ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Are virtual insight visits an effective way of engaging learners?

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• Abstract (300 words):
Insight visits have wide ranging benefits to students including reinforcing and expanding upon taught learning, improved ability to relate theory to practice, encouragement of collaborative learning and enhancement of motivation (Higgins et al 2012, Kim-Soon et al 2017, Kuh 1993, Waltz 2019). Subsequently this enhances teaching and learning, student support and employability, which are all fundamental within student experience (Universities UK, 2016).

Students often choose distance learning (DL) due to its potential to fit around their circumstances (Rasheed 2020). Typically, DL universities, such as the Open University (OU), involve large numbers of students across a vast geographical location. Learners often have competing priorities alongside their study time such as work and childcare. Furthermore, many have physical or mental disabilities and social economic issues. These constraints lower the probability of DL student participation in insight visits and may impact longer term outcomes and career destination.

Due to restrictions in movement and closure of education, museum and business sites during the Coronavirus pandemic, students studying at brick universities have lost
opportunities to benefit from organised insight visits. As with students at DL universities, lack of opportunity to participate in insight visits may have long term consequences.

Advances in information and communications technologies (ICT) mean it is now possible to design and implement live interactive Virtual Insight Visits (VIV) at low cost where students online can gain many of the same benefits as attending traditional insight visits. Despite this, the ICT concepts of VIV have not been fully exploited and most virtual insight experiences or visits remain typically passive.

The aim of this project is to investigate if a live interactive VIV to Bletchley Park Museum using software which allows remote attendees to actively participate is an effective way of engaging Level 1 Computing and Communication students.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

David Conway is a Senior Teaching Fellow and Careers Consultant for the STEM faculty at the Open University with a focus on pedagogy and how employability can be embedded into curriculum. David’s current work includes mapping employability learning across the STEM faculty, incorporation of PDP within curriculum and contributing to learning design through innovative use of technology. David is also currently completing other scholarship relating to the careers, information, advice and guidance needs of Open University Level 1 STEM students.

Christine Gardner began working at the OU in 1999 as a tutor on a digital communications module, after working as a support engineer for Intel. She is a Staff Tutor in the School of Computing and Communications, and is a team member on a number of modules, specifically those relating to networking and communications. Christine’s research interests include distance learning, elearning, assessment and data analytics, with a particular focus on student support models. She is also a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Janet Hughes is a staff tutor in the School of Computing and Communications at the Open University in Scotland. Janet’s current research is in the area of computer science education; particular interests are in agile software engineering, professional issues and work-based learning. She is a team member of various modules relating to work-based learning, and module team chair of two degree-apprenticeship modules. She is a member of the BCS and of the BCS academic accreditation committee.