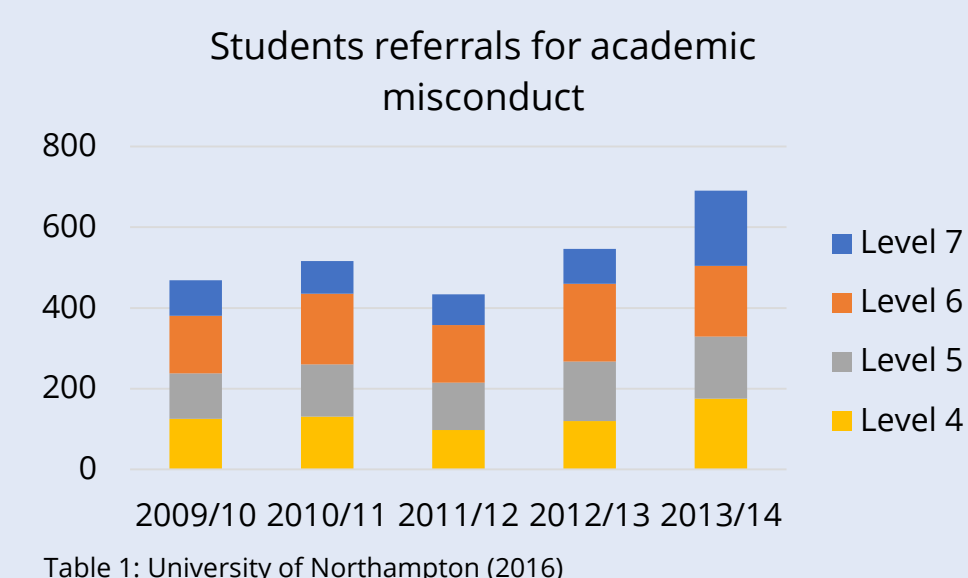# A new approach to university-wide learning resources: rapid course development using a blog platform for delivery

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Why did we need a new online resource?

Needs of students

- Major cause of academic misconduct is student lack of understanding about academic integrity, what is plagiarism and the consequences of academic misconduct (Zivcakova *et al.,* 2015)
- Raise awareness of tools and support available to students to help avoid academic misconduct
- Resource needs to be easy to use
- Certification of completion useful for compliance and recording

Students referrals for academic misconduct

■	Level 7
■	Level 6
■	Level 5
■	Level 4

Table 1: University of Northampton (2016)

A gradual increase in referrals for academic misconduct indicated the need to re-focus our approach. The revised academic misconduct policy and procedures were implemented in June 2017; guidance and support for students needed to be re-designed to align with these.

