly and relevant set of resources. Substantial work has now been undertaken to redesign the site to support the future sustainability of the resources, research activities and successful partnerships that LearnHigher represents.

HEFCE funding for CETLs draws to a close in July 2010, but LearnHigher will continue to be supported under the auspices of ALDinHE (the Association of Learning Development in Higher Education) for the benefit of the LD community and the sector more widely. Plans for this transition are already underway, and the redesigned website will be a key feature of this development. It will include staff and student facing pages which will be clearly differentiated, the navigation will be simplified and there will be a new layout providing uniformity across the site. The new site may eventually move away from the strict 'learning area' structure which formed the basis of the original site, this should make it easier to navigate and to develop logical links between the various embedded resources.

The LearnHigher partners are already adapting their materials to match the new layout. Many of the comments made on the resources and content within specific

learning areas at this event have now been addressed as part of this process. The introduction of interactive features within the resources, and the provision of suggested 'active learning' strategies for their use is also underway. Funding has been made available through the CETL for each learning area to develop video resources for staff and students to meet some of these needs. The new site will reinforce the identity of learning development as a field of practice in higher education and strengthen the LearnHigher brand.

4.0   WrAssE

The WrAssE website offers authentic examples of various kinds of students' written work across a range of disciplines, accompanied by lecturers' comments explaining how and why the writing 'works'. These annotations are made with reference to a functions and qualities framework which was determined following consultation with a number of academics from a variety of disciplines. It is designed to encourage staff to give descriptive and well as prescriptive feedback. It's focus is on text-specific feedback rather than vague or general comments and encompasses the mechanical characteristics of writing structure which Vardi (2009) believes will bring 'positive change' to the quality of student writing.

Academics and students have been using the prototype WrAssE since the launch of its current version in June 2009. Constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement have been accumulating since then and will be taken into account in future development of the project. It is hoped that WrAssE will expand and give access to an increasingly wide range of examples of student texts, and will incorporate links to learning activities to enable students to practise their skills for writing, improve their ability to develop arguments and to communicate with others in their discipline.

4.1   Summary of findings and discussion

The WrAssE prototype has proved successful, despite its limited size. The feedback confirms that there is a need and demand for such a resource in the higher education sector. Both staff and students at this event expressed enthusiasm and plenty of ideas for innovation and development. Some of the points raised will be addressed as a matter of course as WrAssE expands. For example, as the number of sample texts increases so will the number of subject areas and levels. Several participants raised issues about the language and terminology used, particularly for defining the functions and qualities of writing. What might be considered appropriate or how certain terms are defined or understood has always been a matter for debate but despite this the feedback does contain a clear message about the importance of keeping it 'simple', avoiding too much academic jargon. Helping students to break down barriers and remove what Lillis (2001) calls the 'mystery' of academic writing. When students engage and take ownership of their subject, role and learning practices they are empowered rather than mystified (Freire 1972). Experience in using this approach suggests that more effective learning comes from the raising of awareness of some of the 'unwritten rules' of academic writing. It is intended to build upon the experiences and learning from WrAssE to undertake further practice-based enquiry into approaches where students are encouraged to gain awareness of, examine and

question the roles and practices of academic life, in order to become deeply and meaningfully involved as researchers and scholars themselves (Hilsdon and Bitzer, 2007).

The learning development team at Plymouth would also like to develop WrAssE further to include a sister site called 'Red Herring' which would hold examples of 'poor' students writing. WrAssE might also include examples of generic whole essays focusing on structure and building the thread of an argument and video clips illustrating the stages of writing and the effective use of resources designed to support the writing process. In an ideal world WrAssE could be opened up for academics to upload their own students writing and annotations. However, in an online environment comments need to be unambiguous and transparent to alleviate student anxiety and the loss of motivation (McVey, 2008) Therefore to ensure the 'quality' of student work and staff annotations some policing would be required. These ideas for further developing WrAssE would require a significant amount of academic and learning developers' time and would need further funding.

5.0   Conclusion

The comments and evaluations of WrAssE and other LearnHigher resources will be very useful in helping us to further improve and develop the materials, and will be taken into account when designing or developing new resources. In order to make progress, however, it will be necessary to secure both funding and commitment from academics and developers. As reported above, LearnHigher is uniquely placed to continue its work under the auspices of the Association for Learning Development in higher Education (ALDinHE). At its AGM of 2009, the Association agreed to look into ways to support the continuation of LearnHigher and its network of partners and projects, and at the time of writing there is every likelihood that this will be successful.

