The Implementation of Active Blended Learning: What effect has it had on teaching and teaching quality at UoN.
1.0 Introduction

With the upcoming move to the new Waterside campus, there has been more focus on the process of Active Blended Learning (ABL) and the extent to which modules throughout the University are considered to be ‘Waterside’ ready. Whilst the University have documented 90% of modules as being ‘Waterside ready’, the aim of this research is to determine the difference between module specifications and changes throughout actual teaching practice.

The main rationale behind this research project is to address the lack of evidence between what has been reported by the institution and changes that have been made to enhance teaching quality in practise. Due to the amount of resources and commitment that the University has put into the change to Waterside ready modules, research is needed in order to examine the overall impact and implementation of ABL, as well as to fully understand any improvements that have occurred within teaching practice.

Throughout this research project two faculties of staff have been examined: The Faculty of Business and Law, and the Faculty of Education.

Through the use of anonymous surveys given to members of university staff, this research intends to compare the teaching quality of the two faculties being examined. This has been done to discover elements that can be shared throughout the institution, and further improve teaching quality in the future.

In-depth interviews will also be conducted with members of staff that volunteer to participate. These interviews will aim to assess the faculty’s knowledge of the resources that are available to them in order to fully support the move to ABL, and ultimately support any changes that may have occurred within teaching practice.

The four main research questions are as follows:

1) To examine how teaching practice has developed and changed through the use of questionnaires developed to determine tutor’s views on ‘Waterside ready’ module specifications and how these have ultimately changed their teaching practice.

2) To examine how powerful the process of peer observations has been in supporting any changes made to teaching quality.

3) To ascertain the effective use of resources that the University provide in order to support the overall implementation of active blended learning.

4) To disseminate the findings and highlight any areas in which further support can be provided for teaching staff in the implementation of active blended learning.

The overall aim of this research project is to examine the different viewpoints of the two staff faculties and gain insight on how teaching practice has changed since the implementation of ABL. This research aims to not only address any challenges being faced by staff within the institution, but also inform practice so that it can be improved moving forward.
This project intends to not only help towards improving teaching practice, but also towards improving the student experience as a whole. Through examining the challenges faced by members of staff during the implementation of ABL lessons can be learned and shared throughout the University. Therefore, any weaknesses found within the change to ABL can be addressed and ultimately overcome. Overall, helping to improve teaching practice and ultimately enhance student learning through improvement of the student experience.

This research aims to gain insight for the University and provide clear evidence on how successful the implementation of ABL has been. This will provide the institution with information needed in order to make successful decisions moving forward, improving teaching practice and helping the University to achieve their aims and objectives.

2.0 Literature Review

Teaching, from a traditional perspective, has long been considered a learning process where by students accumulate knowledge and skills passed on from a teacher i.e. the person in charge of transferring said knowledge and skills (Canaleta, et al. 2014). By this definition, traditional teaching models usually consist of the student playing a passive role; where they listen or take notes. However, modern cognitive science is swaying towards a new model of teaching, instead of holding passive roles in their learning students are asked to actively construct their own knowledge and engage with what is now known as Active Learning (Biggs, 1996). Another method held in the same esteem as Active Learning is now referred to as ‘flipped classroom’, where students are expected to prepare for class in their own time and then classroom time is spent in active learning with other students under the guidance of a teacher (SwePub, 2015, pp. 4). In essence, Active Blended Learning (ABL) is therefore a mixture of the two methods previously described.

According to Bohel Carbonel, et al. (2013) a blended education can allow for enhanced student learning with tools which embrace an active learning approach (Vaughan, 2007), as well as a way to close the gap between learning and working. Benfield, et al. (2006) review of 300 blended learning, and student experience, studies found that the most common delivery approach was provision of supplementary online strategies, or resources, for on-campus courses. Littlejohn and Pegler (2007) expanded the work on blending learning by defining types of blends such as; Space, Time, Media and Activity. These blends refer to face-to-face, geography and availability, tools and technology and learning/teaching activities (Littlejohn and Pegler, 2007 pp. 75-76). Having defined the different blends of learning which can be applied, many authors within the literature have studied the effects of such teaching methods and seem to indicate positive links between blended learning and student experience (Benfield, et al. 2006). The research behind blended learning surmises that pedagogical benefits such as; increased learning effectiveness, satisfaction, and efficiency (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Graham, 2013) can be achieved.
However, it has not been evaluated in the literature as to whether ABL improves the teaching and teaching quality of the educational institute at which it has been implemented. A study by The University of Central Florida examined the success rates of all their face-to-face, blended learning and online students and the results indicated that success rates (defined as successful where at least a C-Grade had been earned) were higher for blended learning within each college than either fully face-to-face or online courses (Dziuban, et al. 2004; Graham, 2013; Graham, et al. 2014). This would suggest that ABL has an impact on the quality of teaching that the student receives as research supports its improvement of their grades. Though, this would only support a claim for ABLs impact on teaching and teaching quality if the improvement of grades for students is seen as a direct result of ABLs implementation. This is something which has yet to be researched, or evaluated, within the literature. Although, what has been extensively reviewed within the literature is teaching quality itself.

Quality itself is hard to define as it is largely subjective to each as an individual (Green and Harvey, 1993). Despite this, academics have claimed within the literature that teaching quality is quantitatively measurable (Bana e Costa and Oliveira, 2012; Murias, et al. 2008). Although it is also largely recognised that there is complexity in the application, and questionable reliability of, quality indicators - which can be misleading (Swail, 2011). Several methods of assessing teaching quality were proposed by Knight (1993) such as; documentary sources i.e. how well validation documentation matches institutional teaching priorities, evidence of curriculum development, innovation in teaching and self-evaluation, observations of teaching in practice, student satisfaction surveys and self-assessment (Knight, 1993, pp. 10). However, evaluation of these methods within the literature indicates drawbacks in terms of: lack of accuracy, high costs or high workload (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012). For this reason, it is argued by Swail (2011) that only the development of more advances indicates - such as earning and employment status of former students - should be taken into consideration. Though it is simultaneously argued by Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson (2012) that though such indicators as Swail advocates sound rational, they are in fact no absolute measure either. This argument by Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson is easily established by the variables of domestic and economic situations, job availability and the environment of the job and leadership (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012, pp. 575).

It is also argued within their study that teaching quality hard to evaluate as learning quality is “a function of the intrinsic characteristics of students” (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012, pp. 575). This is to say, that though the teaching quality could be good the student might not be or vice versa. If it is indistinguishable which is of high quality, how would evaluation of the teaching quality come about? This would appear to be a study for further research.

As this study’s purpose is to determine what effect ABL has had on teaching and teaching quality at The University of Northampton, it seems logical to review what teaching quality for a university means within the literature. Benfield, et al. (2006) suggested that a University is ultimately a service for its students, for many universities the pressure lies in maintaining and delivering their service rather than evaluating it. However, when evaluating how best to
evaluate teaching quality at a university Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson (2012) proposed that value should be looked at from the student’s perspective. This can be seen to relate to Zeithaml (1998) classic definition. Relating the two ideas, it proposes that value can be gained from the student’s overall assessment of the universities utility. It is suggested that this utility will be based on the student’s perceptions of what is received and given. Relating this to the traditional goods market (McLaughlin, et al. 1998) value is defined as ‘what you get for what you pay’. This perspective aligns with the thinking of Raju and Sakthivel (2006) who claimed that value for students is not just the transfer of knowledge, but is in relation to the amount of money they have paid. Though, according to Lusch, et al. (2008) value goes beyond money and students play active roles in creating their own value of the university’s service. This evaluation would suggest that as students play a significant role in their own learning vesting all learning responsibility on lecturer’s performance is not justifiable (Díaz-Méndez and Gummesson, 2012). Therefore, the literature indicates that the value a student expects, and actually obtains, is a direct result of their own active roles within the learning process as well as the lecturers teaching quality capabilities and implication.

