Evaluating
the Impact of Block Delivery

QAA

Our Project - Who are we?

Dr Ellen Buck

University of Suffolk

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Professor Leanne de Main

De Montfort University (Lead Institution)

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Our Project - Aims and Outcomes

Collate experiences, approaches and methods across the sector to evaluate the impact of block teaching to provide insights, guidance and support to QAA membership.

Key Outputs:

- An online toolkit
- Sector-wide conference

Conference: Learning in Blocks: Evaluating the impact of immersive learning
21st September 2023, De Montfort University, Leicester

Assessment & Feedback

Community & Belonging

Curriculum Design

Inclusive Pedagogy

Student Experience

Student Outcomes

Learning in Blocks:
Evaluating the Impact of Immersive Learning

https://learninblock.dmu.ac.uk

Podcasts

Further Reading

Case Studies

Your Ideas and Questions

Padlet

What is your experience of block?

What would you like to learn about blocks?

What do students think?
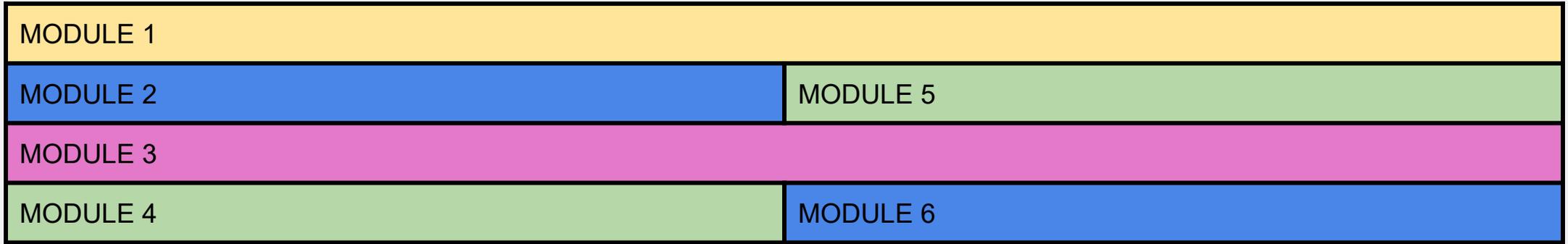
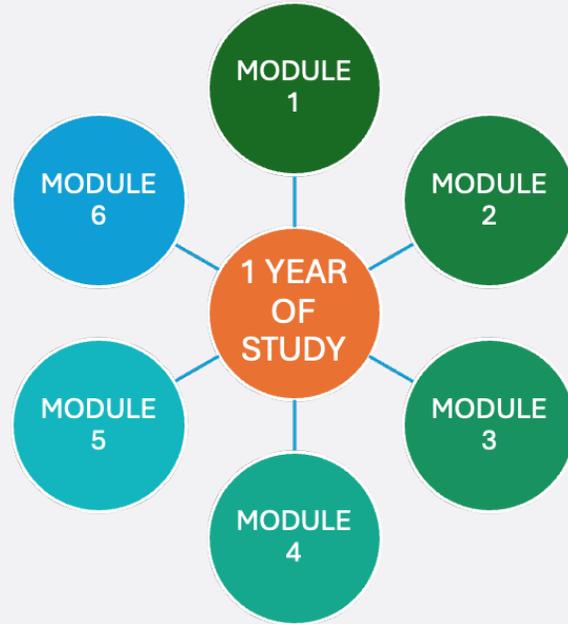What are the barriers to block?

More questions?

What is Block?

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As many have said…it's just a scheduling tool

But one that can have great impact on student engagement, retention, grades and outcomes

MODULE 1		
MODULE 2	MODULE 5	
MODULE 3		
MODULE 4	MODULE 6	

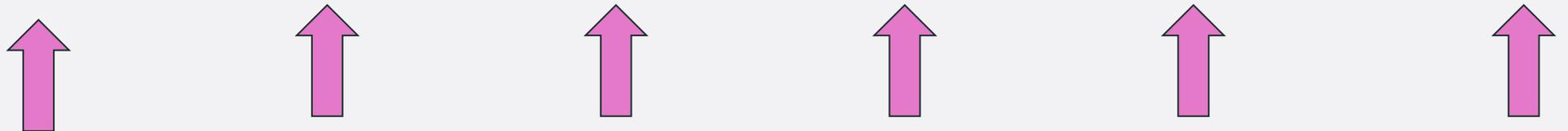| MODULE 1	MODULE 2	MODULE 3	MODULE 4	MODULE 5	MODULE 6

THE LEARNING CHANGES

Where do you want
learning to be at..