Without additional funding it will be difficult to make significant changes or improvements to WrAssE or any of the other LearnHigher resources. It is therefore essential that LearnHigher partners are proactive in seeking sources of financial support. The current economic climate suggests that his may prove difficult but there is every reason to expect that LearnHigher will survive.

This report adds to the growing weight of evidence of the enthusiasm and support for LearnHigher resources that has built up over the last five years. As learning development grows and becomes more established as a field of practice in Higher Education, it is vital that the work of designing and producing resources to underpin this work is supported. Learning Development implies an approach to learning which starts from the perspective of students and which stresses relevance, accessibility and inclusivity. Our commitment as learning developers is to help students to achieve their potential through higher education and a key part of this is the continuous process of seeking feedback and critical evaluation of our materials, resources and approaches.

Please contact the John Hilsdon (jhilsdon@plymouth.ac.uk) at learning development, Plymouth if you have any questions or comments on this report or the resources.

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Appendix 1

Feedback on the LearnHigher website and resources

The following feedback presents the more general comments made on the LearnHigher website and resources, many of which focus on participants' overall perceptions.

General comments

Some participants at the event were full of praise, while others offered constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement. The following quotes show that for many the overall impression was favourable

> 'In my experience the site is really informative and I am very glad for being in the session. Thank you'

> 'Well set out, easy to use.'

> 'Material all seems very useful, would definitely want to use.'

> 'Very well-structured site! Really helpful.'

> 'Very accessible site. Covers a wide range of learning areas. Quick and easy. Excellent programme.'

> 'Overall: LH is a fantastic resource. I became an 'academic skills advisor' two years ago and the materials on this site have helped my professional development enormously.'

> 'Have used LH resources on a weekly basis!'

Several people expressed concern about 'signposting' issues, with a number stating that staff and student resources should be more clearly defined:

> 'Generally – important to signpost how staff/students might use various resources – ie to read later, to practice an exercise now etc'

> 'Areas should be better differentiated for staff and students.'

> 'Clearer signposting as to which pages are for staff and which are for students.'

> 'Need clearly defined student areas but with early 'How To' sections, progressively getting harder. Make inclusion of worked examples.'

> ''Staff button, Student button. Students won't read all the text! Students need pictures to click on.'

There was a desire expressed by two postgraduate students to have separate undergraduate and postgraduate areas on the site:

> 'I would like to see a reference to a postgraduate student area. I suggest a postgraduate site with special materials for postgraduates who are interested to get involved deeper in academic matters (learning).'

> 'I think the LH site has to be demonstrated a bit more in post grad students and for sure in transitions. A place on LH site could be created for undergrads and another for post grads with special materials (writing, reading etc)'

Not all participants praised the site; some found it frustrating or lacking, they questioned the ease of navigation and the language used as the following quotes illustrate:

> 'Some learning areas have some references to others, some quite sparse.'

> 'The site does seem quite sparse in some areas. But I think I'll spend more time.'

> 'It's not all doing what it says on the tin! Some of the information is too academic, some more simple stuff is what lots want.'

> 'Discovered the 'for students' front page. More appealing – why isn't that the front page with the pictures? Seem to lead directly to same pages and LearnHigher home, why do 'non-students get such a dry introduction?'

> 'Not easy to tell which page you are currently on. The site seems useful for staff use (to select resources that would be useful for students eg – I would use it to find e-resources, but then use the web addresses to post onto our model pages so students (teachers) could access them directly.'

> 'Would probably choose to put direct links at relevant places on VLE. – also if say link directly to '5 min guild to time management' - gives opportunity to see links on screen to other relevant things. Don't think students would want to be directed straight to front page.'

> 'Once we were into external sites sometimes confusing to find the way back to learnHigher.'

> 'Some resources seem in strange places – eg PDP help in independent learning?'

> 'Student experience pages, the website perhaps need to be more inviting, more visual colour etc. sound etc. lots and lots and lots of reading, pointing you to more – READING! i.e. DEMOS project (2004) if you did demos it leads to a text filled banner! Then clicking on 'online learning package' takes you to similar page of more reading and subheadings. The resources seem to be good when you get to them!

