

UEA Teaching Fellowship 2012

Final Report

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1 Project Title

“Design and development of learning activities to develop foundation academic skills required for both undergraduate and post graduate programmes. The programme will utilise interactive learning technologies to increase engagement and learning”.

2 Scope

The fellowship award included for development of learning activities with these product packages designs to be exportable into other modules (cross campus) within the VLE (Blackboard).

2.1 Skills Development

The project aimed to address skills development in the following areas -

- Harvard Referencing
- Understanding Plagiarism
- Analytical and critical evaluative writing
- Numeracy
- Literacy / English Grammar

3. Resources

3.1 Internal

A team of three researchers and a Project Leader conducted research and learning programme development, including identification of suitable learning objects and methodologies through collaboration with external contributors and partners.

Key staff within UEA with project relevant expertise were identified and utilised in consultancy roles to support the project researchers in specific areas (DoS; INTO; EDU; Learning Technology/ Blackboard).

3.2 External

External Contributors' of learning objects to the project are acknowledged below –

- Southampton University
- Cardiff University
- London Metropolitan University
- Canterbury University
- Nottingham University

4. Project Summary

Learning programmes now exist for **Literacy, Numeracy, Plagiarism and Harvard Referencing** complete with diagnostic blackboard based tests designed by the researchers. Harvard Referencing and Plagiarism learning programmes have been released and used as part of the NBS UG academic skills development programme in 2012/13. The learning programmes have been well received with 75% of students (260/350) working through the learning objects and taking the diagnostic tests. Data from the tests has been utilised to invite the 50 lowest scoring students in each case to a workshop to develop their understanding prior to summative assignment submission dates, thereby increasing individual marks and reducing the amount of related fails / plagiarism cases in submission of summative assessment in their first year of study. Literacy and Numeracy programmes will be introduced during NBS Induction 2013 programmes to identify students requiring further development in these areas with data used to inform personalised support programmes as described above.

Analytical writing

An innovative programme of learning has been developed as described below -

1. Knowledge and understanding of Blooms taxonomy and UEA (NBS) marking criteria explained through a series of explanatory guidance documents.

- Examples of student work using extracted paragraphs are provided with annotated discussion explaining the reasons for the grade (classification level) awarded.
- Diagnostic test - students are required to view (PDF) a randomly distributed (one from six) exemplar script. The test requires students to use the NBS marking descriptors to assess the work and award a mark within a time limit of 1 hour. On submission of their mark, feedback is released in the form of a marked copy of the same script, complete with text annotated with markers comments explaining why the mark was awarded and a copy of the NBS marking descriptors with appropriate statements highlighted (as shown below).

Classification	Learning outcomes & scholarship	Presentation	Argument & understanding	Criticality & analysis	Use of sources and evidence	Academic referencing	Written communication
60-69% Pass 2(i) Coursework is 'good' in most areas and strong in some.	Learning outcomes have been met to a good standard. Demonstrates a good understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Attains a good level of scholarship, but lacks sophistication of a 1st class piece.	A good standard of presentation: clear, mostly logical, and errors are mostly very minor.	The work contains evidence of insight. Though it may lack finesse, it is thorough, clear and shows an understanding of the subject context. Has addressed most or all aspects of the assignment.	The work contains some good examples of critical analysis but limited originality and creativity in use of ideas, concepts, case studies etc. Good level of self-reflection.	The student draws on a good range of material but lacks the breadth of engagement with the secondary literature required to achieve a 1st class mark. Good use of evidence. Topics are mostly addressed but not always examined in sufficient detail. Partial awareness of the limits of evidence.	A good standard of referencing, though a few errors or inconsistencies may be present. Good bibliography but possibly containing technical errors, some minor, some more serious.	A good standard of written English, with only minor errors present
50-59% Pass 2(ii) Coursework is 'good' in some areas but only satisfactory in others. Good intellectual engagement but execution flawed.	Learning outcomes have been met satisfactorily. Some have been met to a good standard. Demonstrates some understanding of link between theory and practice and practice-related issues and/or standards. Standard of scholarship likely to be undermined by poor linkage of issues/themes, poor use of evidence, unsubstantiated claims etc.	A satisfactory standard achieved: mostly clear, some evidence of logical progression. Some minor inaccuracies.	Competent work, with evidence of engagement in the relevant issues, but little originality and only occasional insight. Gaps in understanding and knowledge; may not have addressed all aspects of the assignment.	Conscientious work and attentive to subject matter and/or task set, but balanced more towards a descriptive rather than a critical, analytical treatment.	Draws on a satisfactory but relatively limited range of sources. Some assessment of evidence. Topics are mostly addressed but not always examined in sufficient detail. Some use of examples. Treatment of data or literature is basically sound but too narrow in scope and underdeveloped. Understanding of the limits of evidence not fully articulated or understood.	Referencing satisfactory on the whole, though some inconsistencies or instances of poor/limited citation may be present. Satisfactory bibliography but likely to reveal some weaknesses in composition and use of referencing conventions.	A reasonable standard of written English, though a number of errors may be present.

