

Notes from the DLF on 5.12.19

We had a good turnout for our December meeting, with attendees hailing from all different areas of the University.

Multi-factor authentication

We started off with an input from **Lindsay Donnelly** of UoDIT, who spoke to the forum on the topic of **Multi-factor authentication** (MFA) - and particularly wanted to allay anxieties about this for staff involved in distance learning and of course DL students themselves. Lindsay's slide deck can be reached at [mfa-dlf.pptx](#) and user guides on MFA can be found on the UoDIT site at <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/it/> - check those links out!

In her presentation, Lindsay outlined the clear need for MFA – as indicated by the high level of compromised accounts which were occurring. MFA reduces risk and better protects users from data theft. There has been a substantial reduction of phishing emails since the introduction of MFA and it is also helping UoDIT to detect compromised accounts more quickly. Of the different methods available, the mobile app is highly recommended as the most flexible method; it is possible to change to another MFA option (such as by text or phone call) via the app if necessary.

DLF attendees raised a variety of questions. It was noted there is an assumption that everyone has a mobile phone; other arrangements can be made for those who do not (contact help4U@dundee.ac.uk re this). Lindsay clarified that Sonic Wall is a workaround – and may be pulled in due course. She confirmed that it is possible to register two different phone numbers (useful for international students in certain contexts). There may be a charge to use the text message option. Lindsay noted that users are reporting problems to help4U@dundee.ac.uk and UoDIT are working with those users on an individual basis.

Finally Lindsay asked how UoDIT could target distance learners in future. She was advised that the DLF network is good for this.

Speed dating exercise

At the last meeting, it had been suggested that some kind of speed dating exercise would help attendees to get to know each other and understand each other's roles in the DL context. A lively half hour of talking and listening ensued, during which each attendee got to meet around seven others individually, focussing discussion on DL issues; a whole lot of information was exchanged!

In a short plenary after that, a few issues came up, such as the different time zones in which DL students live, meaning that university services, such as Academic Skills Centre and UoDIT are often not available to them. Neil Bowie (n.r.bowie@dundee.ac.uk) of UoDIT encouraged DLF members to contact him directly with examples of instances where it would benefit students to have cover 'out of hours' (after 22.00 hrs). It was noted that not only DL students are affected by this, as many students nowadays work full-time or shifts and need to undertake their learning outside 'normal' hours.

There was some discussion about the use of virtual classrooms, such as Blackboard Ultra Collaborate – and whether synchronous discussion is felt to be useful in our various distance contexts. It was agreed it is very difficult to find a time that will suit everyone. It was noted that many students opt to visit a recording of such an event rather than the event itself. Some attendees reported success with using Teams (part of the 365 suite) for discussion.

An attendee from the School of Law asked about how others go about advertising DL programmes. Some programmes reported using social media successfully for this. It was suggested that the international team in Admissions (who attend recruitment fairs) and the Partnership Unit can each help a lot.

Report from the University's Flexible Learning Group

Susie told the DLF about the Flexible Learning Group, which is quite new, was developed by Nic Beech and feeds into the University's Learning and Teaching Committee. Foci for Flexible learning group currently are: module costing, developing a module framework and peer observation of flexible learning.

She also shared UEG's foci for 20/21:

- Grow and diversify the student community
- Enhance university performance and reputation
- Deliver sustainable ambition

Peer observation of teaching

Susie led some group discussion around the topic of peer observation of teaching, based upon *Seven principles for good practice*, a self-assessment tool from Penn State University, which was generally felt to be useful.

New co-convenor of DLF sought

Aileen McGuigan announced that after several years of co-leading the DLF, she has decided to give someone else a turn! She asked anyone interested to get in touch with herself and Susie. Qabirul Abdullah (of Medical Education) volunteered at the end of the meeting – and will be taking over. If you would like to play a role in organising the DLF in future, please do: more people involved would be very welcome!

Topics for next meetings

If you have something you would like to present at a future DLF meeting – or you have an idea of something which you think the forum should include a session about, please get in touch with Susie and Qabirul. One topic which came up at the 5 December meeting was **eportfolios** – so plans are afoot to include that topic at one of the forthcoming DLF meetings this academic session.

Diary dates for next meetings

Tuesday 10 March 2020 14-16.00 hrs Dalhousie 2S15

Thursday 14 May 2020 14-16.00 hrs Dalhousie 2S15

AMcG 16.12.19