Two participants questioned LearnHigher's use of the terms 'successful' and 'excellent':

> 'Resources start from a 'consensus' of what constitutes 'successful' study – does such a consensus really exist? Academics 'know' but how is this made explicit? Can this be made more explicit?'

> 'Student resources – look at hyper link, was drawn to Napier it said 'excellent'. Colleague identified 'own site as 'excellent'. How/who decides whether 'excellent'?'

Suggestions for improvement

There were some useful suggestions made for improving the site and or the resources.

> 'Glossary of terms for website would be useful.'

> 'How you might use this' – tabs.'

> 'Pop up explanations of some of key terms might be helpful.'

> 'Perhaps some specific slang language is allowed to give emphasis in what we try to write!'

> 'Needs to be explicitly about what stuff is and where to find it but not repeat information on screen.'

> 'Some areas needed better layout for students
>   Bullet points – order of information (referencing)
> - signposting
> - audio
> - how you might use this page?'

> 'The need for more interactivity between resource material and student to establish understanding and participation from the student.'

> 'More on learning differences I think, we did not have much time to explore this.'

> 'Advice given is not very clear in all aspects, perhaps some examples would be good!'

Design and Navigation

There were also some ideas for improving the design and navigation of the site:

> 'Make explicit what each of the sections is for and who it is aimed at. Greater consistency in section headings. Look at navigation and links – can seem a bit busy, and not always clear where links are. (Is consistency across the site in

navigation an issue? Worth having discrete sub-sites?) But overall presentation is clear and attractive.'

'LH navigation – could be better, more logical.'

'The LearnHigher website contains many information with huge details packed in one site. Maybe it needs little bit of re-arranging then to facilitate accessing to the needed information.'

'Colour of screen background etc. Maybe good to be able to change colour scheme for dyslexic learners or those with colour sensitivity. More interaction needed, perhaps more basic levels of need such as blind student key, unable to see visual ques in a seminar – strategies or links. Perhaps good to have videos.'

'Need for pictures for students.'

'Some resources are 'print out' use and others are to work through (online tutorials) – could these be labelled appropriately before clicking into?'

'I wonder if it is worth splitting all the material into separate sites – especially in legacy terms eg. Student resources, staff resources, project information.'

'Even micro sites for each area. Noting that: is it reasonable to expect consistency of navigation across the site – do users expect this/does it help the online experience – I don't know what the research is.'

Appendix 2

This section focuses on the general comments made on WrAssE at the event, followed by more detailed and specific feedback on the student texts and staff annotations. On the whole the feedback was constructive and covered both the technical aspects of the website and the content.

General comments made on the website

Participants' initial impressions of the site were generally favourable. Students seemed particularly excited as the following comments demonstrate.

'Very exciting to be able to look at existing good work and understand how to get good marks'.

'I would read all essays and all comment s until I felt tired /bored even outside my own topic (as a student looking for help)'.

'I find this resource extremely useful'

'I think the WrAssE site is good but it needs the addition of more samples of writing like thesis, Master thesis'.

'This is a very useful tool to demonstrate what makes good writing. Even through the subject is not my area, I can immediately see how I can apply the underlying principals of good scientific writing to my work'.

'Good source of examples for students who already have good writing skills'.

Staff perceptions of WrAssE varied. In the following comments academics gave a positive response, many of them recognising the potential benefits for students.

'At first glance, a lot of relevant info'.

'EXCELLENT RESOURCES WILL DEFINITELY USE' (their capitals)

'I can imagine students finding great value in using the WrAssE'.

'…fundamentally this is a brilliant resource, students are so desperate to see models of 'good' writing and to have sections broken down into their elements is great. I like the 'authentic' feedback – this is what students will have to interpret, wordy or not'.

'Physiotherapy section very clear with good use of different and variety of examples from all areas'.

'More able students could use this site easily. I would recommend this as a teaching tool for study skills tutors, to use with SpLD/LD students to help with essay construction'.

'…generally comments are very good and informative but to quite a high level?! '

'I think the WrAssE site is a very good concept and if it can be developed further ie by utilising other voices such as Dr Ken Gales! The resource library could be expanded and would be very user friendly'.

'Excellent way of indicating to students the importance of using online subscription databases – something they find hard to grasp in year 1 (+ other in yr 2 as well) eg 3rd FD comment, 2nd paragraph'.

