THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Teaching Matters

Exploring the potential for multi-authored, University-level blogs to stimulate online and offline dialogue about teaching and learning.

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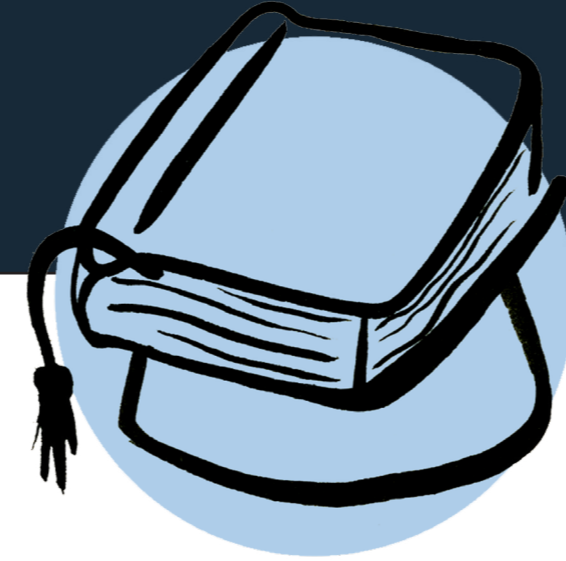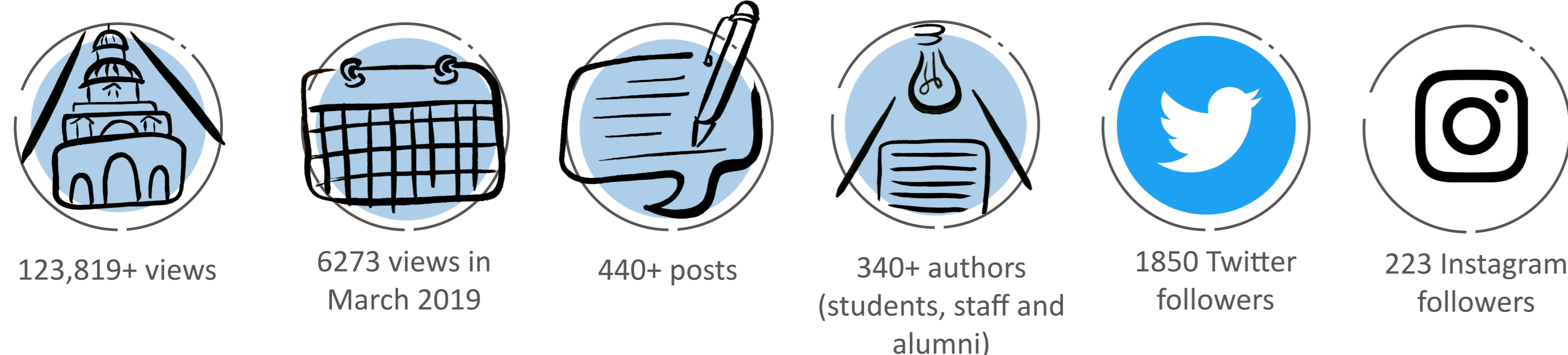
Research project aims

- To explore participants' motivation to read, and contribute to, a multi-authored, university-level blog on teaching and learning: Teaching Matters.

- To map the experiences of authors and readers to gain greater insights into how teaching and learning conversations circulate, and generate impact.

- To investigate how Teaching Matters can be used as a resource to further support the informal sharing of effective practices.

Teaching Matters is the University of Edinburgh's website, blog and podcast for debate about learning and teaching, for sharing ideas and approaches to teaching, and for showcasing our successes, including academic colleagues who are leading the way in delivering brilliant teaching.

www.ed.ac.uk/staff/teaching-matters

KEY BLOG STATS

123,819+ views | 6273 views in March 2019 | 440+ posts | 340+ authors (students, staff and alumni) | 1850 Twitter followers | 223 Instagram followers

Working Research Questions

Where do conversations generated by a blog post travel, and how? What does the nature of these conversations and interactions look like? What impact are they having on teaching practice? How can blogging influence quality enhancement in a Higher Education institution?

Method

The project has received ethical approval from Moray House School of Education and Sport.

1. First stage (Summer 2019)

Data collection: Online questionnaires aimed at Teaching Matters readers and contributors.

Semi-structured interviews with former and current editors and designers.

Data sample size: Approx. 25% of the current contributors to the Teaching Matters blog (80), 25% of the readers (375), and 100% editors and designers (4).

2. Second stage (Academic Year 2019/20)

Data collection: Focus groups and semi-structured interviews with self-selected readers and contributors.

Data sample size: Self-referred participants; ~10 readers and ~10 contributors, staff and students.

What is academic blogging?

A blog (originally called 'web log') is a regularly updated website, featuring short articles written in an informal and conversational style.

Blogging can stimulate conversation and offers a low-resource academic practice with space to reflect and think: *"Academics are increasingly being urged to blog in order to expand their audiences, create networks and to learn to write in more reader friendly style."* [1]

Multi-authored blog

Central editorial team who commissions/collates posts from many different authors; professionally edited; common format; standard lengths for posts; well-defined styling; and promoted on social media [2].

Generating learning and teaching dialogue through informal networks

While blogs may be conversational in tone and style, they remain a monologic form of communication [3].

There is no guarantee that Teaching Matters generates further conversations about learning and teaching across the university: Only 9% of Teaching Matters blog posts have stimulated a written, online comment.

But we know conversations are happening across, and outside of, the university that are prompted by publishing and reading blog posts. They may be contributing to the formation of a microculture [4] around learning and teaching. Yet these avoid capture through analytics and viewer statistics. This research project aims to track and explore these conversations, and investigate their impact on practice and professional development.

TEACHING MATTERS AND YOU

Please tell us about your experience and views of Teaching Matters by filling in a questionnaire:

CONTRIBUTORS
edin.ac/2QxUG73

READERS
edin.ac/2QxH1wF

For more information, please email Jenny: Jenny.Scoles@ed.ac.uk

References

[1] **Mewburn, I and Thomson, P. (2013).** Why Do Academics Blog? An Analysis of Audiences, Purposes and Challenges. Studies in Higher Education, 38(8), 1105-1119.

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[3] **Roxå, T and Mårtensson, K. (2015).** Microcultures and informal learning: a heuristic guiding analysis of conditions for informal learning in local higher education workplaces. International Journal for Academic Development, 20(2), 193-205.

[4] **Wegerif, R. (2013).** Dialogic: Education for the internet age. London: Routledge.