Needs of University

- Central source of information and guidance about academic integrity
- Easy to create
- Easy to maintain
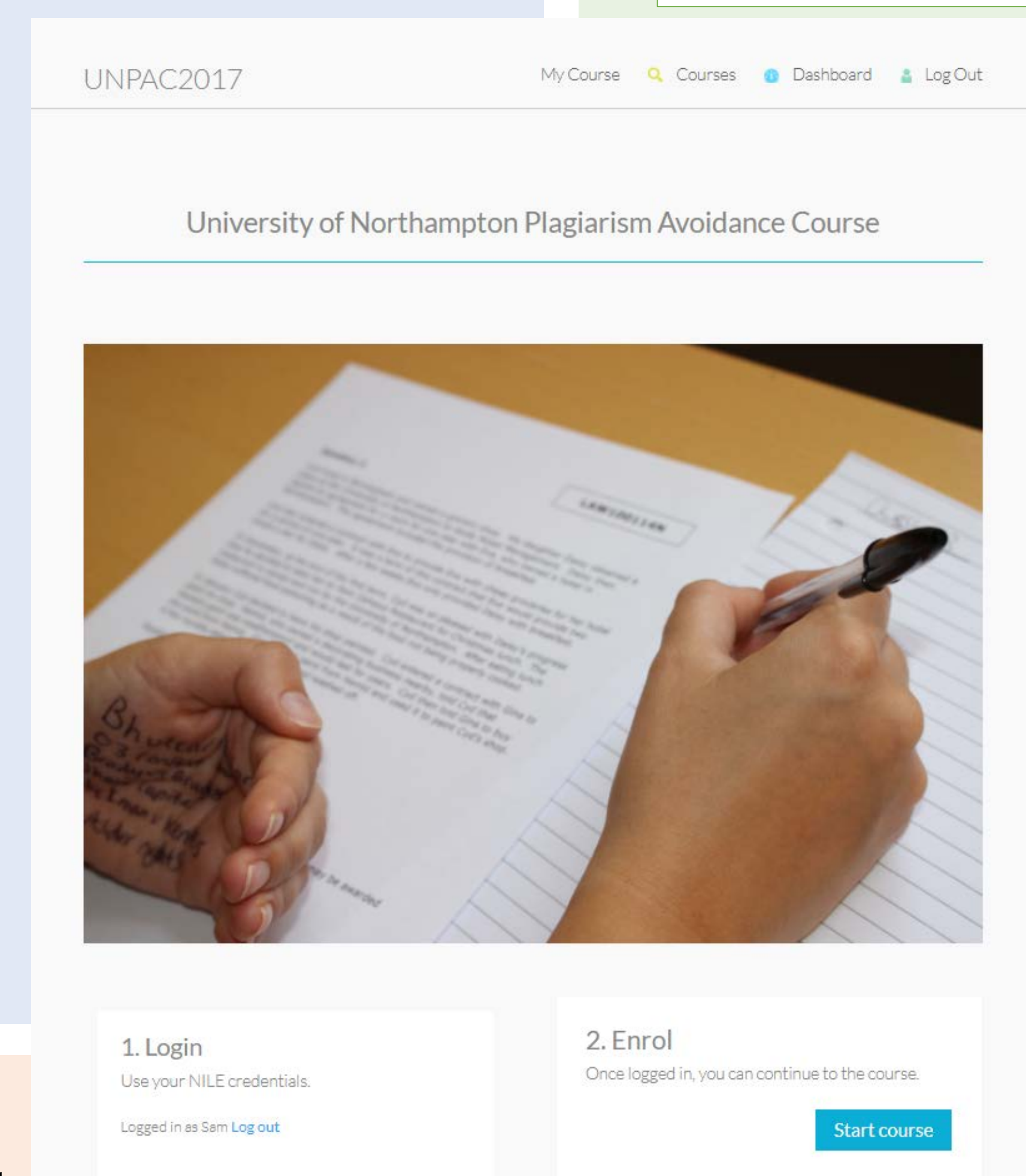- Record of students who have completed the module

Content

We streamlined the content to cover three essential areas:
- What is academic integrity?
- What is academic misconduct?
- How do I avoid academic misconduct?

Statistical evidence showed that there was no one group of students that were more likely to be referred for academic misconduct, therefore the resource had to be accessible and appropriate for all levels and at all stages of study.

If you are referred for academic misconduct during your studies, the University of Northampton academic misconduct procedure will be followed. The Students' Union provides support for students during this procedure.

an academic misconduct referral form

What happens if you are referred for academic misconduct Video transcript (PDF)
What happens if you are referred for academic misconduct Video transcript (Word)

Figure 1: Accessibility adjustments were made throughout, including closed captions and multiple format transcripts for videos.