STUDENT MARK = 57%

This part of the project was put on hold due to changes in UEA policy part way through development in relation to marking criteria (Senate scales introduced) and permission to use students work (new process introduced). Further development work is also needed to build a more comprehensive database of exemplar student assignments across all classifications (with student permission).

Dissemination and legacy

Project dissemination had taken place through the project leader (AV) delivering a demonstration session at an LTS mini bite session in March 2013 and a project review presentation at the UEA Learning and Teaching Day in May 2013 and through submission of this final report.

The project legacy is to be managed by Andy Mee who has agreed to centrally control the transfer of the learning programmes to module areas in Blackboard as requested by staff on an individual basis for 2013/14.

The project has been delivered within budget and has achieved the initial outcomes proposed.

5. Additional developments

- Agreement has been reached between DoS and Southampton University for UEA to purchase a licence for the use of over 100 learning objects in September 2012. The Learning objects have been used across campus to assist UEA students in developing academic related skills. A value based review and licensing agreement review will be conducted by DoS during summer 2013.
- The researchers developed an Understanding Plagiarism video as part of the programme which captures students views and attitudes towards plagiarism scenarios during induction week (e.g what would you do if a friend asked to borrow your work?) The video follows with NBS plagiarism officer explaining the consequences to students of their responses and comments.

- In collaboration with the Exams office a video is being developed (June 2013) presented by NBS students providing advice and information on rules and regulations relating to UEA exams.

Concluding statements

The project has been successful with regards to the development of learning programmes which can be used by students to develop foundation skills required for UG academic study. The flexible nature of the methodologies addresses the diverse levels of ability and understanding of first year Undergraduate students entering Higher Education for the first time, also offers a more interactive and varied set of learning styles than traditional methods, which qualitative feedback confirmed increased the effectiveness of learning.

Benefits of being able to repeat parts of learning programmes and work through skills activities at an individual pace are amplified on considering the International dimension on NBS UG courses. Monitoring of diagnostic tests support this view with English speaking first language students tending to complete learning programmes earlier than International students. It became apparent during the programme that International students were taking longer to work through the programme as a consequence of their development stage of English language in addition to developing academic skills, which was seen as a positive benefit.

The design of the programme also addresses the issue of student readiness, with the flexible nature of the programme allowing students to decide when they are ready to engage with the learning (typically as assignment deadlines become immediate) rather than the previous approach of delivering foundation skills during induction (resource led).

Whilst outside the scope of this project it should be noted that the potential remains to create a management information system to utilise the information collected from the diagnostic tests as an input into a wider set of results including lecture / seminar attendance; formative/ summative marks; uncollected feedback to build up an individual student performance profile to inform and assist advisors and Learning and Teaching support staff to enable the provision of a more targeted and

personalised support package of learning development in order to improve student engagement and academic performance.

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