'Excellent resource will certainly be using this with students and referring them to it. Particularly useful when working with students individually or in workshops. Helping students to understand 'describe, analyse and evaluate' as well as 'structure, authority and voice' is a challenge which this resource will certainly help with'

'Clear, straightforward and easy to use. I think this is a very good idea as a teaching tool'.

Not all participants were full of praise. One said 'Overall, can feel somewhat bitty' and several felt that the number of examples of real student writing that was currently available was limiting.

'Unfortunately there was nothing for any of my keywords/subject area ie early years education'.

'More subjects needed'.

'More subject areas to widen the participation of students.'

'Would like more varied example essays. The more comments by tutor the better. I would read all essays'.

'Insufficient examples for me to use at the present, but definitely like the idea and I would use the 'categories' for discussion to support assignment writing'.

Some people gave their thoughts about the functionality and look of the site.

'The colour coded functions and qualities in writing were brilliant, and the way the page is set up meant that they would be seen as visual reminders as the text was being investigated'.

'Good to have the key on the right hand side for quick reference for colours'.

'The colour speech bubbles were perfect for comment, which once opened, encouraged further reflection via the link to the meaning of each comment type'.

'It was cleverly laid out and the 'more resources' tools contained links to some other really useful sites'.

'The colour coded functions and qualities in writing were brilliant, and the way the page is set up meant that they would be seen as visual reminders as the text was being investigated.'

There were comments on the ease of navigation.

'Very simple and logical to use'

'Easy to use'

'Clear, straightforward and easy to use'.

Feedback on the resource content

As participants became more familiar and started to explore the example texts and tutor comments, their feedback became more detailed and specific, particularly in relation to the content itself, but there were also comments on the way the site works.

'Easy to understand comments. Relate really well to text and highlighting + speech bubble icons'.

'I found some of the links to things such as OWL.english.purdue.edu very interesting, informative and nice to use!'

'Same comments eg biological science through very informative docs, sometimes add on more than the actual comment definition and strays into structure/authority – could be confusing to student'.

'Quality control over material submitted? Comments vary in usefulness/comprehensiveness. Lab report on robot football very good – and also explains some weaknesses'.

'I like functions and qualities headings. Help make sense of the comments supplied'.

'More writing for student use than the Learnhigher site (earlier)'.

'Comment on 'evaluative report – extreme programming' just really stating, not explaining how or why writing was effective'.

'Incidentally, is paragraphing on the screen as per originals? (sometimes could be better)'.

'I can't see how the section with comments was taken from the original. The two pieces diverge after the first two paragraphs and I find it hard to see the rationale behind cutting the original in the way it has been done. There is no indication that sections have been cut. I thought that the piece with comments was one section taken whole from an essay (as a result I considered it to be a weak piece of writing because of references and evidence to support the main points made). Students could be misled by this'.

Comment on 'evaluative report – extreme programming' just really stating, not explaining how or why writing was effective.

'Really useful having the full assignment brief available'

'Psychology: mini-report – unconscious attitudes study. I feel that this would have helped me a lot when I was a psychology student and answers questions about report writing some of my psychology students present to me during tutorials. The feedback is very clear and helpful; it ties in with and relates back to APA guidelines, thus illuminating these as a by-product'.

'…Some formatting has been lost which makes it harder to follow, see 'factors that determine success and culture development and also lab report on robot football.'

'I noticed that some parts of the site need really academic status to follow them. However, they are interested under grad students (freshers) need signpost to the site (it would be proved indispensable help for them)'

One of the key areas of discussion which surrounds the development of a new resource is that of language. The difficulty is finding the terminology which best fits an academic environment, while making it inclusive for all students at the same time. Furthermore, there is often debate surrounding the meaning and use of certain terms or language as the following feedback quotes demonstrate.

'Are we making things too confusing for the student by distinguishing between analyse/evaluate? To me these overlap in some places and it's not always easy to be clear about whether a section of writing is doing one or the other.

'Some of the terminology in your 'functions and qualities' section is a bit contested, for example, the idea of 'voice'. I think many people would argue that this does not include things such as punctuation or paragraphing, but that it is more to do with that rather nebulous concept of a student stamping their individuality on a piece of written work i.e. speaking as themselves (albeit using a formal style)'.

