Learning Analytics Code of Practice

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Learning Analytics Code of Practice

1. Purpose

What is this document?

This document sets out the overall approach for learning analytics at City. It is designed to explain key aspects of the work so that staff and students know what to expect from the system and service. It is based on the Jisc Code of Practice for Learning Analytics.

What is learning analytics?

Learning analytics is "the application of analytic techniques to analyse educational data, including data about learner and teacher activities, to identify patterns of behaviour and provide (frequent) actionable information to improve learning and learning-related activities."[1]

Learning analytics uses specialised software to pull together existing student learning data from multiple university sources into one system. By having learning student data on one system, staff can obtain a clearer picture of student engagement and learning with educational activities across modules and programmes without having to look at multiple systems.

2. What is Learning Analytics at City?

The Learning Analytics Project (LeAP) and service are focusing on how learning analytics and student interventions can be used to understand and support student engagement with their studies, which in turn can lead to a better student experience.

Staff at City may use learning analytics data for the following purposes:

- **Student Support:** Professional service staff members will be provided with Excel spreadsheets from the Jisc learning analytics system which will offer an overall picture of students' engagement and help to identify which students require support. These spreadsheets will provide professional staff with a traffic light system also known as RAG (Red, Amber, Green) which indicates module and course engagement patterns for students. The RAGs will be informed by an amalgamation of students' VLE (i.e. Moodle), attendance, and grades data. This Excel format will allow staff members to use mail merge to contact large groups of students at once. The students who are contacted will be offered appropriate, tailored, and timely support to help them succeed. The support offered, also known as 'interventions', can be done on an individual or group basis. For more information, see Enabling Positive Interventions.

  Staff from professional services (e.g. LEaD, Student and Academics Services, Student Engagement Officers) may also utilise engagement data to assist with service evaluations. For instance, Student & Academic Services may use the data to identify students who have not engaged and who have received interventions. These students may be surveyed or interviewed to find out about their experiences with interventions, so that City can maintain or improve the service provided. Identified students may also be contacted by other professional service staff to collect feedback about the service and to offer support.

[1] Van Harmelen, M. & Workman, D. (2012). CETIS Analytics Series: Analytics for Learning and Teaching. Available from Cetis Publications.

- **Curriculum Analytics:** Curriculum analytics is the use of learning data to "discover whether aspects of the curriculum are functioning as intended". It enables educators to "analyse the places students are visiting online, how much time they spend there, what tools they are using and how frequently they are using them" (Sclater, 2017: 61).[2] If insights are found, then academics can make changes to their modules to improve student engagement and success. The learning analytics interface (aka Jisc Data Explorer) will be used by selected academic staff to explore the potential of curriculum analytics via a feasibility study and small pilot which seeks to map diverse student cohorts' broader engagement patterns and resource use. The system will be used for two purposes:
    1. By academics/module leaders to explore how their student cohorts engage with the resources on their module and to observe patterns around attendance and grades.
    2. By programme leaders to explore how different student cohorts engage with different all modules within a programme, and to evaluate and develop modules based on this evidence.

  The information that staff collect may influence decisions for teaching and learning improvements. The learning analytics team will also gather suggested curriculum analytics feature improvements, which will be fed into requirements gathering for a future system.

- **System and Service Evaluation:** Staff may evaluate the learning analytics system and service by reviewing learning analytics statistical data. This data may be included in reports and may be shared with senior leadership, schools and other professional service staff.

3. Key Principles of learning analytics at City

1. The use of learning analytics is intended to support and benefit all students by helping students engage with and progress in their studies and should not be used in a punitive manner (punitive = visa non-compliance, disciplinary procedures).
2. Learning analytics may be utilised as a starting point for conversations between staff and students to put in place appropriate and timely non-punitive interventions to support students.
3. Data on the learning analytics system or data drops should **not** be used and acted on in isolation, as it may not represent a full picture of engagement. It is recommended that staff view the learning analytics data alongside other available sources (e.g. personal tutor case notes) to ensure that they have a full picture of engagement.
4. Learning analytics data will only be viewed by authorised staff who need to have access to provide support to students.
5. Learning analytics is supported by the Taught Student Engagement and Attendance Policy, which stipulates that students are 'responsible for…participation and engagement with the learning and teaching on…[their] programme' (3). City are responsible for providing 'method(s) of recording attendance and engagement on campus and online' (7).
6. The learning analytics service will be reviewed on an annual basis by the learning analytics team to ensure that it adheres to policy, remains fit for purpose, continues to be data compliant, and aligns with the needs of the University and the student body.
7. Changes in data sources and use of learning analytics will go through a consultation process with staff and students. New data sources will be selected based on their impact on student

[2] Sclater, N. (2017) *Learning analytics explained*. New York; London: Routledge.

engagement and learning and will be approved by the service's governing body. Thereafter, they will be communicated to staff and students through City communication channels.

8. All staff utilising learning analytics will be provided with training and support to ensure that the maximum value is drawn from the system and data.
9. Learning analytics will not be used for the following purposes:
    a. To monitor academic staff job performance (e.g. job appraisals, performance management).
    b. To monitor student activity that is not related to teaching and learning.

4. Access

Types of access to the learning analytics interface (aka Jisc Data Explorer):

- Tutor
    - This access is automatic for all academic staff and personal tutors linked to teaching modules. These staff members will only be able to see the learning data of students and modules they are responsible for. Module information comes from SITS which is Student Records System.
- Site Explorer
    - This access is designed for professional staff who need to support students. This access will need to be requested via the learning analytics team. This access enables a staff member to see all student data across the University.
- Admin
    - This access is designed for members of staff in IT and learning analytics who need to administer and support the system. This access needs to be requested via the learning analytics team. These staff members will see all student data across the University and make configuration changes to the learning analytics system.

