# PTAS Project Report   (for SMALL PROJECT GRANTS)

**Project Title: Understand learning pathways with curriculum analytics**

**Principal Investigator : Yi-Shan Tsai**
**School / Department : Informatics**

**Team members : Diego Rates and Dragan Gašević**

**For further information, please contact: yi-shan.tsai@ed.ac.uk**

Grant recipients are expected to submit a brief report at the conclusion of their project which outlines briefly the following :  nature of work completed; outcomes; benefits to student learning/student experience; dissemination activity (where relevant – actual and planned) and how the activity could inform future work or be transferred to other subject areas in the University.  The brief report will be published on the IAD web pages.

**Brief Report (maximum 500 words)**

**What did you do?**

The University of Edinburgh has provided comprehensive support resources to assist teaching staff in their work related to the enhancement of programme design and teaching practice. However, there is insufficient understanding of the extent to which existing support is effective or adequate in terms of supporting the use of data in these processes. In light of this, this project 1) explored the existing use of data and identify staff's needs in activities related to the evaluation and enhancement of programme curricula, and 2) explored staff's potential concerns with using data and analytics tools to inform curriculum decisions. A total number of 19 staff participated in five focus groups and one individual interview. The participants came from 13 different schools and their administrative roles included course organisers, programme directors, personal tutors, subject or discipline heads, school directors of teaching, school directors of quality, among others. The discussions were facilitated with a list of semi-structured questions related to programme curriculum evaluation and enhancement.

**What did you find out?**

We identified five main types of data used to facilitate programme evaluation (learning data, programme resources, student and applicant data, stakeholder feedback, and programme enhancement data). We also identified needs related to accessing, processing, and reporting data. For example, the participants expressed a need to systematise the analysis of programme curricula and to scale up staff's analytical capabilities for curriculum evaluation and enhancement. They would also like to receive actionable data and reports that speak to audiences with different levels of data literacy. The study also identified a number of concerns related educational practice, privacy, and ethics. These concerns include risks of uncritical and non-contextual interpretations of educational data, misuses of personal data of students and staff, time-shortage of teaching staff, and unequal levels of data literacy.

**How did you disseminate your findings?**
We have completed a detailed version of project report and shared it with the 19 participants (from 13 schools) in addition to 21 heads of schools, the university's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, and the Student Data and Surveys Team. We will also prepare a journal publication based on the report.

**What have been the benefits to student learning?**
Based on the findings, we made three recommendations: 1) increasing curriculum-related analytical capabilities of staff by expanding training, data and tools provided to staff, 2) facilitating conversation about the use and needs of data in the evaluation and enhancement of programme curricula, and 3) using data critically. Following these recommendations, it is expected that the university will be better positioned to assess how, and to which extent, the use of data can help teaching staff improve the quality of programme curricula and ensure the needs of students being met.

**How could these benefits be extended to other parts of the university?**
Using data to inform programme evaluation and enhancement is relevant to all the degree programmes and the university's central quality assurance and enhancement team.

**Who can be contacted for further details?**
Diego Rates (diego.rates@ed.ac.uk)
Yi-Shan Tsai (yi-shan.tsai@ed.ac.uk)

**Financial statement  (please delete as appropriate):**

This project has utilised the funding awarded to it by the PTAS adjudication committee and the Principal Investigator or School Administrator appropriate can provide financial statements showing the funding usage as and when required by the UoE Development Trusts who may require it for auditing purposes.

**Please send an electronic PDF copy of this report to:**
Email: iad.teach@ed.ac.uk