Why Block?

Block Opportunities
Building Belonging

Dr Becky Turner - evaluation of block and how it supports transition into higher education at Plymouth
(Turner et al, 2017; Turner et al., 2021)

- Classroom based practices focussed on group work and active learning = stimulated the development of social relationships and cohort cohesion.
- Promoted peer networking and strong relationships with academic staff
- Students better able to manage their time - and emergence of effective study habits
- Higher student achievement on modules delivered following a block format, compared to those using a 'long, thin' model.

Assoc. Prof Fi Turgoose (DMU) exploring student experience on a professional 'block' programme

- Better engaged, confidence learners

My confidence has really grown … I can now say why I think what I think

Block Opportunities:
Innovative modes of delivery

Looking beyond the lecture and seminar to micro-learning, student centred approaches to promote engagement:

Angie Sibley-White and Talitha Bird (DMU) explored their rethinking of lectures for more inclusive learning in block:

- A more learner-focused and inclusive approach
- Bite size learning = greater accessibility
- The "Lecturette" - micro-learning
- Less overwhelming content

Block Opportunities:
Intentional Redesign

To crack block learning, intentional redesign is critical - you can't just "lift, shift and squish". Intentional redesign can promote deep learning, boost engagement and increase self-efficacy and sense of control in learning.

'Block teaching has allowed me to **research the module at depth and given me time to reflect**. It enabled me to write arguments in a way that **stretches my worldview**. I have a job working in mental health and I also have two children that have spent a lot of time being home-schooled. If I had to emerge myself into a number of modules at once I don't think I would have been able to organise my thoughts or my daily life and perhaps would have burned out. **The structure and the flow of the modules has helped to provide my life with some predictability and kept me grounded**.'

Block Opportunities:
Balancing student experience and success

University of Suffolk data, three years post move to block and blend looking at continuation rates for block / non block for two of our Access and Participation Plan targets.Rates are better across the board, those gaps - almost gone.
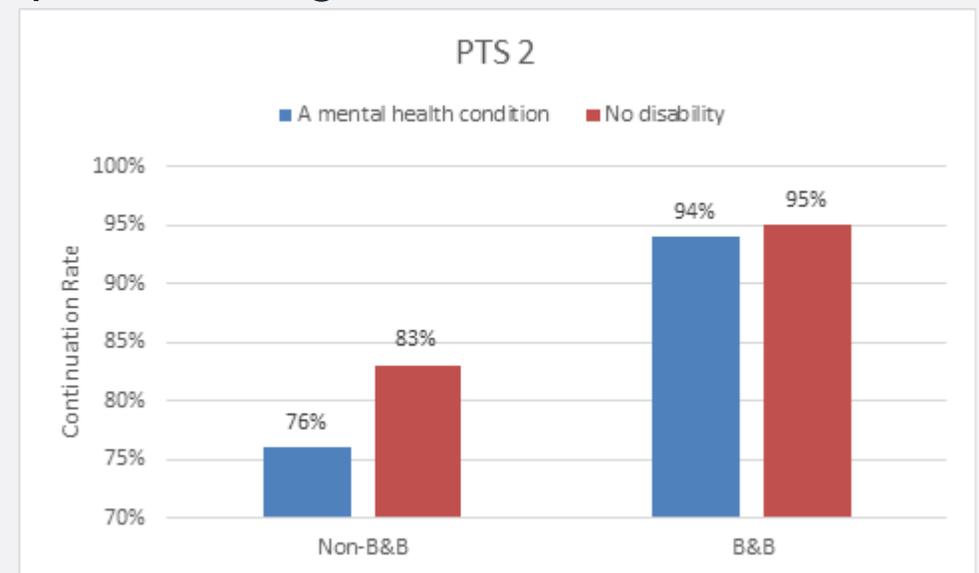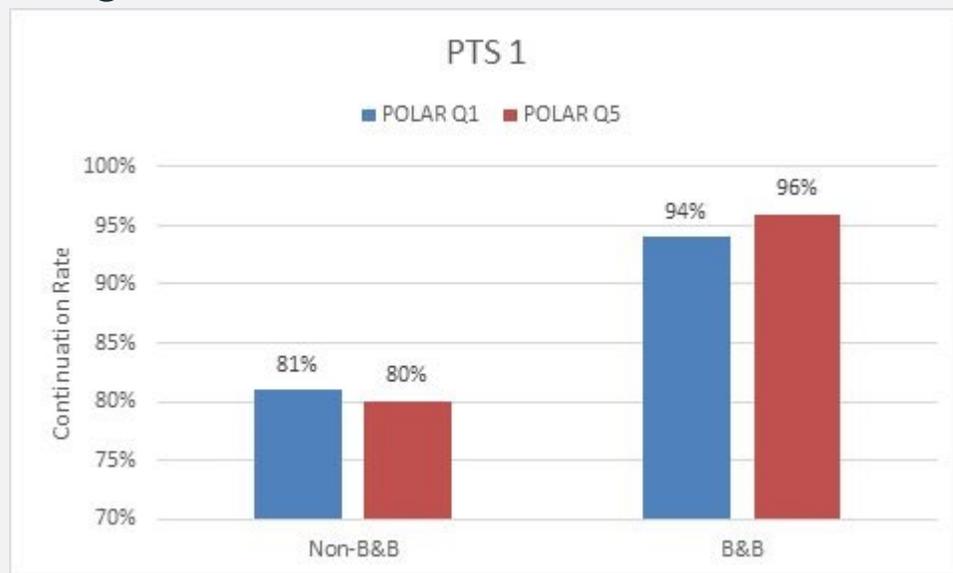
Perspectives of Block:
Assessment and Feedback