'I'm getting a bit confused about the difference between 'analysis' and 'evaluate'. Some of the feedback is marked as 'analysis' when according to the definitions given, it should be 'evaluate' eg. The final section 'although fair value appears to be… would suggest that it should not be a primary financial reporting measurement. To me this seems to be assessing or criticising according to the definitions under 'evaluate'.

When you click on 'what does this comment type mean'? you are presented with a list of functions and their definitions. I think this is a bit daunting for students and would prefer a simple explanation, such as 'this comment type is link to (eg) the way the student includes analysis in their writing' you could then have the option of clicking on analysis' for a definition. I think a simpler definition is needed (however I do like the definition used for 'synthesises')

The following quotes also show how opinions differ where 'good writing' is concerned.

> 'Disparity of opinion between academics about what is good writing'.

> 'Tends to look at the micro level immediately instead of addressing what is good about the writing in general'.

> 'Voice and style comments – at times report that a finding is good eg use of a semi-colon. But how is the writer/student to know why it is good'.

> 'Interesting introduction to WrAssE. Question of quality control was interesting – how do you judge 'good' writing'?

> 'I feel that good examples are motivational and a good idea – our staff cry out for good examples of observed lessons!! Thanks for good day'.

> '… 'struggling' students would be intimidated. It shows them what they could achieve but has forgotten to show the steps towards achieving this. However it would help 'good' students improve'.

While the comments above focus specifically on the 'good writing' aspects of the resource, others expressed concern about the high quality of the texts used and some felt there was a need for 'poor writing' examples as well. The learning development team have considered developing a sister site which would be known as 'Red Herring', this would address the issues raised in the following comments.

> 'Providing 'models' of writing – ultimately problematic – limiting rather than liberating'.

> 'Need feedback from struggling students'.

> 'I definitely feel the need for assignments that are not 'good' as the comments would help to show/explain what is needed to improve'.

> 'Some examples almost too perfect and may prove intimidating for some students'

> 'Any bad examples? – good examples can really put students off'

Wherever examples of real student work is used there are often fears of plagiarism from some members of the academic community. However, only two participants made comments relating to plagiarism and they also recognised that it could be avoided as 'computers can identify (plagiarism) easily' and that there is 'a way to restrict copying or altering word docs without creating a pdf file'.

How students and staff could use WrAssE

Participants, both staff and students, offered some very constructive thoughts on how WrAssE could be used. The comments below illustrate how students might use the tool independently and how staff might utilise it in the classroom or in tutorials.

The students themselves said:

'I would keep clicking and reading through until something either answers my question or points me towards another idea to look at'.

'I am a bit like a dog with a bone and I will search/trawl the internet for info on what I am writing about for hours. Once in the zone I will read a lot. (that is one of the skills I have learnt as a student)'

Some staff saw the benefits of using WrAssE to improve their students understanding of academic terminology, their writing and their analytical skills.

'I am … envisaging using the WrAssE as a springboard for discussion when discussing academic writing with out students. A brilliant tool for developing understanding of what constitutes critical, analytical writing. It ticks all the boxes for me'.

'Excellent resource will certainly be using this with students and referring them to it. Particularly useful when working with students individually or in workshops. Helping students to understand 'describe, analyse and evaluate' as well as 'structure, authority and voice' is a challenge which this resource will certainly help with.

'Question for students – ie. Do you want more advice on how to analyse – then show examples from work – do you need to write better introductions? Etc'

'Insufficient examples for me to use at the present, but definitely like the idea and I would use the 'categories' for discussion to support assignment writing'.

'It appears would be more useful to staff then students. As sometimes the text is densely packed and wordy – students may just not read it. Excellent examples for tutors – tutors can take from it and present it in a relevant seminar within the context of a lecture'.

Suggestions for improvement

Although there have been suggestions for improvement in many of the previous quotes, in the following section the feedback focuses specifically on helping us to improve the resource. Many of these are comments about the student writing, the extracts or the tutor comments.

'Think about using non-subject areas – or general areas/or levels so that Students do not miss out on a different and valuable feedback'.

'Good to mention if the extract is intro (discussion/conclusion) as student can view for completeness'.

'Two examples I looked at seemed very brief. Just a paragraph or two. I realise that the commenting process is very intensive and that the full assignments are available, but it would be useful to have the complete piece of work to see how it all fits together (and how an assignment works as a whole) comments on

'evolution of business intelligence solutions' seemed particularly useful and covered varied categories'.