Assessment of the literature indicates that ABL is most commonly, and agreeably, highlighted as a way for the student-lecturer relationship to be approached from a co-creation of value perspective. This is in line with the University’s concept of a teaching programme being ‘Waterside Ready’. As seen in the interview with Professor Ale Armellini (Fidler, 2016) where he explains how waterside readiness refers to modules which are taught through student centred activities which support the development of subject knowledge, understanding and independent learning with digital fluency. One point in particular which is made clear is that a waterside ready programme must focus on what learner’s do with subject matter such as content, but more importantly who they complete the content with in order to achieve specific learning outcomes i.e. students working with tutors and colleagues to fully understand and engage with course content (Fidler, 2016).

3.0 Methodology

The time horizon for this project was cross-sectional in nature, due to the projects end deadline being the 29th of June it was apparent that work on the project had to follow a strict schedule (see appendix 6.3). However, although limited on time for the scale of the project, it was decided based on similar research studies that mixed method would be used to accumulate a stronger quality and reliability of data (Davie, et al. 2016, pp. 624). Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative data was collected in the form of staff surveys (see appendix 6.1) and in-depth staff interviews (see appendix 6.2).

In order to create a staff survey which would successfully cover all areas of the University’s implementation of ABL previous academic studies were referred to and adapted to suit our purpose. For example; the purpose of using the survey method was to examine a number of viewpoints on a number of topics. According to Kotler (2013), conducting surveys is one of the best ways to gather many kinds of different information regarding a certain subject. Due
to the nature of the sample, surveys were also chosen for their flexibility, with members of staff being able to complete and return them within their own time. One particular study by Pina (2012) was often referred to when designing the surveys for this research project. As the study by Pina (2012) also examined the change to ABL, it was used as a reference to what questions needed to be considered, as well as the best way to present them i.e. in order to ensure that a large audience could easily understand and follow the structure of the survey was designed in a similar style to the survey in Pina (2012).

Before beginning distribution, staff surveys were piloted on three members of staff to ensure that questions were easy to follow, understand and to answer. Based on the pilot, several questions were changed as well some questions combined. The pilot also helped to guide the amount of time it would take a participant to complete the survey.

The distribution of the surveys then began in a three stage process, which consisted of the research assistants involved in the project attending and distributing the surveys within a number of staff meetings. Secondly, the staff Blog and centralised email was used to contact both faculties. Thirdly, individual staff members were approached in person and via email and other avenues including leaving enveloped surveys on desks or visiting offices. This was done in order to ensure a larger sample from each faculty was reached.

However, there was a definite lack of trust from staff in that it was felt their identities would be revealed and therefore their opinions on the University’s implementation of ABL would be released. This was a major issue for the collection of our data, as people felt that if their identities were disclosed then their jobs might be affected. As a result, although we ensured that all surveys remained anonymous, the number of surveys fully completed by staff was limited to 16 even though at least 140 were distributed. Some were returned incomplete and many staff members acknowledged that they did not want to partake. Although, with no personal questions being asked and the identities of staff members protected, it meant that the answers provided were more likely to represent the ‘true’ nature of staff opinion and experience. Members of staff that had completed the surveys were given an email address through which they could then contact the research assistants if they wished to volunteer for the next stage of the research; interviews.

Note: academic tutors were encouraged to participate and emails and the FBL blog were used to try facilitate survey responses.

Using the same logic as when creating the staff survey’s, the interview questions were created based upon what had worked to gain valuable insight in studies undertaken by other academics within the literature. However, unlike when researching similar studies who had also undertaken a survey finding reference of interview questions proved challenging. For this reason, when devising the questions (see appendix 6.2) it was decided that interview tactics would be referred to instead and questions devised based upon areas we were keen to gain insight in. Therefore, using the ten tactics advised by Alexander (2007), the market
research assistants created questions which were used in the project. Each interview was conducted with staff who had volunteered, and therefore would be willing to discuss their opinions and experiences. It was also decided that each interview would be recorded and transcribed to be better analysed, therefore limited to no longer than thirty minutes in length. As these interviews were relatively informal in nature, it should be noted that the reliability of qualitative data could be affected due to its subjectivity.

However, as our method for interviewing progressed one unforeseen difficulty was, again, the lack of willingness we had from staff to participate. Those who were willing were also extremely cautionary of their identities remaining anonymous. This meant that we would have less data than anticipated to collect from our interviews and so questions had to be devised which would still give enough detail for assessment. In order to generate more willing samples for our interviews the research team attended more staff meetings to encourage interest and advertised the fact that interview, though recorded, would remain unidentifiable. Therefore, within our findings you will see a table covering all five of our interviews that we managed to procure - but for ethical reasons identities have had to remain confidential.
4.0 Findings

4.1. Survey Results

Each question asked within the survey has been evaluated below in order to fully understand perspective knowledge amongst staff on the subject of ABL. The mixture of qualitative and quantitative results have then been analysed to provide further understanding into the common challenges faced, in order to determine ways in which the institution can improve teaching quality moving forward with the implementation of ABL. The below data displays participant demographics who undertook staff surveys.

1. Participant Job Level

| Lecturer |    ||
| Senior Lecturer |    ||||
| Associate Lecturer |    ||
| Graduate Tutor |    ||
| Other. Please Specify: |    ||

2. Participants length of time at UoN.

| Less than 1 | 1-3 | 4-9 | 10-14 | 15+ |
| Please Tick |    |||||    ||

3. Participant's years of experience teaching undergraduate modules in duration of career.

| Less than 1 | 1-3 | 4-9 | 10-14 | 15+ |
| Level 4 |    ||    ||    |
| Level 5 |    ||    ||    |
| Level 6 |    ||    ||    |

9
4.1.1 Question 1

Evaluation of answers given for survey question one has provided a generalised definition as to what ABL at the University of Northampton stands for. Although there were wide ranging opinions among staff, it is most commonly represented in our findings that ABL is definitively centred around proactiveness of the student to engage with course materials which must be provided by the teacher. What differed in answers given, was how the teacher supplied the student with materials and in what activities they used to engage their students for them to play active rather than passive learning roles. Therefore, overall opinion agreed that ABL is a method for getting students to actively engage in their learning but differed in how it should be executed by the teacher.

The current University of Northampton (UoN) definition of ABL is defined as where:

“The programme is taught through student-centred activities that support the development of subject knowledge and understanding, independent learning and digital fluency. Our face-to-face teaching is facilitated in a practical and collaborative manner, clearly linked to learning activity outside the classroom. Opportunities are provided for students to develop autonomy, Changemaker attributes and employability skills.” (University of Northampton, 2018).

Some of the answers given by staff were very close to the above UoN (2018) definition of ABL:

- “Students are actively involved in the learning process. They participate by getting involved rather than listening and making notes during lectures and seminars. Workshops involve discussions and tasks. They may be required to undertake online workshops rather than face to face contact time.”

- “ABL is using face to face contact and online facilitated engagement opportunities to enrich the student experience. The online environment can be used to transition from one face to face session to another face to face session.”

When asked to provide a definition of ABL, most were in agreement that it centered around the student population themselves:

- “Prior prep work on Nile. Discussion/explanation in class. Follow-up application work and assessment.”
• “It means having engaged students that proactively research and learn before and after class, challenge the current dominant structures in education and position themselves in the position of an active learner, instead of passive.”

• “Encouraging (requiring?) students to do directed study at home which informs them for the lesson: students should arrive in class with broad and knowledge and questions. The essence to me is that a greater responsibility for their own learning is entrusted to students.”

While others considered the technology in relation to their ABL definition:

• “It means making teaching interactive, with students preparing beforehand and technology being utilised as appropriate. Uses technology to combine in class and out class learning. Also ABL is a mixture of learning methods that incorporate multiple teaching models.”

