Technological Ecosystems to Support and Engage Students

HE is leveraging technology to create efficiencies and allow access to processes and information regardless of location. These technologies though, tend to be soulless and are removing more and more of the human contact that, in these times of increased student anxiety, is crucial to helping to support students. This poster will highlight issues and explore how these systems may be developed to support an integrated technology ecosystem that engages and inspires students.

### Issues and Drivers

Wellbeing of students (and staff) - wellbeing of students is reducing with a 5% drop in students reporting low levels of anxiety between 2016 and 2019 from 21% to 16% (Higher Education Policy Institute 2019).

Response to Covid-19 increasing reliance on technology to deliver content and support students

Universities looking to reduce costs

Efficiency – using technological solutions where appropriate.

Temptation of accessing new markets with online delivery

### Example of Current Practice

This is an example of an extenuating circumstances form - the website overview is engaging and well designed

But the form it links to is not tailored to the user and is not supportive and engaging.

### Relevant Theory

**User Experience (UX)**

“No product is an island. A product is more than the product. It is a cohesive, integrated set of experiences. Think through all of the stages of a product or service – from initial intentions through final reflections, from first usage to help, service, and maintenance. Make them all work together seamlessly.”

Don Norman, inventor of the term “User Experience”

*Going Beyond UX*

UX needs to make a system as simple and enjoyable to use as possible, but stops short of actually positively influencing the user and helping them to flourish through using the system.

Self determination theory (SDT) posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs: needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). If these are met then people can flourish.

Peters, Calv & Ryan. “Designing for Motivation, Engagement and Wellbeing in Digital Experience”

details how technology designs support or undermine basic psychological needs, thereby hindering motivation and engagement.

Nudge Theory (Thaler and Sunstein) is based upon the idea that by shaping the environment, one can influence the likelihood that one option is chosen over another by individuals.

### Simple steps to apply

- Taking care of the language used - it has to have absolute clarity whilst also being inclusive and caring.
- Linking to relevant support clearly on the page (and doing this consistently across resources)
- Signpost to tools like Weboot to support mental wellbeing.
- What other information/systems might be relevant to a student in the current context - for instance, context-specific assessments regulations (rather than link to a long and probably technical article that the student will not be in the right frame of mind to deal with)
- Adding real human touch by being able to chat synchronously online with someone if help is needed.
- Images of the people that are on the other end of the process if relevant so at least it is obvious it isn’t just a computer.
- The colours and fonts used - which will give Uni Marketing departments paroxysms about being off-brand, but some things are more important!
- Simple, almost inconsequential ‘nudges’...like a background image.
- Information clarity (worth mentioning twice :) )

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**About this Poster**

This work outlines the topic for my PhD, based on professional practice and includes anyone who is interested or collaborating to research into technological ecosystems that support, encourage and enable students to flourish in contact me - details above.