

# Students at the heart of the VLE

## THE USERS

The goal of Learn Foundations is to make Learn more accessible, inclusive and easier for students to navigate. Therefore, being both interns and students at the University of Edinburgh who interact with Learn every day, we have been able to provide the project with valuable insights from day one. The 47 interns hired over the summer of 2020 are all familiar with Learn and have been using it for a minimum of two years, we have experienced firsthand the positive impact that a logical, clear and easy to navigate Learn page can bring to our learning. The value of being both interns and students has never been more potent than over the past academic year, as the university shifted to a completely online learning approach. We have been able to provide valuable insights to the Learn Foundations project regarding the use of terminology for online learning tools that have been adopted by academic staff over the past year. With this insight, we have been able to advise on the terminology that works best and ensure a consistent approach to online learning across the university.

One of the greatest aspects of joining the Learn Foundations team has been working in the knowledge that what we are doing is going to benefit every student at the University, regardless of their School or Deanery. We are from many different academic fields within the university. However, using Learn is common to all of us. It has been eye-opening to discuss our personal experiences of using Learn throughout our studies and see how much variation there is. This has allowed us to come together to understand the importance of the common goal of the Learn Foundations project; make Learn more consistent across the university.

## THE DESIGNERS

The template was carefully created using a co-design approach. The incorporation of students into this approach once again puts students at the heart of Learn Foundations. To inform the approach to Learn Foundations and establish a university wide standard for Learn, the design team conducted qualitative face-to-face research with students from multiple Schools. We engaged with over 4,000 students in multiple surveys to inform the development of the standard template. Students allowed for a rich and detailed picture of what is needed from Learn and what tasks students use it for. During the coronavirus pandemic, student interns have been involved in adapting Learn to support online teaching in the virtual learning environment.

As interns, we have been involved in the process of mapping out over 600 courses and providing suggestions as to where we would expect to find certain elements of the course on Learn, for example the course handbook or the course resource list. We have been involved in the design process to ensure that the template is being utilised to its full potential, and our position as both interns and students has allowed the co-design process to continue well beyond the initial building of the template.

DESIGNERS

USERS

STUDENTS

ENABLERS

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Throughout our time with Learn Foundations we have been provided with ample opportunities to develop our professional skills and interests. During the summer internship, time was set aside for us to use LinkedIn Learning.

We have completed courses ranging from Microsoft Teams Essential Training and Excel Essential Training to courses on Efficient Time Management, Working from Home and the Morning Habits of High Performers. We have also gained valuable skills in teamwork, communication, organisation and presenting. The opportunities provided by Learn Foundations have allowed us to grow in confidence and it has been a great stepping stone into the professional working life.

## THE ENABLERS

The implementation of the Learn Foundations vision would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of student intern. Over the course of our summer internship, we migrated over 3,000 courses to the Learn Foundations template, completed 2,000 accessibility checks on learning material and University websites, and directly supported and liaised with over 100 academic staff to ensure the smooth transition of their course content to the next academic year. We received training from 3 students interns who completed the internship in 2019, again highlighting how integral students have been to the Learn Foundations project.

From the larger cohort of summer interns, 6 interns were retained to work part-time for Learn Foundations alongside their studies throughout the academic year. During this time, we have completed a variety of tasks across the project. For example, producing visual and statistical analysis of the tasks completed over the summer, captioning and transcribing user experience interviews to aid in understanding the impact that coronavirus has had on the experience of using Learn, and producing creative content to demonstrate the work of student interns at Learn Foundations.

"There were always many avenues of support, so I never felt overwhelmed or lost"  
**Rory Shaw, Core Intern**

"The ease with which I could navigate my courses certainly made me more inclined to go the extra mile with my studies, for example, accessing further reading material"  
**Claudia Jones, Core Intern**

"As a University of Edinburgh student, I have experience using Learn and being a part of the new improvements would be an enlightening experience"  
**Patricija Mendelyte, College Intern**

"It has been really enjoyable and very productive to improve on my technical literacy, both for the internship and my studies moving forward"  
**Tsholofelo Motswagole, Core Intern**

"One thing that I really like about the School of Engineering template is the addition of a Course Activity Tracker to the course materials section that helps with keeping up to speed with the content being uploaded."  
**Joan Kibagendi, Core Intern**

"Having taken courses in various schools throughout my time at University, I know from first-hand experience how a well-designed easy to navigate course page can improve my learning experience"  
**Philip Jenkins, Core Intern**

"As a student, I have found the common nature of the template being utilised for all my courses incredibly helpful in navigating my work for the academic year"  
**India Sommerside, Core Intern**

"The way the template was designed meant that once I had taken the time to explore one course, I knew exactly where everything would be for each of my classes. Having all teaching materials divided by weeks within the Course Material folder has saved me so much time and effort as I know exactly what is expected of me each week"  
**Emma Calvert, Core Intern**

