

Chapter 13

Enhancing Teaching Through Asynchronous Professional Development Programmes: A Case Study of the Cambridge PDQ Certificate in Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a comprehensive case study of the Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Certificate in Teaching & Learning (PDQ T&L) programme, a benchmarked professional development initiative offered by the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC), with a focus of its asynchronous learning model. The study spans three cycles of the programme, from 2022 to 2025, and evaluates the effectiveness of its asynchronous delivery model in enhancing teaching practices among participants. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the various aspects of asynchronous teaching development and to identify areas for improvement in the course structure, participant engagement and reflective practice facilitation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Asynchronous learning has been widely adopted and has had significant impact on student engagement, academic achievements and the overall structure of higher education. Reflective practice is essential for teachers' professional growth, but it faces a variety of challenges. The Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Certificate in Teaching & Learning (PDQ T&L), offered by the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC), provides a benchmarked programme that aligns with the Framework for Higher Educational Qualifications (FHEQ) level 4. This chapter presents a case study of the PDQ T&L programme, focusing on the asynchronous delivery mode and its impact on enhancing teaching practices among participants. Through a comprehensive evaluation of three cycles of the programme, spanning from 2022 to 2025, we explore the details of asynchronous professional development.

The evaluation of Programme One is based on a seven-section checklist for blended learning (Manna et al., 2023), highlighting key areas for improvement, including the introduction and course overview, assessment methods, learner engagement, communication, course content, course technology and resources for learner support.

Upon the evaluation of Programme One, multiple areas of improvement have been identified for Programme Two: adopting Salmon's (2002:11) 5-stage model to enhance participants' digital literacy, incorporating a pre-course orientation week into the curriculum, classifying asynchronous tasks into three categories (input tasks, application tasks and portfolio tasks), aligning asynchronous tasks with different methods of formative assessment, developing a reflective journal template to strengthen candidates' reflective practice, and providing diversified learner support.

The application of these strategies has boosted participant engagement and course completion on Programme Two. However, based on Murphy's (2004) conceptual framework for collaboration, it was discovered that the majority of the asynchronous forum contributions are confined to the fundamental levels of 'social presence' and 'articulating individual perspectives'. Furthermore, the Cambridge examiners' reports have revealed several areas to enhance participants' reflective practice, including engaging with a greater variety of teaching methods and learning activities, demonstrating a clearer progression from Unit 1 to Unit 3, and enhancing the critical nature of their reflective practices.

Consequently, following the evaluation of Programme Two, several key areas for enhancement have been pinpointed for Programme Three: implementing new measures to communicate course expectations with participants, establishing an instructor feedback framework and an end-of-fortnight asynchronous forum discussion summarization framework, and introducing group tasks to foster deeper collaboration within Online Asynchronous Discussions (OADs).

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