Types of access for exported student support spreadsheets:

- School/Departmental roles
    - This access is designed for school or departmental staff who need to access to specific departmental or school data. This access will need to be requested via the learning analytics team.

5. Enabling positive interventions

An 'intervention' is appropriate, tailored and timely support offered to a student/students identified as not engaging with their studies. Interventions can ensure that students receive appropriate learning support. They can be undertaken on an individual or group basis.

- Individual interventions normally involve a staff member contacting a student who is not engaging with their studies. The goal is to check in with the student about their engagement, establish what type of support the student requires and help them to access that support.
- Group interventions normally involve making a change for a group of students who are not meeting expectations or not engaging in a particular area, with the hope that the change will lead to improvements. For instance, a lecturer might offer extra tutorials to help students who are struggling in a particular area. It is likely that this will be offered to an entire cohort in an opt-in basis, to ensure students' analytics are confidential.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Several teams and individuals are responsible for ensuring the smooth operation and use of the learning analytics system at City. They include the following:

- Learning Analytics Team in Learning Enhancement and Development (LEaD)
    - Product and business service owner
    - Oversight and management of the project/service
    - Training and guidance
    - User/pedagogic support
    - Responsible for data protection, retention, and storage
- IT
    - System technical support
    - Data collector and processor
- Jisc
    - Provider of learning analytics solution (Jisc Data Explorer)
    - Escalated technical support
    - System development and updates
- Staff
    - Responsible for utilisation and monitoring of learning analytics data
    - Implementors of student interventions
- LEC (Learning Environment Committee)
    - Governance of the Learning Analytics Project and service
- Special interest groups (e.g. Student Union)
    - To be consulted regarding major changes to the system or service

7. Transparency

The University will be transparent about learning analytics and the approaches used at City. Informational sites will be provided to staff and students which will clearly outline:

1. The purpose of learning analytics
2. Data sources used
3. How learning analytics will be used at City
4. Key contacts

Student site: Learning analytics | Student Hub | City, University of London
Public and staff site: Learning Analytics Project (LeAP) | City, University of London

8. Consent

Consent to process data falls within Article 6 (1)(e) of City's Student Privacy Policy at City. It states that processing data may be 'necessary for the performance of a task carried in the public interest – City is an educational and research establishment and in particular its educational and research activity is conducted in a public interest (including…[students'] interest and the interest of others).'

Through interventions, students may be offered support. It is up those students if they wish to consent to that support. They can choose to opt out of any support by stating this to the staff member who has intervened. There may be a circumstance where students are not allowed to opt out if there is a legal requirement or safeguarding need for the student's welfare. If this is the case, it will be clearly communicated to the relevant student.

Consent is also referenced under City, University of London's Terms and Conditions for Studying at City clauses 15.3 (a), (d) and (f). The following statements are included inform students about City's purposes for using their data:

(a) to facilitate and deliver your programme of study and to provide you with teaching,

research and educational services and support

(d) to monitor and maintain records of your performance, engagement, and attendance

(f) to conduct research and to identify ways to enhance learning, teaching, assessment and the broader student experience

9. Privacy

The use of student data will comply with relevant University policies and protocols, in alignment with GDPR requirements as stated in the Student Privacy Policy.

Access to student data and learning analytics is restricted to those identified by the University as having a legitimate need to view them. The following groups will have access to learning analytics data held by the City University:

- Staff who need the data to provide student support
- Members of staff with responsibility for student education
- University data analysts for reporting purposes
- Technical and professional staff at the university who support the learning analytics system
- The learning analytics application vendor

It is worth noting that the following privacy policies are also available:

- City Staff Privacy Policy
- Jisc Privacy Policy

10. Validity

City will monitor the quality and validity of the data through periodic testing of the data in the learning analytics system. When inaccuracies are highlighted, City will endeavour to correct them to ensure data validity.

Under the GDPR guidelines, students have a right to highlight incorrect personal data about themselves.

11. Minimising adverse impacts

The University recognises that learning analytics is just one tool that can provide information. It can never provide a complete picture of student engagement as it has a limited number of data sources and cannot capture students' personal circumstances. Individual interventions (see Enabling Positive Interventions) are encouraged as these can help staff members to obtain a more holistic picture of a student's situation.

The learning analytics service will offer training which will cover how learning analytics can be used in relation to student engagement, how to use the learning analytics system, and how learning analytics can be used to review student engagement to identify non engaging students and implement interventions.

The University will take steps to ensure that the service and terminology used does is not biased or discriminatory.

12. Stewardship of data

Data for learning analytics will comply with existing City's Data Protection Policy and the Data Protection Act 2018. Data will be:

- Only kept for the minimum time which is essential for delivering learning analytics
- Only kept for suitable and defined periods of time
- Utilised and processed in accordance with the GDPR

Any personal data which is created by learning analytics can be destroyed or anonymised upon request by individual students. Certain exceptions will apply to data fields that are required for education or statutory purposes (e.g. grades).

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out for learning analytics to ensure full compliance with GDPR.

13. Student queries about learning analytics

Under GDPR students have the right to request access to, rectify, erase, and restrict processing of their learning analytics data.

If students would like to request any of the above, they should contact their school programme team or Information Assurance.

14. References

City, University of London (2019). *Data Protection Policy*. [Online] Available from: https://staffhub.city.ac.uk/policies/information-technology/data-protection-policy

City, University of London (2020). *Education and Student Strategy 2021*. [Online] Available from: https://www.city.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/381609/Education-and-Student-Strategy-1.pdf

City, University of London (2021), *Terms and Conditions for Studying at City*. [Online] Available from: https://www.city.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/terms-and-conditions-of-studying-at-city-university-of-london

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