'Worth having a main model essay in each subject, illustrating a whole load of important points?'

'I would have liked to also see an introduction /literature review Paragraph'.

'It also would be wonderful to include an essay example'.

'I wonder whether the extracts may be confining to some students who need to see the whole context of an essay. Could comments on the whole essay be shown?'

'Links to student voices? Perhaps the writer of the essay?? I also thought it might be good to hear the tutor explain what they were expecting (in terms of content not structure) and in this way the message that there may be more than one way of meeting those expectations. A range of responses to a single assignment would also be helpful in terms of exemplifying a range of approaches'.

'Maybe later label sections as 'literature review' 'reports' etc with texts then seen where you go into that section? (my students wouldn't recognise a lit review at first)'

'Extracts need to be used to ensure that there is not one blueprint to follow'.

'I would want as much detail as possible in all comments, as before understanding I would need to read the same comment many times'.

'Perhaps tool kit with basic/key points for them to look at (useful opening lines, argument presentation etc)'

'Advise them to spell-check their work'.

'What about adding a link to critical thinking model?'

'Need to provide developmental feedback'.

'Check for grammatical errors/phrasing'.

'Extract – review of a piece of research based evidence relevant to healthcare practice, level 4. Level 4 comments good for foundation degree students (my area) if a little high level for some. Will there be level 3 extracts soon?'

There were those who suggested improvements in the resource to help specific groups such as disabled or international students.

'Perhaps this would work well as a teaching tool for study skills tutors supporting students with learning difficulties. I know I could use it like this with my dyslexic students'.

'At first glance, a lot of relevant info, but I would question the design of the site. 'What are the accessibility features of the site? Colours – have they been tested for colour blindness?'

'I particularly like the highlighting with the comments coming up. Perhaps this could be re-enforced by auditory commendatory – for different learners eg dyslexic. What about students with colour blindness?'

'Are the word docs marked up to be accessible for screen readers?'

'Non-native speakers essays – could form part of the resource'.

'How agreeable would you be to some extracts to be explore from an international student point of view? ie. with comments relevant to their particular/specific needs not having English as mother tongue'.

All prototype resources need to be tried and tested, especially from a technical perspective. Participants at the event gave us some very useful feedback on the functionality and design of the site and some excellent ideas for improvement.

'Make the link for further help at the bottom of the front page more noticeable, colourful.'

'Needs colour background please'

'You have fantastic other content; eg video tutorials for group work. Why not also have some introductory WrAssE – how to search etc.'

'How do the colour changing highlights change if a user amends the colour contrast settings in their browser?'

'Could tutor comments be notable alongside text, without pop-ups?'

'Design: The feedback box that usually opens over the text could better be placed on the side, including the key to colour and functions. That way it won't interfere with text. The assignment details info could be integrated on the title bar of the actual extract body.'

'Search results – would like to see the number of 'hits' the brings up, as at the moment you need to scroll to the end.'

Perhaps the comment could disappear when you take the cursor off the comment – as need to close it every time! (only a small matter)'

'Once you have reviewed essay extract – how do you navigate back? To stay on subject as previously you need to go back to home and repeat same search.'

'Students name to be removed? This is an issue in nursing example – it can be seen in the reading view as the reader is visible – this was true with the biosciences one as well.'

'In main section of nursing example, the first FE pink bubble seems to highlight too much text?'

'It would be helpful if positive and critical feedback would be clearly signposted so the students could distinguish them at sight, perhaps by a pattern in the bubble'.

Engagement with and evaluation of WrAssE

'Need to consider how to engage those 'weaker' students who need more help/assistance but who are all proactive in going for help/assistance'.

'How to engage/entice students who need to improve their writing skills'?

'More student feedback needed'.

'Has the website been user tested? With the audience'?

These comments will encouraged us to think about how we might improve 'student involvement' in the evaluation process and possibly get them to give the site a 'student rating'. It was also suggested that we use student reps as a way of involving students and evaluating the resource.

Some staff and students made comments on participation and the future of WrAssE

'I'm thinking I would like my tutors to take part'

'Templates to submit material on-line'?

'I find this resource extremely useful and I will be asking my tutors to donate some work to this website'.

'If academics are interested – how can they be helped to produce good feedback – as this is the crux of the matter '?