**Transcript for Mentimeter Podcast**:

(Hannah John) Hello and welcome to the Innovation Podcast series where we interview academic staff from across the University of Glasgow who have worked with the Learning Innovation Support Unit to develop and deliver upskilling opportunities. The topic for today's podcast is Mentimeter, an interactive presentation software. I am joined by Dr Craig Gurney, a lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences who has volunteered to share his experiences and thoughts about Mentimeter. Craig, could you share a bit more about yourself and your background?

(Dr Craig Gurney) Well, you've heard who I am, um, you're hearing my voice and you you've heard which department I work in I'm, I'm new to Glasgow. I only joined University of Glasgow in January 2020 after spending 23 years man and boy working at the University of Cardiff. Previously to that I was working at Sheffield Hallam for five years. So yeah. I'm, I'm really passionate and enthusiastic about teaching and about kind of teaching, innovation, engaging students, and I've been a fairly heavy Mentimeter user, probably for about four or five years now, and I've used it for Eurovision quizzes. I’m a big Eurovision fan that's something that you should know about me. So, I've used it for alternative Eurovision quizzes and voting. I've used it in wedding speeches, and I've used it in my in my teaching, more sensibly. So yeah, um, thanks for the invitation. I'm delighted to be able to talk about it, and perhaps to, to share some top tips if we come onto that.

(Hannah John) While I know that anyone who's attended the previous Mentimeter upskilling session can attest that you are a veteran of Mentimeter. As you just mentioned, many people listening to this podcast may be new to the Mentimeter platform, and for anyone who missed that session that I just spoke about and would like to either revisit the content or discover it, our recording can be found on the Glasgow Anywhere Web page under the recorded Upskilling sessions. Um, with so many interactive online presentation tools available, Craig, why did you choose Mentimeter? Why should anyone choose Mentimeter?

(Dr Craig Gurney) Most interesting you, you make the point that there are a lot out there. There's a lot on the market. We’ll come on to why I think Menti is the best one in a moment, but I think that when we think about Mentimeter, I'll be calling it Menti for short. Why not? When we think about Mentimeter. It's an audience response tool. OK. So, if you're new to it, what's the audience response tool? Well, the, the acronym that's often used is ART? A R T, audience response tool. And there's lots out there and I think Mentimeter like all good audience response tools and there's essentially kind of five things it engages your audience, and it boosts participation. It facilitates active learning and it's really good I think for kind of generating instant feedback and developing learners’ feedback literacy and particularly during the pandemic and was kind of delivering blended learning. It's been really important in terms of checking in on students and, and you know being able to talk anonymously about their wellbeing. But for me though I might, I said I think it is the best audience response tool out there in my experience and I've used quite a few and I've done a little bit of research on the kind of, the pros and cons of different ones available.

There are things like Zeetings, Zeetings is a good one, but there's, there's, a there's many, many others out there that people might be familiar with. Padlet is another one but for me it trumps those other ones because, A- I think it's the easiest to use and it's all about kind of ease of use for me we're all busy we're all kind of learning new things all the time, particularly during the online pivot for me. Mentimeter dead easy to use. Secondly, I think it looks good, It’s got a really nice slick interface. Users, um, predominantly engage with Mentimeter through their mobile phones. It does look, it looks good on a mobile phone and, and, finally of course, Glasgow's got this license. Now we've got this license, so you know we've got this. I mean, you mentioned that in the Mentimeter upskilling session, but. And one of the things that I, that I'd used really from the outset in my teaching practice was the idea of a buzz group. Yeah, so you, you've got a large. The large lecture theatre, large group of students. You give them a small task to complete and there's a big buzz bees, right heart of it.

So, it's got a buzz group and, and you know the thing about audience response tools is. It's just to kind of high-tech way facilitating a buzz group. And of course, you know you can use these. Use audience response tools like Mentimeter in a live face to face situation. Always many of us have been doing in the last and last couple of years. I've been using them for blended learning during the pandemic. So yeah, just to reiterate, it's about engagement first and foremost, and I think off the ones out there of the audience response tools out there, Mentimeter, I think, is for me, is head and shoulders above the rest.

(Hannah John) Uhm, because you mentioned face to face as well, students tend to learn at their own unique pace, and they benefit from both asynchronous and synchronous learning experience. And with COVID the use of virtual classrooms and on demand content has made it challenging to say the least, to maintain student engagement at times. So, my question for you is how does Mentimeter either create or support student engagement opportunities in either of those settings?

(Dr Craig Gurney) It's the, the anonymity really. I mean, you just imagine a situation. You've got a, It's the first week of the semester. OK? You're teaching a large group of students in a large lecture theatre. OK, or you're teaching a large group? I'm talking 100, 200 maybe. Or you, you've got lots of people on the other end of the zoom call. You've got 2 to 300 students in a zoom call, and you want them to be engaged. You want them. You want to start a discussion and you want, you want somebody to say something. Yeah, he said yeah and, and you know people don't? I mean I wouldn't because you're terrified you know you're, you're new. You know first week of lectures you know you're terrified of being made to look a fool. You're terrified of saying the wrong thing.