How did we work? Principles and processes
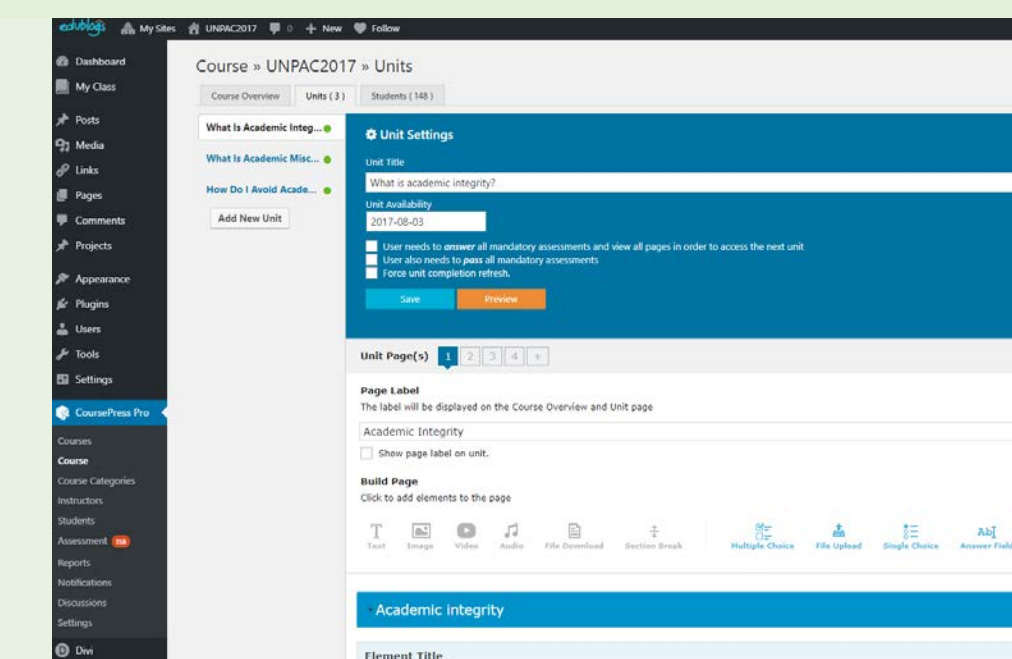
Pedagogical approach

To ensure maximum impact the resource needs to be part of an holistic approach to academic integrity which encompasses policy, procedure and guidance (Morris and Carroll, 2015).

The previous version had focussed on generic skills and guidance, but the intention was to provide specific examples based on University policy and procedures.

Students knowledge and understanding is checked by quizzes at the end of each section, which students have to attempt before they can move on. The score for each participant is recorded.

UNPAC2017   My Course   Courses   Dashboard   Log Out

University of Northampton Plagiarism Avoidance Course

1. Login
Use your NILE credentials.
Logged in as Sam Log out

2. Enrol
Once logged in, you can continue to the course.
Start course

Rapid production

Collaboration between learning development, librarians and Student Union as well as input and guidance from academics across all faculties.

The initial planning workshop focussed on the requirements of the module and the key content areas. We spent a day planning the module, and starting to produce content. This gave us momentum which enabled the module to be completed, reviewed and available within two months.

Using a blog for course delivery

Many institutions have explored the benefits of using blogs for communication and collaboration (Leslie, 2003; Luján-Mora and de Juana-Espinosa, 2007; Garcia-Sabater *et al.*, 2011). However, the blog has not been used extensively as the core mechanism for delivering teaching and learning. With the help of our Learning Technology team we were able to develop a format that is intuitive and easy to use, edit and maintain.

Technical considerations

The benefits of using the Edublogs platform with the CoursePress Pro plugin were clear for us:

- The platform is linked to the University VLE, therefore integrated with single sign-on
- CoursePress Pro enables assessment through various quizzes and free text entry
- Students can download a certificate of completion
- The platform is accessible for those using screen readers or keyboard only input, and we provided alternative formats where appropriate

