Q9 Conwy2 Thursday 6 December 17.30 - 18.00

Designing an Online Music Tutor Development Programme (0148)

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Abstract: The inclusion of online music courses is becoming increasingly prevalent in undergraduate and graduate music programs (Johnson, 2017; Johnson et al., 2018). As these online courses become more common, and class sizes increase, the use of graduate teaching assistants, or tutors, will become necessary as instructor support mechanisms. Given differences between face-to-face and online teaching approaches, online tutors will need to have basic skills specific for online- teaching, -communication and -assessment. This literature study explored the research of graduate teaching assistant (i.e., tutor) programs and online music teaching and learning to identify key elements for developing a program for online music tutors. Key elements of an online tutor preparation programme, and future research areas will be discussed.

Introduction

More and more music departments and faculties are considering the adoption of online music courses for their undergraduate and graduate programs (Johnson, 2017; Johnson et al., 2018; McConville & Murphy, 2017). Yet, there are many policy and administrative complexities to consider when adding online courses to programs (Johnson, 2018). The examination of how administration can support its online instructors through the use of online graduate teaching assistants, also termed "tutors," addresses the administrative challenges of scalability and sustainability when teaching music classes online.

The use of tutors, is a commonly acknowledged practice in face-to-face music subjects. Tutors can be involved in assisting instructors with assignment grading, responding to student questions outside of class time, as well as providing students with weekly tutorial classes facilitated by the tutors themselves. The job description of tutors varies from subject to subject and is relative to particular music conservatory cultures. Given the different educational and teaching backgrounds of tutors, it is suggested that tutors take part in some form of induction or mentoring programme to prepare them for their teaching assistant positions (Boice, 1992; Gallardo-William & Petrovich, 2017; Jacobi, 1991). While the field of tutor preparation and mentorship strongly evidences a need to provide face-to-face tutors with supportive active learning programs to be equipped with basic skills for teaching, communication and assessment, very little research addresses the preparation of online tutors.

The online environment is itself unique with its own teaching opportunities and challenges. Differences involves the inclusion of multimedia technology use for student learning of content, social constructivist learning activities, as well as developing effective online communicate skills. With the primary role of online tutors as a support to online instructors, it is posited that online music tutors should

have the basic skills for teaching, communicating and assessing in the online environment. Developing an effective program to adequately prepare music tutors with necessary online pedagogy skills responds to the current research gap.

Combining the research areas of tutor mentoring and preparation, and online teaching and learning, this literature study explored the following research questions: 1) What are key components of graduate teaching assistant and tutor development programs?; 2) How can these components be adapted for a development program for online music tutors? A practical design framework for building a year-long programme for online music tutors was developed from the study.

Implications

Understanding the necessary components and design elements of a face-to-face tutor program can positively inform the design and development of an online music tutors programs. Addressing basic online approaches to teaching, communicating and assessment in established face-to-face tutor program activities (i.e., peer activities, workshops, and observation opportunities) can be effective for developing programmes for new online music tutors. In turn, the online tutors will be better equipped for their current duties as tutors, and their future careers in teaching music.

References

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