

Digital Lancaster

Student Bursary Project Evaluation

Title of project:

Networked Learning for Placement Students: Creating digital resources for pre-placement students.

Project timescale:

May 2016 – end of September 2016

Student ambassadors:

Unzila Ali, UG student, and Roxana Ghiassi, PG student

Academics supervising the student ambassadors:

Carolyn Downs, Vivien Hodgson and Uzair Shah from the Department of Leadership and Management, Bernadette Loacker from the Department of Organisation, Work and Technology and Ed McKeever from the Department of Entrepreneurship, Strategy and Innovation.

Project details:

This student bursary project has been conducted in the context of a Management School initiative, UG LUMSNET DL, to develop the greater adoption of digital learning and resources in the School's UG provision. We recruited two Moodle student ambassadors, Unzila Ali and Roxana Ghiassi, to research and develop a digital platform to support and inform placement students, and in so doing bridge the gap between the university and students during the placement period. A big driver of these activities has been a growing awareness of the need for more substantial interaction with both tutors and peers during placement so that students can access relevant resources and advice, and gain maximum impact from their work experience.

The project objectives were two-fold: First, Unzila and Roxana were encouraged to conduct research among pre- and post-placement students regarding their placement experiences (including issues such as applications, recruitment processes, challenges at work, return to study post-placement). Second, they were asked to use the research to develop a creative digital resource that can be accessed via Moodle by placement students, especially by those undertaking MNGT 222 and OWT 250.

More specifically, the student bursary project consisted of three parts:

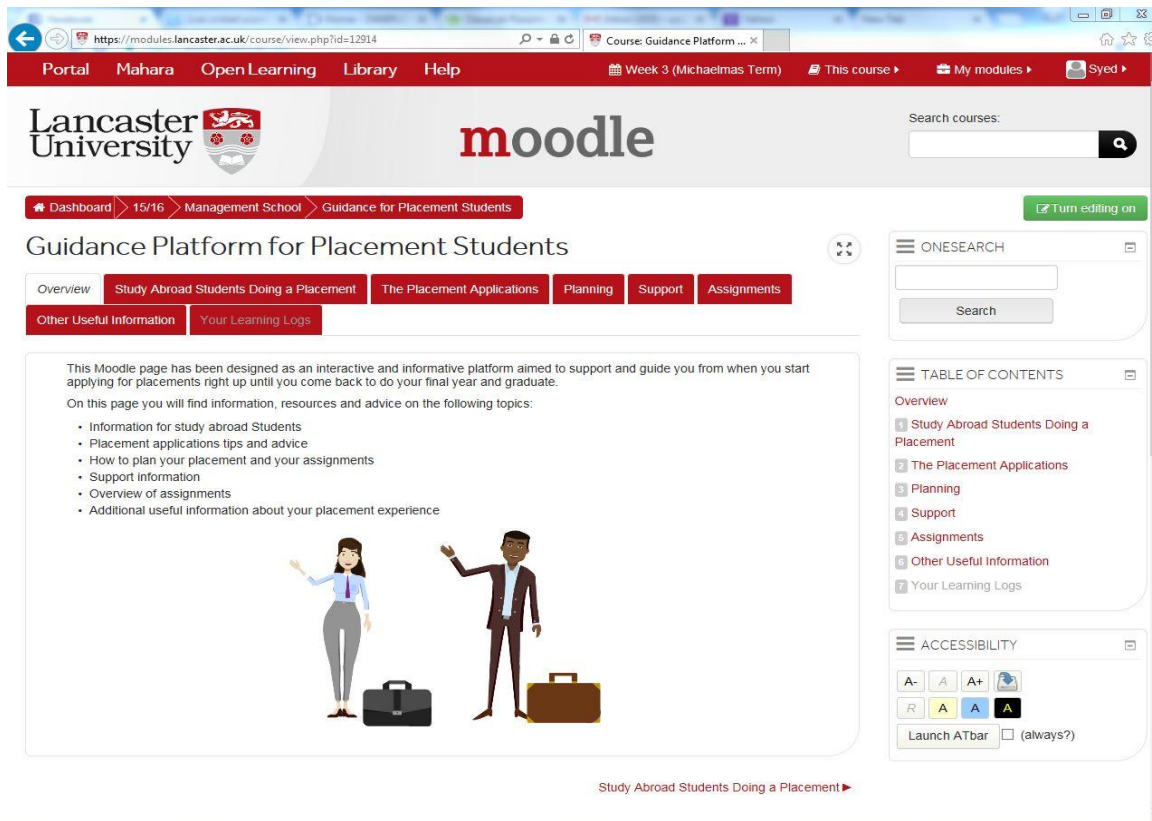
During **part one** of the project - Unzila and Roxana developed a questionnaire in conjunction with the steering group to use with first and second-year students. They distributed the questionnaire with the assistance of the student placement office. The questionnaire achieved 78 responses and provided an opportunity to explore key issues and concerns around the placement process.