Intentional [re]design of assessment and feedback practices

- Based on experiences - presentations and case studies
- Be aware of your credits!
- Low risk assessments i.e. lower percentage
  - Quick assessments that can be taken at home or during class e.g. quizzes
- Scaffolding of assessments
  - Portfolio of smaller tasks
- Assessment and feedback as part of the teaching process - supports engagement and attendance
- *Danger!* Do not overload students or staff - the balance needs to be just right and that might take a few attempts
- Feedback should feel natural and can be both personalised and streamlined
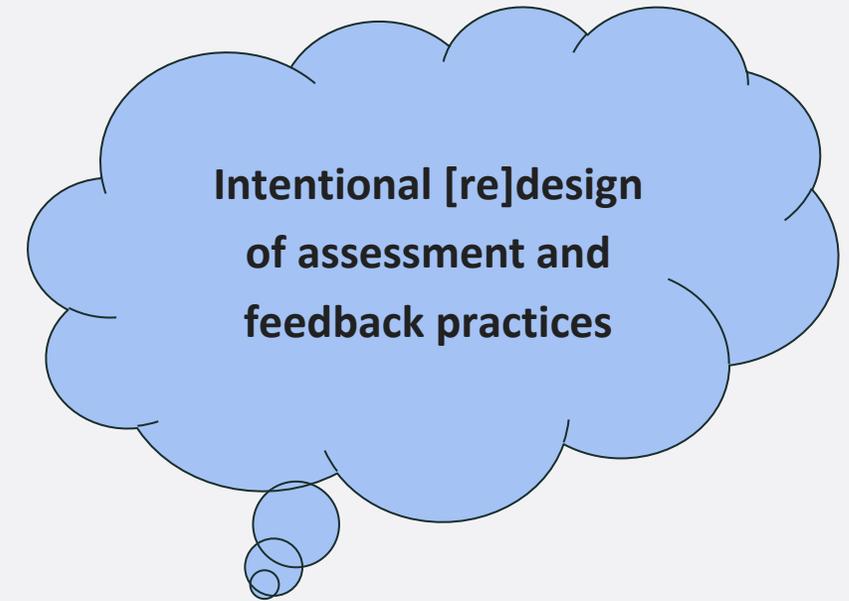
Research and the Future of Block

How can we push the boundaries?

- Practice-sharing
- Cross-institutional partnerships
- Cross-institutional internships
- Research projects that involve a multi-disciplinary approach
- Doctoral projects
- Longitudinal studies

- The future of the Block must be supported by a strong evidence base.

So You are Thinking About Block?

- Preparing students for block teaching is important
- 'Lift and shift' is not ideal
- Block design, but not block thinking – Depth of learning
- Transitions through blocks need to be planned in advance
- Assessment and feedback needs careful design
- Engagement and attendance - monitoring
- Staff experience
  - Academic development for staff is vital
- Sometimes there are imagined barriers
- Part-time block design is 'interesting'
- Plan for bumps in the road!