A potential drawback is that we are reliant on Edublogs for access and maintenance. For example, early in production a technical issue with certification was identified, however this was swiftly resolved by the company.
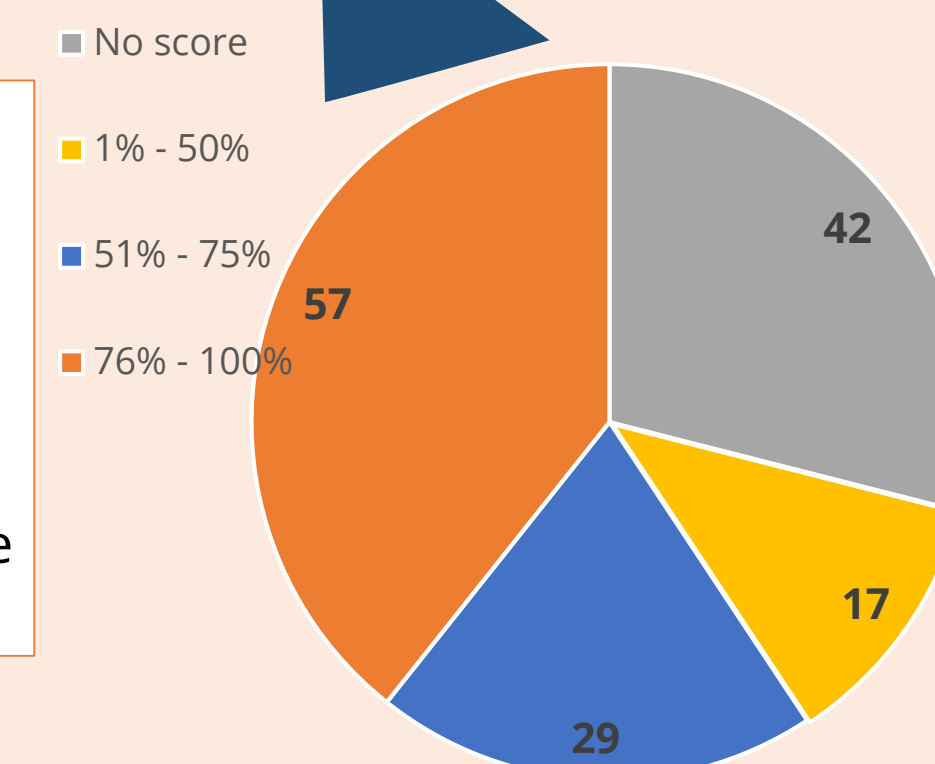
What next?

Qualitative feedback about the course content and blog format from participants would enable us to refine and improve the course.

Gathering up to date information about student referrals for academic misconduct would provide an indication of the effectiveness of the course. The interactive features of the blog format could be better used to improve student engagement.

"...the units arrangement was really attention-grabbing and informative. The quizzes at the end were especially useful to check my understanding."

What could be improved?

We did limited user experience testing before release, and feedback was positive. We need to think about how we incorporate the student voice into the resource.

As we had a soft launch with little publicity knowledge of the resource amongst staff is still low. A publicity campaign, perhaps timed to coincide with the annual *International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating*, would increase staff knowledge and student enrolments.

Student assessment scores in UNPAC, September 2017 – February 2018

■	No score
■	1% - 50%
■	51% - 75%
■	76% - 100%

What was the result?

145 students registered with the course in the first six months, and 39% (57) scored over 76% in the assessments. This demonstrates that not only were students engaging with the content, it was also pitched at the correct level.

Garcia-Sabater, J.J., Vidal-Carreras, P.I., Santandreu, C. and Perello-Marin, R. (2011) Practical experience in teaching inventory management with Edublogs. *Journal of industrial engineering and management*, **4**(1), pp.103-122.
Leslie, S. (2003) Matrix of some uses of blogs in education. *Edtechpost* [online]. 9 October. Available from: http://scottleslie.ca/edtechpost/wordpress/2003/10/09/matrix-of-some-uses-of-blogs-in-education/ .
Luján-Mora, S. and de Juana-Espinosa, S. (2007) The use of weblogs in higher education: Benefits and barriers. In *Proceedings of the International Technology, Education and Development Conference (INTED 2007)*, pp. 1-7.
Morris, E.J. and Carroll, J. (2015) Developing a sustainable holistic institutional approach: Dealing with realities 'on the ground' when implementing an academic integrity policy. In: Bretag, T. (ed.) *Handbook of academic integrity*. Springer Reference: Singapore.
University of Northampton (2016) *Student Experience Committee Complaints and Appeals 2014-15 dataset* [internal document].
Zivcakova L., Wood E., Archer K., De Pasquale D., and Nosko A. (2015) Examining Instructional Interventions: Encouraging Academic Integrity Through Active Learning Approaches. In: Li M. and Zhao Y. (eds) *Exploring Learning & Teaching in Higher Education. New Frontiers of Educational Research*. Springer: Berlin.