• “Using a mixture of offline and online resources and integrating them together”

• “Using both online and face to face sessions. Taking activities done face to face into the online synchronous or asynchronous environment to continue sessions started in sessions.”

It could be argued that the difference in understanding of what ABL means for UoN is indication of a representational gap, referred to by (Steiner, 1972) as a process loss phenomenon in diverse teams which can influence the three core processes of group functioning (Argote and McGrath, 2001). As findings potentially show a dischord in what UoN understand ABL to mean and what the staff understand it to represent, this could make coordination of ABL implementation difficult as when the same information is interpreted differently throughout a team conflict is likely to occur (Cronin and Weingart, 2007). Overall, the responses show mixed understanding of how ABL has been interpreted and how it should be implemented, which could be linked to the developing narrative at UoN around ‘waterside readiness’ and ABL.

4.1.2 Question 2

Question two was devised so that the major ABL components currently used at UoN could be identified, as well the favoured components for future use. As can be seen in the work of Etonhouse (2017), where entries depict the options available to supplement ABL and replace the traditional lecture, the past decade has seen a significant increase in the amount of technology used within teaching classrooms. The choice of technology chosen to supplement teaching is important as it must be understood by the teacher how to blend technology chosen with the traditional lecture-based approach. This is so improved student engagement with course materials can be achieved, or that the classroom itself is more interactive so that learning is potentially enhanced (Bodie, et al. 2006). Therefore, gaining
insight into the main technology supplements being used within the classroom at UoN and how the chosen technology is being used could help evaluate whether ABLs implementation is improving teaching and teaching quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wikis</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist space</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation tutorials, scheduled content and sessions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online external providers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-based learning/placement learning</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small interactive group sessions (Online)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures online</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-site activities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest Speaking</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online learning activities with tutor input</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Boards</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small interactive group sessions</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What was most apparent from the results above, was that each respondent had chosen multiple technologies to supplement their teaching. Perhaps this indicates that in order to achieve the desired quality when implementing ABL, numerous technologies must be applied to the blend. This is to say, one technology supplement is not enough to achieve the full potential of ABL teaching practice.
When evaluated, the results show that a mixture of both online and offline activities need to be used in order for ABL to be truly effective. As even though small interactive group sessions seemed to be the favoured activity, online activities such as discussion boards are also being used within teaching practice amongst a large number of participants.

According to work by Singh (2003), learning requirements of each learner within an institution tend to be different. Therefore, in order to create an effective blended learning strategy, institutions must use a blend of delivery methods to deliver the right content, in the right format, to the right people.

Kanuka and Garrison (2004), found that using a mixture of activities to create an active blended learning experience has the potential of enhancing both the effectiveness and efficiency of meaningful learning experiences. The fact that multiple participants use both online and offline activities suggests that although there is a representational gap when it comes to the definition of active blended learning, the implementation itself is progressing successfully.
4.1.3 Question 3

Question 3 began the ‘Waterside Ready’ section of the survey. It considered the different approaches that participants had used in order to ensure that their modules are ready for the move to ABL and the new Waterside campus. This question was also included in the survey to gather a deeper understanding into what participants believe make module specifications ‘Waterside ready’.

When evaluating the results of this question, it became clear that, in order to create an active blended learning experience, the majority of participants placed a large amount of focus on incorporating online activities into their teaching practice.

- “More online activities and resources”.
- “Converted all modules from lecture/seminar delivery to workshop and online delivery”.
- “E-tivities setup for every session”.
- “I have recorded written preparatory reading into lectures, which students can access on Nile”.

Altogether, showing a strong link with the results gathered from question one, participants believe that in order for their modules to be considered ‘Waterside ready’ and to effectively implement ABL, a strong focus needs to be placed on technology and the prior learning/engagement of students.
4.1.4 Question 4

Question 4 of the survey was asked in order to examine participants viewpoints on the implementation of ABL itself, to gather a deeper understanding into whether the teaching practice within the University is truly ready to face the move to Waterside and the new active blended learning approach.

| All of my modules are Waterside Ready | 9 |
| Most of my modules are Waterside Ready | 3 |
| Some of my modules are Waterside Ready | 0 |
| None of my modules are Waterside Ready | 1 |

The results gathered from this question can also be seen to show a gap in knowledge amongst participants, or perhaps a gap in teaching practice being reported and actual teaching practice. As, although in question one it became clear that participant's opinions differed on what it meant for a learning experience to effectively incorporate ABL, the majority of participants still reported all of their modules as being ‘Waterside Ready’.

With links to question 3, it is possible that participants judge their modules to be ‘Waterside ready’ because of the added technologies and online activities that are being incorporated. However, as stated in work by Marsh (2001), when it comes to ABL the addition of E-Learning isn’t always the whole solution. Classroom learning is still essential in order for students to get direct face - to - face feedback from staff. The result of placing too much focus on technology when implementing ABL is lower attendance and retention rates (Marsh, 2001).

4.1.5 Question 5

Question 5 was used in order to effectively determine whether ABL has caused any changes to teaching practice throughout the University. This was to provide deeper understanding into whether participants have faced any challenges when ensuring that module specifications are ‘Waterside Ready’.

Overall, from the results gathered, it was encouraging to see that whilst staff were continuing to use the elements of teaching practice that were successful in the past, they were also willing to change some elements and incorporate new ideas. It can be assessed that this was to ensure that modules are effectively implementing ABL. As is demonstrated in the table below, with the majority of participants stating that since the implementation of ABL within the institution, some of their teaching practice has in fact needed to change.
Work by Bonk and Graham (2006), shows that in order for teaching to be truly effective in the implementation of ABL, there needs to be a convergence of traditional face-to-face and distributed environments. The links between all of the ‘Waterside Ready’ questions shows that participants have readily incorporated online/distributed environments into their practice in order to make their module specifications waterside and ABL ready. The fact that a majority of teaching practice has changed since the introduction of ABL is another indicator that the learning style is working towards improving teaching practice in the long run.

4.1.6 Question 6

Question 6 was designed in order to gain greater insight into how the introduction of ABL has improved teaching practice, as well as to determine any challenges that may have been faced when incorporating these changes within the modules.

Several ways illustrated how teaching practice has been changed since the implementation of ABL, this ranged from lectures being abolished altogether to...

“Workshop 2 hour sessions rather than 1 hour lecture and 1 hour seminar, less ‘solid’ input and more interactivity, use of 2 online collaborative sessions, MCT test online” were mentioned several times.

With some teachers noting that there was a more student centered approach: “I no longer stand in front of a class and lecture the students. The face to face sessions are interactive with much more student input”
It appeared that many respondents had also used technology to supplement their teaching as well as:

“More online activities for preparation” and “Used more online resources, used blogs and discussion boards “

Further, some suggested:

“I have tried to push students to reflect on their role in their studying and set tasks (e.g. research) to encourage them to become more independent learners”... With increased “Expectations of levels of participation and engagement of students”, as well as “More opportunities for discussion in class”.

There was also clear acknowledgement that the students, and the context of ABL, at UoN requires specific understanding:

“N/A - I take responsibility for my teaching. Not someone higher up who doesn't do my job or understand my challenges. It is too important to delegate to somebody else”

“UON is currently very theory lectury. There needs to be (word unrecognisable) or assessment where students can demonstrate that they can apply theory into a business context.”

Whether or not teaching practice has improved since the implementation of ABL is hard to determine. In order for teaching practice to be seen as effective it depends on the viewpoints, as well as the commitment, to learning shown by the students involved as well. As stated in work by Marsh (2006), when incorporating a blended approach into teaching practice a large focus is placed on the students showing the initiative to do online learning prior to sessions. This could be seen as a major negative to the approach, as there is no way for members of staff to ensure that students are doing the pre-work assigned for them. Therefore, although teaching practice may be seen as improving this does not necessarily mean the same can be said for the overall learning experience of the students.
4.1.7 Question 7

In order for this research to fully determine and understand any challenges faced by participants when implementing ABL, it was important to evaluate whether they were aware of the training and support within the University that was available to them.

