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How to square a circle

Redesigning an individual project module

Dr. Cristina Gacek
Department of Computer Science
City, University of London

Outline

- Context
- Previous set up
- Revised approach
- Outcomes observed

The context

- BCS (PSRB) requirement ¹
 - Individual project
 - “Practical work to solve a problem using computing technology”
 - Considerable variations between projects
 - Many common aspects
- Increase in student numbers
 - Student intake
 - Student progression
- Increase in students/staff ratio



So what?

- Change needed...
- Reduce load on staff
- Provide more uniform student experience



How we went about it

- 5 academics
 - Alena Denisova
 - Chris Child
 - Chris Smart
 - Cristina Gacek
 - Ross Paterson



How we went about it

- Inspired by literature ²
 - Reduce load on individual academics
 - Reduce departmental resource consumption
 - Increase students' contact hours
 - Increase students' independence
 - Support different learners
 - Provide timely feedback



The previous set up

- Negotiated pairing student with academic supervisor
- Fortnightly 15min meetings student-supervisor
- Prescribed feedback on writing required once, at the end
- Module in two terms
- 2 academics overseeing the module



The new set up

- Pairing student with academic consultant by module team
- Weekly taught sessions on common aspects
- Weekly drop-in sessions with specialists
- Weekly drop-in sessions with module team
- Weekly messages signposting sessions and expectations
- 5 meetings with consultants for feedback on write up/progress
- Module runs in one term
- 5 academics overseeing the module



Observed impact on primary drivers

	Before	Now
Student contact	5 hours	24 hours (excluding drop-ins)
Academic supervisor/consultant contact	60 hours	18 hours
Total departmental resources	1000 hours	408 hours (including individual, group and drop-in sessions)



Further outcomes observed

- Better support for different learners
- More independent students
- Strong engagement by some students
- Easier for students to hide
- All appreciated the new pairing process
- Students worried at first
- Staff very happy
- Similar marks distribution and number of suspected Academic Misconduct (AM) cases



Areas for further thought

- Engaging less proactive students
- Further discouraging AM
- Set up for post-pandemic sessions



FUTURE

City, University of London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)20 7040 8421

E: Cristina.Gacek.1@city.ac.uk

www.city.ac.uk/departments-computer-science

