Closing the attainment gap at MMU

Dr. Andrew Wilson, a Senior Lecturer and the Department Education Lead for Strategy, Enterprise, Sustainability at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), is committed to addressing attainment gaps and ensuring an inclusive, supportive education for all students. Here's how he used technology to help close the gap.

The growing challenges

For institutions across the globe, attainment gaps and the need to provide support to an ever-diversifying learner demographic are a constant challenge.

Dr. Andrew Wilson - Senior Lecturer, Department Education Lead for Strategy, Enterprise, Sustainability at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) - is no stranger to this reality.

He identified an **attainment gap between underrepresented students** and their peers across his institution. These students often struggled to keep up with the pace of lectures and different accents, **leading to a cycle of disengagement, poor academic performance, and lower retention rates**.

To address this, Andrew began exploring options for how technology could improve his student's learning outcomes.

Having discovered Genio, he developed a business case for a pilot program to help this at-risk group and boost their performance in line with the university's inclusive education strategy.

By offering Genio Notes, a tool that promotes independent and personalized study habits, Andrew was able to **directly address the challenges faced by his students, improving their experience and boosting their learning outcomes.**

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Identifying the goals

MMU is committed to addressing attainment gaps and ensuring an inclusive, supportive education for all students.

As such, one of the main goals Andrew had was to help **close the attainment gap** by improving access to high-quality, structured lecture content and note taking support.

This initiative fed into Andrew's wider goals. They included:

- Enhancing the learning experiences for students who may face additional challenges in traditional academic environments by providing a tool that supports independent, active, hyper-personalized and accessible study habits.
- Promoting equity in learning outcomes by offering all students, regardless of background or learning preference, greater autonomy and clarity in how they engage with and revisit taught material.
- Supporting the university's inclusive education strategy, aligning with institutional goals to **foster a learning environment where diverse student needs are met** through thoughtful and evidence-based digital interventions.
- **Providing students with cutting-edge digital technology that enhances their academic experience** and supports more modern, flexible, and effective learning practices.
- Responding to sector-wide calls for more inclusive pedagogy, particularly in light of national conversations around differential outcomes, by **embedding a scalable tool that empowers underrepresented students** without requiring major pedagogical overhauls.

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Building a business case

Andrew saw a potential solution in Genio Notes. He knew that implementing technology at scale could help students of ***all*** abilities take meaningful notes from lectures - whether in-person or online, helping to achieve Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) overarching goals.

He planned to **run an 8 month pilot for 50 students** to establish the impact Genio Notes could make before rolling out across a larger cohort, and to be able to share findings with other stakeholders.

The pilot group encompassed both undergraduate and postgraduate students, focusing on students who often struggled with the pace of lectures or were becoming disengaged with their courses.

This would form part of his research paper into **how technology can be deployed to improve positive student outcomes**.

Why Genio Notes?

Genio Notes helps make learning easier for all students, but Andrew knew that students in his pilot group, who were struggling with disengagement in lectures, would significantly benefit from using the technology.

With Genio Notes, the cognitive load can be lightened. As the lecture is recorded and transcribed it relieves the pressure of writing notes while the lecturer is talking, something international students struggled with in particular due to pace and accent differences.

Having all lectures recorded, along with lecture slides and notes all in one place, means students can go back and not only review notes, but the *whole* lecture.

Furthermore, students can pinpoint areas they misinterpreted or didn't understand and replay that specific section of the recording to their lecturer during office hours, so they could explain the point again.

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Securing buy-in

To secure buy-in from stakeholders, Andrew knew it was essential to showcase the pilot study and connect it to overcoming the disengagement cycle that fuels the churn of students, especially those deemed ‘at risk’.

He collaborated on this with the Faculty Education Lead for Business and Law and his Head of Department.

Demonstrating the impact Genio Notes had on at risk students, was essential in proving the efficacy of implementing a wider roll out of Genio Notes.

Implementing Genio Notes

Andrew targeted specific demographics and at-risk students who he knew would see the most benefit.

These students were **struggling with disengagement, leading them to not attend lectures and as a result, receive poor grades.**

Technology can have a significant impact on learning outcomes, **but only if beneficiaries are shown *how***. It was essential to ensure students felt confident using the technology in lectures in order for them to see results.

So, to make sure students were confident in using Genio Notes, Andrew ran simulation lectures as drop-in sessions for students to familiarise themselves with the technology ahead of their “real” lectures.

Andrew also utilized the Admin Portal to monitor student engagement and regular utilization among the cohort.

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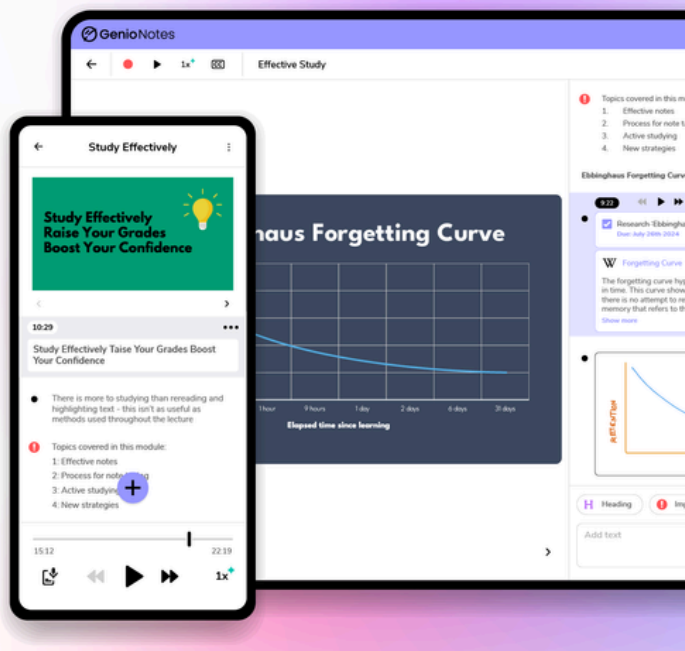
The impact

The impact was clear. Over the pilot period there was an **80% utilization rate** (compared to a 20% industry average), encompassing 407 recorded sessions and 120 hours of transcription.

Most importantly, **students noticed an improvement in their note taking ability and engagement within classes**, leading to increased grades from the first to second semester.

Students in their final year graduated and received their degree, a significant impact considering the level of disengagement from the group at the start of the pilot.



*"The adoption of Genio has significantly enhanced teaching, learning, and the overall student experience at Manchester Metropolitan University. By enabling students to capture, organise, and revisit lecture content more effectively, Genio has **supported inclusive and flexible learning**, particularly for students who face barriers with traditional note taking methods.*

*For educators, it has provided insight into student engagement and comprehension, **allowing for more responsive and reflective teaching** practices.*

*Collectively, the platform has fostered a more student-centred learning environment, improved knowledge retention, and **strengthened academic confidence across the department**."*

***Dr Andrew Wilson**, Senior Lecturer and Education Lead for Strategy, Enterprise, Sustainability at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)*

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