Be clear about why you are thinking of a move to block - what are the problems you are trying to solve?
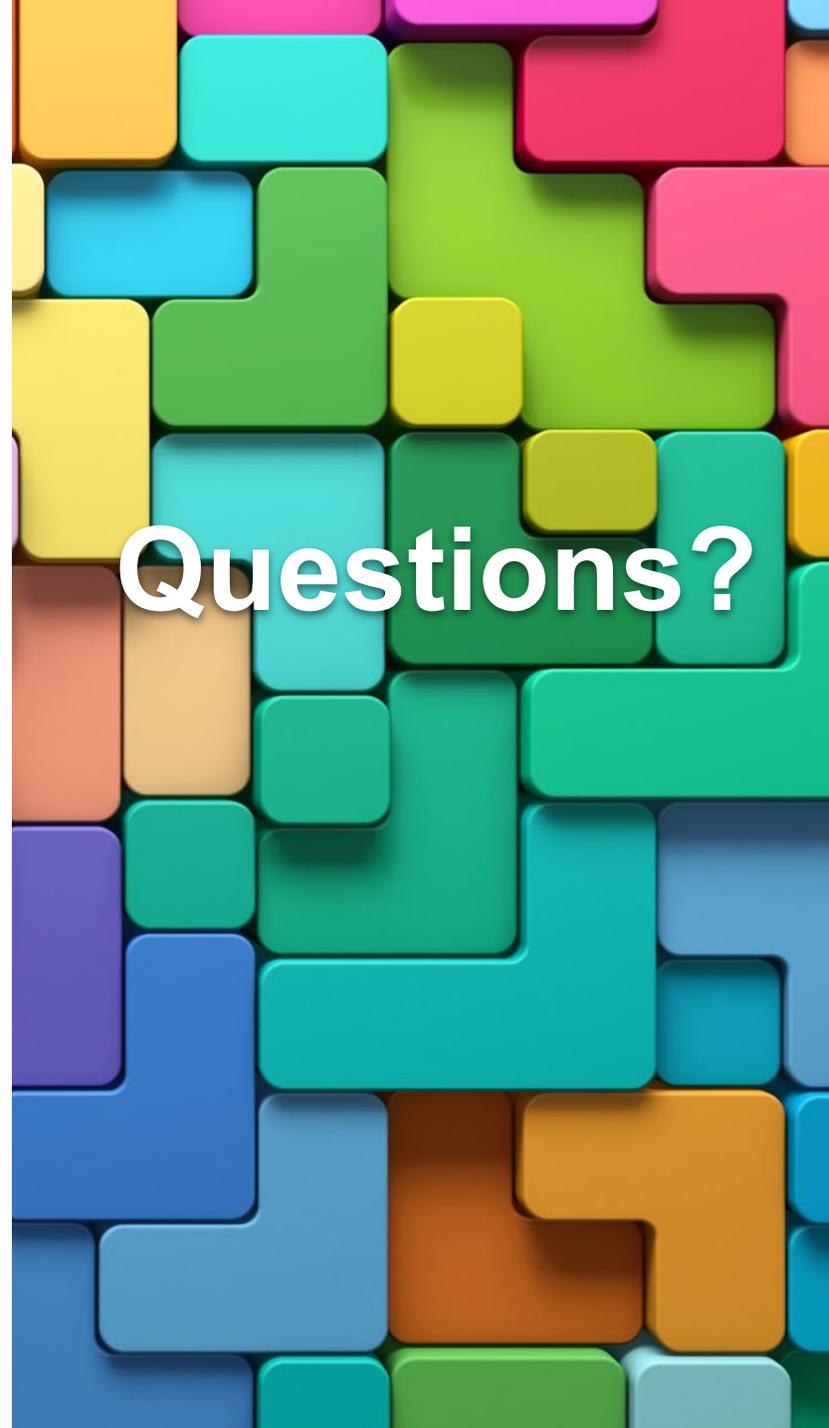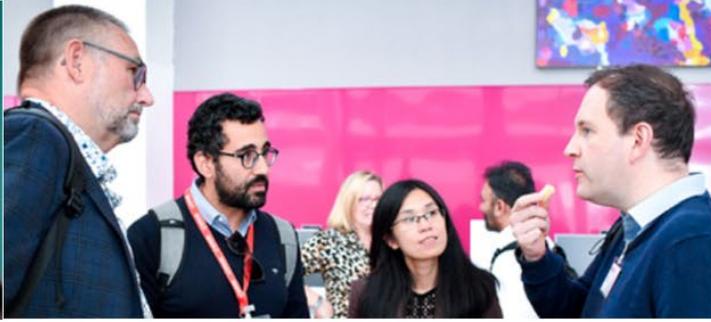
Questions?

Thank You!

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