(Hannah John) I'm still terrified.

(Dr Craig Gurney) It might be, yeah, that there might be all sorts of I mean also seriously, all sorts of kind of cultural reasons why you might feel uncomfortable. You might feel as if that you know you might say the wrong thing. So, it may, may be a kind of controversial opinion. It may be something that that that might kind of divide opinion. I mean, we're talking kind of post Brexit Britain here. We're talking, you know issues around Scottish Indy ref. 2 There's you know, there's things that inflame people and inflame debates and people might not feel comfortable about talking honestly about their feelings or their thoughts on the other classic thing. I'm sure they'll be familiar to people listening is you, you ask at the end of a lecture. Have you got any questions? And no one says anything and then you go right and then you ,you go to leave.

And there's a queue about 30 students want to talk to us to ask you that one question because they want to to, go again. Perhaps they're, they're concerned about, about revealing their questions publicly,they might be embarrassed all sorts of, different cultural reasons for that. But you know, you can say, OK, well, we're gonna, we've got 10 minutes left. Here's your chance now to come. To bombard me with your questions, you know, give me your questions now through mental meter. And actually, that doesn't mean that the ending of lectures is much crisper and much neater, and you haven't got that. You know, those, those constants you know their constant kind of questions asked as you were trying to leave the room, you know, and you dashing off to your next meeting. So, so, it's I think it's just the, the anonymity and the instantaneous. Mentimeter, which promotes engagement for me.

(Hannah John) Speaking of students having used platform with for several reasons, but specifically with students over some time. What is some of the predominant feedback that they've given you about Mentimeter?

(Dr Craig Gurney) Uhm, embarrassingly positive. I mean students. Students love it and they value the anonymity during lockdown periods. They value the ability to check in on them and for them to respond anonymously and honestly. They I mean it's looking at the first time you come across. It's a bit of a gimmick. It's fun and you know we, you know we're students may have been told, you know, going into lecture theatres. Can you please turn off your mobile phones? But this is, you know, I quite like Mentimeter 'cause it's a little bit kind of seditious and breaking the rules because there's no turn on your mobile phones, so there's a bit of a gimmick to it. I mean, I accept that, but hey, it engages students. They enjoy it, and you know, it's a little bit embarrassing because I've been nominated. And one several awards. Both hear in Glasgow and previously in Cardiff. And basically, it's because the way I've used this software. So, I feel a little bit kind of a bit of a, a kind of cheating, because-

(Hannah John) Did you credit them in your award speech?

(Dr Craig Gurney) It depends. It depends how long I've got really, but I think it's but seriously, I mean, I think the students do enjoy it and I think it's, it's just a different way to engage people. And I think that that's important and I think you know we just because we're doing stuff online, it doesn't mean that we kind of give up on our or teaching craft and, and you know, we have to perhaps work that bit harder to engage. But yeah, it relentlessly positive. I mean I think, I mean there are, there are down, there are downsides to using it. I'm obviously I'm going to make some comments later on about that if you, if you want about kind of the pros and cons, but you know that there, there is, you know you. You could use it for much more than just doing quizzes, and I think that there's a limit to the number of quiz questions you can ask sensibly before people start to just kind of. Switch off, so I think there's probably a Goldilocks sweet point number, and I think you know you could probably get away with asking more than three or four questions in a quiz as part of a lecture, but I think not as many as 10 because it then it becomes a pub quiz and you know it's just people. Stop, stop, stop, take it seriously, but they're good for learning checks. They're good for checks. Picking up on what you mentioned, some of the like challenging aspects I was going to ask you around sort of the difference in preparing a Mentimeter presentation versus the more traditional presentation. Well, so I think it's, it's not first and foremost.

A piece of software I'd go to, to present or disseminate. OK, so I wouldn't, for example, use Mentimeter to present research paper findings at a conference. I wouldn't use Mentimeter alone to deliver every scintilla and every iota of learning outcomes for a particular learning event. PowerPoint, I think offers the cutting the PowerPoints got more variation in font. PowerPoint is much easier to embed. Video contents. Uhm, you? I mean, that's like you know. I mean, having a restriction in fonts, font size and numbers of words you can get on a slide is not a bad thing. We've all seen those PowerPoints like you know, death by PowerPoint. It's not first and foremost a, a mechanism for disseminating information. It's about engagement. So, what, what I tend to do is, rather than embedding 'cause you can't do this, you can embed Mentimeter into a PowerPoint presentation. What I tend to do actually is just having free standing. Because often if the Internet connection is weak. You know, some you know the and the, you know you're, you're using stuff from the cloud. Sometimes there's a lag it makes if you, if you're using, you know a kind of data stick. If you, if whatever reason you might be doing that it data, stick to make your presentations and it uses up a lot of memories.