After analysis, the results from this question show that whilst all participants were aware that training was available to them or taking place in the institution, many have still not received training themselves:

“I have not received any formal training. I have read about it, discussed it with colleagues, and sought advice from other colleagues that I know to be trained”

“None, as it was not applicable to my role”.

“Did not (word unrecognisable) any training”

“None”.

This would indicate that although UoN might have supplied or encouraged training for ABL implementation, that staff feel as though none has been given which actively helps them to make the modifications to their programmes which are vital for the implementation of ABL.

Evidence of the importance of training for staff to successfully implement ABL methods is depicted in the work of Bonk and Kim (2006) where it is said that faculty training and support is crucial for quality online education as well as traditional classroom instruction with web enhancements. Therefore, training is a specific requirement which perhaps is shown in the findings to not have been met.
4.1.8 Question 8

This question was devised in order to gauge what activities have been used by UoN teaching staff to implement ABL.

![Bar chart showing engagement levels](chart.png)

**Key**
- Blue = Completed or engaged with activity
- Red = Planning to do in the future
- Yellow = Not Required
- Green = Unknown resource

It is important that members of staff are aware of all of the activities that are available to support them through the implementation of ABL. Question 8 was designed to determine awareness levels of each of these activities as well as assess which ones members of staff have been using to help improve teaching practice.

The results show that every activity available to participants has been engaged with in some way, whilst only a small amount of resources were unknown. The results from this question are once again promising, as they show a willingness amongst staff to adapt to new ideas and their commitment to ensuring that teaching practice is as good as it could be.
4.1.9 Question 9

This question was designed to follow on from the one before and provide the team with a deeper understanding, not only into what activities are being used, into how effective participants perceived these activities to be in improving teaching practice and quality.

![Chart showing analysis of responses to activities]  

Analysis of the data would indicate that opinion on peer observation was largely divided, ranging from excellent and good to average though the large majority of participants had no opinion on it. This division in opinion for peer observation is further demonstrated and explained within the interview findings later on. In fact, opinion on most of the activities is extremely varied, as can be seen with one of the few activities to be considered ‘poor’ being in house training also being place within excellent. Perhaps this would indicate that experience of the different activities made available to teaching staff is too inconsistent. Which could be extended in it’s line of thinking to suggest that the students, receiving teaching from staff who have experienced very different level of quality of activities, will also have extremely diverse levels of teaching quality being given to them. For the most part however, due to the amount of staff who had ‘no opinion’ on the activities, it would be hard to measure whether or not experience of quality of the activities received by staff is inconsistent.
4.1.10 Question 10

Question 10 was again devised to focus on any challenges that participants may be facing when implementing ABL into their teaching practice. It allowed the research team to gain deeper insights into what resources and activities members of staff feel are currently missing within the University. This enables the team to determine what support staff feel is needed, and what support has the potential to go on to improve teaching practice moving forward.

One of the main areas highlighted within the answers for this question is time. In order to effectively implement ABL into their teaching practice, it is important that staff have the time they need to create and be creative. As mentioned in the work of Marsh (2001), an increase of online learning can often result in low retention rates amongst students. Therefore it is essential that staff are given the time they need to be able to create engaging and stimulating content.

“Time to dedicate to complete”.

Another theme that was apparent is that of communication between departments, as well as communication between the organisation itself and its employees.

“How to use ABL with respect to different modules”

“It would be useful to see what other departments are doing to foster greater cohesion in approach to ABL”

“Why ABL? This point has been largely ignored”.

When dealing with organisational changes, it is important to focus on communication between departments. This will not only allow members of staff to adopt ideas from others that are successful in the implementation of ABL, but it also increases the trust between the University and its staff. Allowing staff to better focus on their work, meaning they are more likely to help to University reach its overall aims and objectives (Howard, 2014).
4.1.11 Question 11

This question was also devised to understand which technologies teachers had chosen at UoN to help supplement their traditional classroom teaching, the following list details programmes which teachers found particularly useful for adapting traditional pedagogical teaching method to ABL.

**Useful Tools Identified:**
Collaborate Tools
Colleagues, help, discussion informed
Core Economics
Discussion Boards
DL - great opportunity
Etivity Templates
Google docs
IT 1 to 1 support
Kaboot
Kaltura
Labs/Laptops
New laptops
Nile
Online journals
Online resources
Padlet

Though some, of the tools identified above, were considered by most of the participants, not all of them were considered useful by all. Therefore, this evidence would seem to suggest that each discipline, and lecturer, needs to find their own balance between both methods and choose their materials to suit their own styles in order to achieve their own self evaluated level of teaching quality.

When the second phase of in-depth interviews was conducted, it became clear that a large percentage of participants believed that some modules were more adaptable to ABL as a teaching style than others. Therefore, whilst some members of staff may find these tools helpful in delivering their course content, this changes between courses, modules and students. Meaning that not every staff member will view them as helpful and choose to use them.
4.1.12 Question 12

Question 12 aimed to uncover whether or not teaching staff considered technology to be of good enough quality in order for them to be able to implement a high standard of ABL. For this reason, teachers were asked to rate the technology supplements made available to them on a scale from Poor to Excellent. As can be seen from the graph below, the majority of participants considered the technology available to them to be of average quality.

![Bar graph showing ratings from Poor to Excellent]

It could be assessed that if teachers only have access to average technology then surely they are hindered in being able to provide high teaching quality to their students. Especially as with ABL it is argued by most academics that use of high standard technology is a particular requirement (Benfield, et al. 2006; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Graham, 2013).
4.1.13 Question 13

Question 13 was the beginning of the ‘Teaching Quality’ section of the survey. These questions were designed in order to gain an understanding of participant’s opinions and experiences with the implementation of ABL, and whether it is believed the change has helped to improve or hinder teaching quality overall.

This question was asked so that the team could evaluate whether participants fully understood what it takes to make an ABL experience effective. As discovered throughout the duration of the survey, staff perceptions on what ABL is, and what it involves, differ significantly. Meaning that, although they have reported to have implemented ABL into their teaching practice it may not have been entirely effective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand and I have implemented it into my teaching.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand and I am experimenting/trialing it in my teaching.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand but I have not implemented it into my teaching.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand but I am finding it challenging to implement into my teaching.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I do not understand and need further training and support.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results gathered from this question show that although the majority of participants claim to understand what makes ABL effective, and are implementing it into their current teaching practice, there are still a number of staff members who are unclear on the meaning. Or, data could show that they are facing challenges when it comes to ABL implementation. These results are essential for the organisation as it gives them the information they need to ensure that all members of staff are fully aware of what changes need to be made, and that they are getting the support needed in order to implement these changes effectively.
4.1.14 Question 14

When monitoring the performance of staff members, the University use a tool known as peer observation. As this is a commonly used tool within the organisation it was necessary to devise a question evaluating whether participants have taken part in these observations, and how helpful they have been to improving teaching quality during the change to ABL.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Observer/Obseree</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Observation</td>
<td>Observer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management/Tutor</td>
<td>Observed a lecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to Face</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Meeting</td>
<td>Observee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIM system</td>
<td>Observee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELTA</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leading</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate fellow</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHEA</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEA</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures/Workshops</td>
<td>Observer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of 3</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was made clear that the majority of participants had in fact taken part in these observations, whether as an observer or an observee since the initial introduction and implementation of ABL. The majority of participants also seemed to be in agreement that this particular tool is very useful in helping to support and improve teaching practice and quality.

