The aim of the project was to investigate the use of text messaging and microblogging (Twitter) as communication tools in a large year one module.

**Overview**

**COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS** A two-way SMS texting service has been implemented in a year one semester one introductory chemistry module using the services of TxtTools.co.uk. Students (n= ca.200) were encouraged to send questions and queries to a dedicated text number (88020) prefixed with the module code during lectures and at other times when support with the module material was required. Questions were answered either in the lecture theatre, at a subsequent tutorial or via a reply back to the student’s mobile phone. Announcements to the class group were sent via bulk text messaging as well as by email and using a dedicated Twitter page for the module.

**TEXT MESSAGING FOR STUDENT COMMUNICATION AND VOTING**

**Communication**

**Students** The service was used to communicate with students as follows:

- By text messaging: 80% of students agreed that they would prefer to use a text messaging service instead of email or other methods. 16% of students had no opinion.
- By email: 12% of students preferred email, while 72% had no opinion.
- By Twitter: 5% of students preferred Twitter, while 88% had no opinion.
- By module website: 9% of students preferred the module website, while 88% had no opinion.

**Evaluation/Impact/Results** During the course of the semester some 66 text messages were received from students with the content varying from administrative queries about timetables and room numbers to specific questions relating to lecture content. A few texts were sent during lectures but the bulk of the messages were received after lectures or tutorials had taken place. The Words in Figure 2 provide a representation of the main themes texted by students.

**Voting** Text messaging was further evaluated as an in-class voting system to conduct short multiple choice quizzes on material being covered in a bioanalytical chemistry lecture. Such quizzes can take place without the need for bespoke handsets or specialist software and students may be automatically sent a text message with additional follow-up information dependent on the answers they provide to questions.

**Evaluation/Impact/Results** Responses to a question regarding the use of texting to provide feedback of marks following a class test saw 14% of students expressing indifference while 8% disagreed that this was a useful exercise. This view was precipitated by the fact that not all students attended this post-test peer assessment event and so not all scripts were marked. The issue was not related to the technology but rather lack of student engagement with the peer assessment process.

**Voting** Three short multiple choice quizzes were interspersed throughout a three-hour lecture, two relating specifically to the material and the third as a reflective question to gauge student confidence in their understanding of the material at the end of the year. Approximately 45 students engaged in each quiz and a pie-chart of responses may be generated as a visual representation of how the class has voted as shown in Figure 3.

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The results of the evaluation of the voting process showed that students generally agreed with the following statements:

- Voting quizzes are a great way of keeping attention in class
- Found the voting procedure straightforward
- Didn’t mind sending a few text messages to take part in the quiz
- Would be happy for text voting to be used in more classes or modules

Interestingly only 45% students agreed that they would prefer to use a handset for voting instead of their mobile phone.

**Twitter** A Twitter page for the module facilitated broadcast of relevant announcements rather than any discussion of module content and only attracted about 10% of the cohort as followers. When asked about how students would prefer to receive information about the module, email was the preferred option followed by text messaging and then the module website. The Twitter page was rated fourth, however some students expressed interest in a Facebook page being established for the module instead.

**Transferability** A two-way texting system can be readily transferred to other disciplines. A licence is required to use the TxtTool system and text messages need to be bought in bulk so that communication with students may be facilitated. For in class voting events students pay to send the text message at their normal rate so this cost to the student must be taken into consideration when designing the assessment. The Process could also be used for distance learners to assist with inclusivity issues and to enhance communication.