Part two of the project focused on conducting video-interviews with five post-placement fourth year students. The interviews enabled the student ambassadors to further contextualise the student placement experience and collect information about the types of materials to include in the digital resource.

During **part three** of the project, Unzila and Roxana edited the material into an engaging multimodal digital format for use on the Moodle called the '[Guidance Platform for Placement Students](https://modules.lancaster.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=12914)'. The platform can be accessed via this link: <https://modules.lancaster.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=12914>.

Outputs and outcomes:

The main output of the project is the online [Guidance Platform for Placement Students](#)– the front page of which is presented below.



The screenshot shows the Moodle course page for 'Guidance Platform for Placement Students' at Lancaster University. The page features a navigation menu with tabs for 'Overview', 'Study Abroad Students Doing a Placement', 'The Placement Applications', 'Planning', 'Support', and 'Assignments'. Below the navigation, there is a list of topics: 'Other Useful Information' and 'Your Learning Logs'. The main content area contains a welcome message and a list of topics: 'Information for study abroad Students', 'Placement applications tips and advice', 'How to plan your placement and your assignments', 'Support information', 'Overview of assignments', and 'Additional useful information about your placement experience'. An illustration of two people with suitcases is also present. The right sidebar includes a search box, a table of contents, and accessibility options.

The platform provides a range of digitally animated and other resources supporting various aspects of the wider placement process from application to working away from campus. These include resources and advice on:

- [1 Study Abroad Students Doing a Placement](#)
- [2 The Placement Applications](#)
- [3 Planning](#)
- [4 Support](#)
- [5 Assignments](#)
- [6 Other Useful Information](#)

The different pages include both animated videos and information relevant to each of the above categories. A screen shot of the Placement Applications page is shown below.

The screenshot shows a Moodle course page for 'Guidance Platform for Placement Students' at Lancaster University. The page has a red navigation bar at the top with links for 'Portal', 'Mahara', 'Open Learning', 'Library', and 'Help'. Below this is the Moodle logo and a search bar. The course title is 'Guidance Platform for Placement Students' and it is currently in 'Turn editing on' mode. The main content area is titled 'Guidance Platform for Placement Students' and includes a navigation menu with 'Overview', 'Study Abroad Students Doing a Placement', 'The Placement Applications', 'Planning', 'Support', and 'Assignments'. Below the navigation menu is a video player titled 'Application Process' with the text 'Practice makes perfect...' and a list of links for application support. The sidebar on the right contains 'ONESEARCH', 'TABLE OF CONTENTS', and 'ACCESSIBILITY' options.

We view the [Guidance Platform for Placement Students](#) as a prototype and starting point which can evolve through ongoing use and feedback. However, a wider outcome is that the project has brought together colleagues from across LUMS departments, the careers and employment office and the Library to develop this resource. Knowledge developed from the project can now be fed back into individual departments and applied further within other faculty developments. As a result of the project academic staff have also developed new skills to further enhance the platform and additional resources have been added to support writing literature reviews and development of reflective writing skills. In addition, the opportunity to work closely with specialist support staff such as Hilary Thomas (LUMS/ISS) and Andy Holgate (Library) has been invaluable in enabling the academics taking part in the project to understand the ways in which Moodle can be developed to support students while out on placement.

Conclusion:

Overall, the student bursary project has been a thorough success. From the start, Unzila and Roxana have been very engaged and committed to the project. Following several project meetings where we discussed the project's main ideas and tasks, Unzila and Roxana have self-responsibly organised and carried out the project.

We are very pleased about the virtual guidance platform our Moodle student ambassadors have created for current and future placement students. We are convinced that the platform is not only beneficial for our students, but for all students who consider going on placement. We are thus happy to share the platform and the resources and material it contains widely across the school and university.

On a more general note, we would like to remark that Lancaster's student digital bursary project has been very helpful in further developing our UG LUMSNET DL initiative. Hence we do hope that the 'Digital Lancaster' scheme will continue to exist in the future.