This could again show the importance of communication and sharing ideas between different departments. Through viewing what others are doing in their modules, staff members are able to decipher what approaches are successful and what are not. Allowing them to adopt these approach for themselves, ultimately leading to an improvement in their own teaching practice.
4.1.15 Question 15

Question 15 was devised to focus solely on any challenges that participants may have faced or currently be facing in the implementation of ABL. This question allows to organisation to develop a deeper understanding into what actions need to be taken and what resources need to be made available in order to fully support staff during this change, and ensure that teaching practice is improving.

The results show that the main challenge faced among participants is the lack of student engagement with online content. With some of the post session tasks not being done, as well as students in some cases simply choosing to not turn up to lectures at all. As a challenge, this is largely out of the organisations control, while timetabling or communication could be addressed. However, if staff are given the time and resources needed to create more engaging content, then this could lead to an increase in student retention as well as attendance (Marsh, 2001).

The other major challenges that are being faced are centered around the technology itself, whether this is a lack of resources or training to understand the new systems, or issues with the connectivity in classrooms. This again is essential knowledge for the organisation as in order to create an effective blended experience for the student, there needs to be collaboration between online and offline materials, meaning that members of staff need to have all online resources available to them when needed in order to effectively deliver their content.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the majority of the challenges spoken about in these results could be resolved with an increase in both communication and staff training. It is essential that the University ensure that not only the resources are available, but that the faculty are made fully aware of the need for them and how to use them.
4.1.16 Question 16

When analysing teaching quality and practice, it is important to evaluate how members of staff currently measure their overall performance. This questioned was designed to gain an insight into the tools and resources that participants currently use the effectiveness of their teaching performance.

It was clear from the results that the majority of participants measure their teaching performance on the overall experience of the students themselves:

“Feedback from students and grades”.

“Feedback from students and module evaluation”.

“Feedback given”.

“Verbal feedback in sessions, feedback on module reviews”.

The focus of a University is ultimately the student experience. The answers given to this question are encouraging as it shows that even though an organisational change is happening and module specifications are being assessed, members of staff still view their teaching practice as most effective when it is helpful to the students.
4.1.17 Question 17

With question 17 of our survey it was originally devised as way to measure the amount of student engagement that lectures perceived to be taking place within their teaching periods. Having piloted our survey, as previously discussed within the methodology, it was unexpected for this question to be largely left unanswered by participants. As such, only a small handle of data was collected for this question. However, of the limiting data to analyse the below chart was still created assessing the teacher perception of student engagement across level of education and term.

![Bar chart](chart.png)

**Level and Term (1 or 2) is displayed upon the x axis and percentage of student engagement along the y axis. [Based on the 6 participants who answered]**

As can be seen by the chart above, student engagement with pre-session work seems to decrease with each year, with 3rd year students showing the lowest percentage of engagement. As the data is not sufficient due to a lack of responses, this data will be removed from the overall findings of the report due to a lack of reliability. It was also clear that some participants did not fully understand what was being asked of them in this question, meaning validity may also be a problem.
4.1.18 Question 18

Question 18 was presented to staff in order to gain insight as to whether teachers felt that at UoN ABL was helping support student retention and engagement. The following table displays the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis would indicate that although a fair amount of teachers feel certain that ABL is supporting student retention and engagement, that for the most part teachers are uncertain as to the effects ABL is having upon these areas.

As suggested by Marsh (2001), student engagement is one of main cons of adopting a blended learning strategy. As there is no tool or resource available that can guarantee students engage in the work that has been set for them. Perhaps the focus for the institution should not be how to make sure all students engage, but how to effectively ensure that all students are at the same level.
4. 1.19 Question 19

Question 19 was designed in order to gain participant’s viewpoints on what activities are most effective at ensuring students are engaging with both the online and offline content provided for them. Participants were asked to list the top three activities that they thought would be most helpful in this area.

The main theme amongst those provided is that of offering/providing student support to accompany any online tasks that have been set. Including face to face sessions, clear feedback given on any tasks as well as communicating clearly to the student the relevance that the task will have on the course as well as the assessments.

As with a lot of the results analysed throughout this survey, communication is again key here. As well as ensuring that departments and members of staff are informed, it is also important to ensure that students are aware of the changes made to their modules. These will ease stress, possibly increasing overall performance as well as their experience within the institution. These results were once again encouraging as it shows the commitment that staff have to their students. It also allows the organisation themselves to understand what it is the staff members need in order to ensure that the students are getting the best learning experience possible.
4.2 Interview Results

When analysing the interviews what became quickly apparent was the presence of five key themes throughout each interview: Student Feedback, Student Engagement, Face-To-Face, Technology and Peer Observation. The below graph demonstrates each themes level of occurrence within all five interviews.

![Pie Chart]

What is most clearly demonstrated is the level of importance given to student feedback. Each interview considered student feedback to be the most important criterion to determining the impact of ABL on teaching and teaching quality. This can be seen from the following student feedback quotes.

1. “So it’s just been me listening to that feedback from my students and you know that’s how I’ve adapted my module specifications”. (Transcript 1, lines 48-50)

2. “Well I hate the module review forms anyway, I think they’re ridiculous and if you wanted to find out what they think about active blended learning you’d probably change those questions on the module review forms anyway. But, I’d say feedback from students, the
grades they achieve in the modules that’s ongoing, and at the end of the academic year”. (Transcript 2, lines 142-145)

3. “So, I think we’re trying to make something fit rather than listen to the students, understand what it is that they need in the diverse group that they are and work from them backwards”. (Transcript 3, lines 86-88).

4. “If you’re talking about from peers, ultimately I’ve got quite an old traditional view on that as I don’t care what my colleagues think. I care what the students think” (Transcript 4, lines 55-56).

5. “I’ve found especially this year, a lot of kind of positive feedback in terms of some of the interactive stuff I’ve been doing (Transcript 5, lines 98-99) … I think through module feedback. Um, that kind of provides a bit of evidence that it’s working and you see sometimes get other people who don’t like it as much or some people want more of it (Transcript 5, lines 130-132)”.

Therefore, it is clear that a key insight from our data is; in order to determine whether or not ABL is working, or if it should be implemented in the first place, teachers consider student feedback to be the most important aspect. This can be related to the work of Kavanagh (2011) where it was established that student feedback is of the utmost importance when modifying workshops, otherwise the workshop won’t be kept relevant and without student feedback problems with instruction or the mode of delivery are unable to be identified. As modules are now being adapted to become ‘waterside ready’ at UoN, with adaptations to suit ABL teaching models, what could be drawn from these findings is that teachers are uneasy as to the shift in pedagogical framework not being a result of student feedback. This is to say, if an ABL teaching style has not been asked for by the student body then why is it being put into practice? As a result, face-to-face has been identified as another key theme within the interview findings. From discussions, as modules are being changed to suit ABL with application of technological supplements, it would appear that some teachers are keen not to lose ‘in person’ contact with their students. Such can be seen from the following quotes:

1. “Students actually need more face to face support because you know they need that guidance they need that advice” (Transcript 1, lines 16-17).

2. “We’ve included more face to face sessions actually, which is what the students asked for” (Transcript 2, lines 51-52).

3. “the advantage of that, for me, (face-to-face) was that I could make sure that I gave a common narrative to all the students at the same time and so I could be sure they’d all heard what I had to say from me, and I think it also perhaps fostered a little bit more of a group mentality and more cohesive” (Transcript 3, lines 22-25).
4. “I do not understand how you can do ABL in research methods because it needs to be face to face, it needs to be in-depth and it needs to be that academic ring to it” (Transcript 4, lines 17-19).