So, what I tend to do is to start off a, a learning session. Let's say you've got a, a one hour lecture, let's say, and you might start off with a free standing Mentimeter session of kind of 10-15 minutes. That might be a kind of check in how you are doing, how you doing this week, you know, and you know. And you could use a kind of ranking exercise. People can scale from one to five, you know, and you can kind of you say, well you are doing better than this week or last week. You can then follow at with the word clouds and then you can look at that. Respond to some of the things there might be some questions to follow up from last week. OK and then you get OK, we'll come back to that and then you go back into PowerPoint and you do you know you do you kind of additional slide? Said there might be a breakout room. There might be a kind of some buzz groups or something. Can you go back into Mentimeter for that? So, I think that you know I, I would say that it it's, it's not the best way necessarily just to present stuff. Although you can use slides and you know I've seen it done and I have done it.

But I, I think PowerPoints got more flexibility because it is, it, it you know we know it at all for presenting materials Mentimeter the prime driver of Mentimeter is about engagement. Because you cannot get engagement with PowerPoint. Uhm, it's so. I've talked a little bit about the, the kind of limitations Visa V PowerPoints. Uhm, I guess I'm just other things to say ready. I mean, I've caught you know that gets us to think about what, what it is that's good about mental meter. And I think that I've mentioned quizzes before. I mean, it's not, not just about quizzes, it's about kind of, you know you can produce these Q&A sessions. And some people said, well, I said that's crazy. That's a bit, you know, it's a bit high risk. You know. Asking people to write things and they're, they're projected on the screen behind you, But I mean, that's exactly the same as if you ask students. If you got any questions and they put their hand up. Not exposed you're not exposed to more jeopardy because students are writing things down that might appear on their on their screens on the wall behind you there, there is a, a profanity filter you can bring up profanities in 23 different languages and an ASCII characters as well as sometimes just to make it exciting.

Only the profanity filters on in Icelandic or something, just to see if anyone knows any Icelandic swear words. And, and you know, you can. You can use it for that for those Q&A sessions, you can use it to build, build work cloud. You could rank things that we know from low to high. None of that you can do with the PowerPoint, so, I think it's you've got to think it's not a panacea. You've still got to think about what your aims are, what you're learning games are, and all the good practice that engagement, but it's very, very good for engaging students. And if you're teaching something, there's definitely dull and you need to find a way to make it engaging and keep students with you and keep them on. Board and I would pause the PowerPoint presentation. It's just come out of it completely. Go into Mentimeter for 10 or 15 minutes and then you can come back to it and the way that Mentimeter works. Since students accessing it via their mobile phones that same Mentimeter code that you need to type in when you go into the Mentimeter browser will still be good. Kind of 20-30 minutes later. Yeah, so yeah, it's very different. PowerPoint that's important.

(Hannah John) The last question I have is if you could give either a tip or a recommendation to someone who was new or beginner to Mentimeter. What would you make? What piece of advice would you give them? Or you know, maybe even what feature would be a staple in a Mentimeter presentation.

(Dr Craig Gurney) Hannah, I'm glad you asked that. I prepared for this, and I've got five top tips. OK, I've got five fingers on my hand, so, it's dead easy to remember. OK, the first thing. The first top tip is to- Whilst you're still learning to use it, I would suggest to use Mentimeter. There's a free standing. Uhm? Uh, yeah, it's a freestanding learning event. OK, don't try to embed it into PowerPoint and just have it as a freestanding interlude. OK, the second thing is just to practice using it. It's not difficult. It's the, for me, it's the best audience response to it because it is so. It's so intuitive. And thirdly, using sparingly I was at a conference once and somebody had clearly just, just bought the- they kind of put the pro version or had a, you know a limited use on the pro version and there was like 50 or 60 quiz questions and it was just you know, people's phone batteries were dying.

People were using up there with their data allowances so you've got to think about that so you know I'm the fourth thing. UM, just don't forget a, the importance of thinking about what the aims of your sessions are. OK, and finally the, the thing- Remember is the key is buried in the settings menu. There's one thing that you need to be mindful of in the settings menu, and that's a pace, and it's the distinction between audience space and presenter pace is vital. So, if you're intending to use Mentimeter asynchronously, you need to make sure that that switch to audience space. OK, if you're doing a live session, either face to face or through a zoom link or teams link, you need to make sure that switch to present to pace it. Defaults to the option you previously used, so just check that and I've made that mistake a couple of times and it's just it's not working. Then you realize why it's not working. That's my 5 top tips. I hope their helpful.

(Hannah John) On that note I want to thank you so much Craig for generously volunteering your time to share your thoughts, your experiences on Mentimeter and once again being a really big, big advocate of this tool and encouraging you know your fellow peers. So, just get out there, try it. If anyone has any questions about Mentimeter or this podcast, you can find them on this page that this podcast will be located on along with our other podcast from the learning innovation support unit.