However, this concern from teachers of not wanting to lose face-to-face was found to be closely linked to the key theme of technology. Discussion within the interviews revealed that teachers were concerned about getting the blend between face-to-face and technological supplements right for the module as well as for the students so that they are actively engaged. This finding could be related to the work of Freeman (2004), who referred to the blend of technology with active face-to-face learning as a method called Team Based Learning (TBL). For some, TBL means provision of ‘pre-class’ individual study, such as: online readings or lectures, whereas for others it means the use of more innovative approaches i.e. adaptive e-Learning platforms or social media sites like Twitter (Carlucci, et al. 2013; Davidson, 2011; Frame, et al. 2014). These different methods of TBL can be seen in use by teachers interviewed in this study, as demonstrated in the figure below.

Technologies and Face-To-Face Activities within the diagram above are those which were mentioned within all interviews.
In essence, it was identified that as long as teachers were able to ‘get the blend right’ between face-to-face and use of technology that they would consider the quality of their teaching improved by the implementation of ABL. As depicted in the following quotations:

1. “And, the only sort of other negative is sometimes when the technology doesn’t work. So, sort of when I’ve sort of done these evening sessions with students and I’ve said you know come in to collaborate, use the link, and I’ve tried to say you’ve got to be on google or don’t try it on this internet browser and then people get in and then they can’t hear it but really it’s just sort of those technical issues there where you know you then realise it hasn’t been a positive experience for the students” (Transcript 1, lines 99-104).

2. “I feel that that has been quite a good process in terms of reflecting on specifications and reflecting on those module specs, because it makes you reassess and take that time out to think ‘Ok is that appropriate now? Is it not? What could be streamlined?’ So, for us as a division it has been quite helpful and I feel that it does have an implicit part in what I teach and what I showcase students on Nile and what we have in terms of sessions and delivery, and other active activities” (Transcript 2, lines 24-29).

3. “You need mixed strategies to cater for different modules, different teacher’s strengths, different student strengths and be prepared to be flexible. So, I think you take what’s good and what worked well in our traditional module and you evolve it. You develop it, you improve it. You try things, you use technology in a positive way to enhance” (Transcript 3, lines 91-94).

4. “So in, I think other technology we need to use, we need better functionality within Nile. We need better functionality with kind of, I mean the quiz facility within Nile is fine, you go to things like Kahoot you are getting the advantage that you can actually run it as a bit of a game. I did it the other week with some post-graduate students who loved it. We had an international theme where I brought back from Scotland like shortbread and all of that kind of thing so they won prizes as part of it. You couldn’t really do that in Nile It’s not exciting enough. Whereas with Kahoot you can make it not childish, but you can make it a bit more fun. I think just more things like that we need to do. We need to make it fun.” (Transcript 4, lines 102-110)

5. “I think you can adapt any module to a ABL because you’re just changing the way that they gain that information rather than you telling them, they’re getting it in a different way.” (Transcript 5, lines 15-17).

Throughout the interviews conducted it seems that the way teachers at UoN currently evidence the impact on the quality of teaching referred to above is by student engagement. As such, it is highlighted as another of the key themes identified in the findings. Though from discussion, it would appear that the way in which teachers are trying to measure student engagement levels in their ABL modified modules is either by attendance levels.
“So the evidence is going to be on bums on seats, looking at some of the analytics you can get on Nile, who’s interacting with what?” (Transcript 4, lines 148-149).

Although, it is proposed that student engagement could possibly be measured by student feedback. As mentioned previously, evidence suggests that modifications to workshops should be made from feedback obtained from the students it is being catered for. This is to say, if the workshop is being changed to improve student engagement surely it would make most sense to obtain feedback on whether the student feels actively engaged or not then apply the findings during modification. I.e. teachers mentioned during interviews that students had given feedback based upon what activities they had enjoyed and those they hadn’t. Those activities enjoyed by students could be increased to improve engagement levels, and activities which did not add to the learning could be modified. Such practice is credited in the work of Coyer, et al. (2015) “When implementing change it is imperative to consider the perspective of the consumer. As students are the drivers of a flexible learning design they are crucial in the feedback loop” (Coyer, et al. 2015. pp. 971).

“When I look at the module that I’ve got where it’s been designed for ABL, the negative aspects are is students will not engage, they don’t care and they’re not interested. You ask them to do some reading before they walk into class and they go no. Within class if you ask them to look something up online they would rather sit on YouTube or sit on Facebook. They say they’re doing it and then won’t.” (Transcript 4, lines 116-122).

“Ok, I’ve found especially this year, a lot of kind of positive feedback in terms of some of the interactive stuff I’ve been doing. So like with that speed dating in my module feedback I had quite a few people sort of say they enjoyed that and I think it’s been particularly effective with some of my international students” (Transcript 5, 98-101).

The final theme to be identified, which also links to evidencing the impact ABL has had on teaching and teaching quality, is peer observations. In the interviews there was a clear divide in opinion of the usefulness of peer observation, some considered it to be useful:

“I’ve had someone come over from China who observed one of my classes so that was good. They, they sort of took that away I think to change their teaching a little bit. We talked a lot about how it’s different with the different learners” (Transcript 5, lines 51-53).

“Ok peer observation, great in theory I think there’s lots of pedagogical advantages through peer observation” (Transcript 3, lines 41-42).

However, most found it to be an unofficial process which did not help them in evaluating the successfullness of ABL on their teaching:
“Peer observation, I don’t think we do a particularly good job of it, I don’t think it’s prioritised enough by management or staff. Tends to be kind of something we do rather than something we actively seek out...I haven’t really yet seen an ABL session done well or anybody who appears to have a solution towards the many challenges that it throws up.” (Transcript 3, lines 42-48).

“No. I mean the peer observations at the University is not a formal process” (Transcript 1, line 60).

“This year, I haven’t specifically done observations linked to programme specs or getting waterside ready” (Transcript 2, lines 34-35).

“I’d rather have peer observation by students than observation by colleagues because who are they to say what I do is wrong?” (Transcript 4, lines 56-58).

However, overall findings suggest that there is no set process to evidencing the effect of ABL on teaching and teaching quality at UoN, and as such its impact is unable to be calculated at present. This is not to say that ABL is not improving teaching and teaching quality, only that currently it is unable to be measured. However, this is largely due to ABLs type of implementation process at UoN. As identified within the interviews there was no set start or end date to its implementation and therefore it is not clear how to measure its effects before and after. As a side note it should be mentioned that this is always why student grades were not suggested as a way to measure the effect of ABL on student engagement.

“There’s been no start and end point, so, to say that grades have improved would be very difficult to determine” (Transcript 2, lines 148-149).

Observations:

Informally collected comments (water fountain conversations and corridor talk) and thoughts have been brought together here which staff shared (sometimes while declining to partake in the research). They have all been aggregated.

The assumed reputation of UoN has always been that all staff intrinsically know their students, in this way UoN has built a strong reputation for understanding student needs as well providing an irrefutably excellent service consisting of strong staff and student relationships. This is reflected in the GOLD TEF status already achieved by UoN. However, that being said the findings seem to suggest that student and staff satisfaction is on the down turn as seen by NSS and league score results (The Guardian, 2018).

It must therefore be queried whether ABL could have had some potential negative impact upon these factors. Or at least the perception of ABL and misunderstandings of ABL may have had an impact. However, other criterion should also be considered in assessing this negative turn of
events, such as: the curriculum redesign, learning outcomes, modules and the moving of campus including the amount of changes being managed by all. It should also be noted that this negativity could stem from the impact on staff, which in turn could affect UoN’s student perspectives. Therefore, the UoN should assess whether the students are truly at the heart of changes taking place and whether the institution itself is being true to its core values.

Furthermore, while this research has not considered education with others (EWO), it has been observed that this workload has had an impact on the different type of workload tutors are now managing, and further research is required to identify the cause of staff satisfaction and poor NSS results. Many tutors noted that they practised ABL previously, but did not label it with this terminology, and that there is a perception that all teaching was previously bad, when indeed this was not the case.

5.0 Conclusion

Through the use of surveys and interviews, the team were able to determine that the implementation of ABL has caused significant changes within the teaching practice at UoN. With many members of staff adopting a more online approach to ensure that modules and module specifications are ready for the move to Waterside. It was made clear that many participants were attempting to create Waterside ready modules and incorporate ABL, without truly understanding the definition. This is essential information for UoN as it allows them to provide members of staff with the correct training needed to make sure teaching practice and quality are improving through the implementation of ABL and not decreasing.

It was also made clear that peer observations were viewed amongst the majority of participants as being a very helpful tool in improving teaching practice, allowing them to view the successes and failures of other departments, allowing members of staff to ensure that only the successful approaches are used throughout their own modules.

In terms of evaluating university resources, it seemed that whilst a large number of participants were aware of the current resources available to them, they feel they need more training or that the current resources are not as helpful as perceived by the institution and need to be updated. This is once again vital information as providing the staff with resources needed has the potential to substantially improve not only teaching performance, but the student experience as well.

There are some key themes that have been identified throughout the content of the report, communication, student engagement and training. This research has allowed the organisation to gain a deeper understanding into what is needed of them in order to ensure that teaching practice is as successful as it can be.
There were many limitations to this research. Many of the questions on the staff surveys were misunderstood or answered incorrectly even though the questions had been piloted on different members of staff previously, meaning that the data gathered from these answers had to be disregarded. This could have had an effect on the overall reliability of the results.

It should also be considered that a large majority of the questions were based on the topic of ABL itself, when it was made clear by the first question that there is not a universal understanding within the university as to what ABL means. Therefore, although many participants reported that they were effectively incorporating ABL into their current teaching practice, this may not be the case.

This research answered the four main research questions that this project aimed to answer:

1) To examine how teaching practice has developed and changed through the use of questionnaires developed to determine tutor’s views on ‘Waterside ready’ module specifications and how these have ultimately changed their teaching practice.

   This was achieved by using a mixed method approach data was able to be collected from tutors and then analysed, this meant that the data is able to display tutor perceptions and how they have adapted their teaching practice where needed.

2) To examine how powerful the process of peer observations has been in supporting any changes made to teaching quality.

   Peer observation was examined during both the survey and interview results, what transpired was that there was great diversity in opinion by staff of its ability to be able to improve teaching quality. Therefore, results showed that peer observation is not sufficient in its supporting teachers to make changes in relation to ABL.

3) To ascertain the effective use of resources that the University provide in order to support the overall implementation of active blended learning.

   This research highlighted how staff are aware of the resources available to them, but that they need more time to be able to engage at the level they would like. This is to say that each teacher is different in terms of the blend of active learning and technological supplements that they attribute as being required for the implementation of ABL within their modules to be successful.

4) To disseminate the findings and highlight any areas in which further support can be provided for teaching staff in the implementation of active blended learning.
Having answered our research questions poster was put together and presented at the research conference, findings presented are available on the project blog and will be presented at faculty staff meetings which are ongoing.

5.1 Limitations to the research

Throughout the procurement of data within this report, the biggest limitation was that despite piloting surveys, meetings with staff, advertising on the project blog and approaching individuals in person and via email, there was a lack the amount of data that was able to be collected. The limitation in amount of data could have been down to numerous factors such as; Time, in regards to whether staff were simply too busy to be able to fill out surveys; Fatigue, that if they did have spare time they might have been simply been too exhausted from events of the day to partake; Confusion, in terms of if they were uncertain of ABL and what they should know about it the might not have wanted to take part and have that confusion identified in front of or by colleagues. What was found to be the biggest influencing factor however was Trust, this was identified throughout the research from discussion with staff who were worried that their identities would not remain anonymous. The suspected reasoning behind this is that teaching staff might have been concerned that their true opinions of ABL or perhaps lack of knowledge around what they should be implementing could be linked back to them and therefore their jobs be put at risk.

As a result, the research has relied on minimal respondents and could therefore be subject to respondent bias. This is to say, that participants of the study who were willing to be involved were likely already known advocates of ABL or openly against its being implemented. As such, data collected would most likely be highly in favour of ABL or strongly against and therefore biasy is probably strongly evident in this research.
5.2 Future research

The research of this report shows that there is indeed an appetite for student-centred approaches and for talking about ABL in a unprejudiced environment, essentially suggesting that if a ‘safe space’ is created where anonymity is certain then the subject matter could be discussed in a way which would draw true results without bias.

Therefore, it is recommended that future research such as this could involve focus groups where the true process taken place can be established. In theory, by conducting future research in this way it is identified that the subject of how staff adapt to new working styles and in what way this influences ABL, could also be examined.

In addition, research should be undertaken into EWO partners so that such an affect can be examined. This could potentially range from assessing the impact of flying faculty, to dealing with EWO partners. In other words, the potential communication problem in explaining the concept of ABL to different staff and partners of UoN could be analysed, along with how to ensure understanding of ABLs implementation is standardised throughout the institution.

Finally, the main area recommended for further research could be based around the subject of trust in and around ABL at the UoN. This statement is made based upon findings within this report that staff are subject to vulnerability, in order to establish this in further research a study could be conducted based upon the stress staff are exposed to which affects their teaching methods and practice - hence exposing this vulnerability.

In conclusion, further research could use findings and theories explored within this report to examine what makes teachers confident within the workplace and whether this ‘teacher confidence’ can make a better learning environment for their students, using ABL and peer observation.
References


6.0 Appendix

6.1 ABL Staff Survey

Part A- General Information

This initial section is designed to gather information on your teaching position at the university. If you do not wish to answer a question please skip it and proceed to the following one.

1. You are designated as:
   (Tick as appropriate)
   □ Lecturer
   □ Senior lecturer
   □ Associate lecturer
   □ Graduate tutor
   □ Other. Please specify: ______________________

2. How many years have you been teaching at UoN?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 1</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-9</th>
<th>10-14</th>
<th>15+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please tick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How many years have you taught undergraduate modules of level 4, 5, and 6 throughout your career?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 1</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-9</th>
<th>10-14</th>
<th>15+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Part B - Current Practise**

This section observes current practices being implemented, designed to gage your understanding of ABL and the application of these practices. Skip questions which do not apply.

1. What does active blended learning (ABL) mean to you?

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

2. From the following list of ABL components, select all those that you use or plan to use in the future. (Select all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face-to-face</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Small interactive group sessions (Face-to-face seminars/ workshops/ tutorials)</td>
<td>☐ Small interactive group sessions (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Specialist space (e.g. laboratories, studio space)</td>
<td>☐ Online learning activities with tutor input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Off-site activities (e.g. fieldwork, trips)</td>
<td>☐ Dissertation tutorials, scheduled content and sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Lectures</td>
<td>☐ Lectures online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Work-based learning/placement learning (directly supervised by employers/tutors)</td>
<td>☐ Discussion boards    ☐ Wikis    ☐ Blogs    ☐ Quizzes    ☐ Collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Guest speaker</td>
<td>☐ Online external providers (kahoot, trello, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46
Waterside Ready

This section aims to examine the transition to ‘Waterside Ready’ modules. These questions will gather your opinion on this process. If you do not want to answer a question please skip it and proceed to the following question.

3. What have you done to make your modules waterside ready?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

4. How ‘Waterside ready’ do you feel your current modules are? Please tick as appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All of my modules are Waterside ready</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of my modules are Waterside ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of my modules are Waterside ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of my modules are Waterside ready</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Has your teaching practice changed since ABL has been introduced? Please tick as appropriate.

| All of my teaching has changed |  |
| Most of my teaching has changed |  |
| Some of my teaching has changed |  |
| None of my teaching has changed |  |

6. What do you think, if any, are the main things you have changed in your teaching?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Resources

This section looks at your opinion regarding training and resources in relation to ABL. If you do not want to answer a question please skip it and proceed to the following question.

7. Please detail the type of training/support, if any, you received upon the initial introduction of ABL?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

8. Which activities have you used to support your ABL teaching? Please tick as appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Completed/ Engaged with</th>
<th>Planning to do in the future</th>
<th>Not required</th>
<th>Unknown resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhouse training e.g. C@n-do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away days/ Staff development days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIRO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCAP (PGCHE) and modules (formal qualification)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching/ learning conferences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal ABL discussions with colleagues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>..................................................................................</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
9. How effective would you rate the level of support available/ received to implement ABL successfully in your teaching practice? Please rate the following types of support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Type</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inhouse training e.g. C@n-do</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away days/ Staff development days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAIRO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCAP (PGCHE) and modules (formal qualification)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>External training</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching/ learning conferences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading and research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal ABL discussions with colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer-observation</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What support do you feel is missing at present that should be made available with regards to ABL?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Teaching and technology

The following questions explore the role of technology within ABL. If you do not want to answer a question please skip it and proceed to the following question.

11. List the top tools that you feel support ABL and tools that are available but not useful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Useful tools</th>
<th>Not useful tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How would you rate the technology support currently being offered by the university?
   Please circle one answer only.

   Excellent       Very good       Average       Poor       I don’t know

Teaching Quality

This final section focuses on teaching quality and the implementation of ABL. We will ask you questions to gather your opinions and experiences on this matter. If you do not want to answer a question please skip it and proceed to the following questions.

13. I understand what makes an effective ABL experience. Please tick..

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, I understand and I have implemented it into my teaching.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand and I am experimenting/trialing it in my teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand but I have not implemented it into my teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I understand but I am finding it challenging to implement into my teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, I do not understand and need further training and support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. What type of peer observation have you participated in? Please list in the far left column. Please also tick how useful you feel each peer observation has been in supporting your ongoing teaching quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(please list below)</th>
<th>Observer/Observee?</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Somewhat useful</th>
<th>Not useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Which challenges, if any, have you faced when implementing ABL?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Tick Box</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No challenges faced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of administrative support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of student engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited ICT facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited internet connectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ICT knowledge among students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large student cohorts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of face to face sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16. How do you currently measure the effectiveness of your teaching?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

17. Please approximately indicate what percentage of your students engage with and complete set work (pre and post) for weekly contact time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Term 1</th>
<th>Term 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you would like to leave a comment. Please do so here.

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

18. In your opinion, does ABL support student retention and engagement? Please circle.

Yes  No  Maybe

19. List the top three activities that in your opinion best support student retention.

1. ........................................................................................................................................

2. ........................................................................................................................................

3. ........................................................................................................................................
6.2 Interview Questions

1. How has your teaching practice developed and changed through ABL?

2. From your experience, are some modules more adaptable to ABL than others?

3. How have water side ready module specifications been reflected in teaching practice?

4. Have you participated in peer observations since the implementation of these changes? If so, in what capacity was this and what changes if any have you observed?

5. From discussion about your observation have you changed your teaching practice with regards to ABL?

6. If not taken part, has there been any informal observations?

7. What university resources have you used in the implementation of ABL?

8. What resources are useful and what would you like to be made available?

9. Have you had any positive or negative experiences in relation to ABL, if so please could you expand on this? For example, what has or hasn’t worked?

10. How have you been able to evidence ABL’s impact on your teaching quality and practice?

6.3 Project Timeline
6.4 Jennifer Collins – Student Research Assistant Experience

Being given the chance to fulfil the role of student research assistant within this ITL Bid project has been an inspirational and motivating experience. Having started out with minimal research skills the project offered me a challenge in terms of learning how to manage my third year studies along with the demands of time commitment and learning new skills for the project. This ultimately taught me how key project management skills are which I feel this project has directly taught me and will greatly contribute towards managing my time in future careers.

Not only has the project enabled me to learn project management skills, it has also improved my verbal and written communication. Part of the project required interviews to be conducted so that data could be obtained, this meant that I learnt how to conduct an interview and communicate myself in a way which could be understood. For example, when a question wasn’t understood by an interviewee it meant I had to be able to explain and break the question down. Ultimately, this means that in the future when proposing perhaps new or controversial marketing solutions I will be able to communicate them in a way others can understand. This is an important skill which can’t be taught, it needs to be learnt through practice which is what this project has provided me with.

It wasn’t just face-to-face communication in which I had to partake in, part of my responsibilities consisted of emailing colleagues to keep them updated. Not only this, blogging and creating blog content was also a critical aspect of this project. As technological communication is now a major requirement of most jobs I feel as though this project has enabled me with the skills I need in order to fulfil the role most marketing assistant jobs consist of. I am now adept at conducting myself in a professional manner through online communication, but also at being able to create interesting and stimulating copy for online publication. This project has also helped me improve my other skills such as; team building, confidence and website management. All of which I am sure will be vital in order to succeed with my future endeavours.

The project has also provided me with critical work experience which I can discuss within upcoming job interviews, this is something which is extremely important to possess as a graduating student as employers need evidence that you have experience within the workplace. As the project is directly inline with the type of work I aim to be involved with, it has meant that I now have real experiences of marketing work which I can relate to and have learned from. Essentially, the project has provided be with an edge when it comes to future interviews as it’s something different and interesting to talk about and shows that I am capable of achieving real results.

It’s also motivated me to go for a career within market research, as I now know that I can handle the challenging characteristics of the job. Most importantly though, today’s business environment heavily relies on who you know not necessarily what you know and I feel as
though this project has offered me a fantastic opportunity to get to know experts in the marketing field whose advice has been pivotal to the outcome of my degree and knowledge learnt. Skills learnt from the project have been interchangeable, this has meant that I’ve been able to apply them to my degree as well as to job applications. I would thoroughly recommend to all students, no matter what stage they are at in their degree, that if given the opportunity to participate in a similar project that they take it. Not only will it help with course work and understanding of the course material, it will also provide an outlet to test the skills you are learning and improve them. As I took a year out completing an apprenticeship before starting university I didn’t want to take a placement year in the workplace. Therefore, completing this project whilst in my final year, though definitely challenging, was so worthwhile as it has meant that although I didn’t do a placement I still have experience and something different to talk about in the competitive graduate job application process.

I am so grateful to have had this fantastic experience and for the guidance of such wonderful supervisors, having learnt valuable business skills and gained considerable knowledge in the field I look forward to what the future holds.
6.5 Mollie Moran - Student Research Assistant Experience

The chance to work on this research bid had been an enlightening experience. The project was a challenging one as it forced the research team to use skills that many of us had not learnt before.

One of the major benefits of working on this bid is that it taught me how valuable project management skills when working in the business industry. From time keeping and team working skills to communication and problem solving skills. This project has gone a long way towards improving my written communication as well, as when designing the surveys and interviews, it was essential that all questions could be understood by a large audience. My verbal communication has also improved, as if a participant was not clear on what a particular question meant it was essential that a member of the team were able to fully explain it to them.

This project also helped with improving my digital skillset. As managing and creating blog content was a major aspect of this role. As blogs were a format I had previously not used before, it challenged me to learn something new. I feel like this research bid has given me a large advantage going forward as technological skills are something the majority of jobs are currently looking for in applicants.

This project was also a good experience for me as it provided me with job experience within my chosen field, giving me something to show to future employers and perhaps giving me a competitive advantage over other graduating students. This research has also been an excellent opportunity for networking, not only allowing me to work with two lecturers from my faculty, but also allowing me to meet other professionals in my field through conducting interviews. This research bid was extremely worthwhile for me as, although it was not an option for me to do a placement year, it still provided me with experience and taught me the skills I'll need to survive within the industry itself.

I am very grateful to have been given a chance to work alongside such an amazing team of researchers and academics and to be given the opportunity to improve my knowledge and skills so significantly.