

Disciplinary Investigations: An Enquiry-Based Approach To Engaging Learner Autonomy



What are the aims of this project?

This project aims to use an enquiry-based approach to enhance the partnership between students and staff in the discipline of criminology (Brew, 2006). The objectives of this are as follows:

- Create an investigation that provides an opportunity for students to articulate key issues and a future direction for the discipline.
- Use an enquiry based model (Wood, 1994) to plan for student learning within the module so as to build engagement and motivation.

The main outcome of this project is expected to be the development of staff and student engagement about attendance, motivation and achievement using an enquiry-based approach. In addition to this concepts of student learning about the discipline will be mapped at the beginning/end and so that changes can be evaluated (Kinchin, Lygo-Baker and Hay, 2008),

What is the background / rationale?

This project extends the dialogue (Austen, 2007; Lynch, 2005, 2007; Lynch, McCoy, Patton and Senior, 2007) about 'learner autonomy' to the wider subject group, students and faculty to focus on enquiry-based learning.

The new module 'Key Issues in Contemporary Criminology' at level 6 provides an opportunity to engage with 7 staff members from the subject group, 80 students and 4 staff members in the Learning Hubs and Centre at Collegiate campus. The project also supports strategic initiatives within the faculty to develop learner autonomy using enquiry based learning approaches. The project would provide opportunities for learning to be introduced across the Applied Social Science Programme covering more than a 1000 students and 50 staff.

What are the benefits to student learning?

The module content (the discipline) and process (enquiry-based investigation into 'key issues') are aligned within the project to give the greatest potential for staff and students to maximise their autonomy in engaging with the subject. A pedagogic research project into conceptions of learning in relation to engagement and motivation is embedded within the project plan to develop an understanding of this complex area of practice. This will support, and be supported by, the CETL STAR in this area.

The Faculty of Development and Society is currently aligning its research and scholarly practices within subject groups. The project promotes investigations on topics from the outward facing Hallam Centre for Community Justice with student enquiry thereby promoting a research-related approach to learning. The nature of the disciplinary investigation as an 'enquiry-based approach' to student learning (Price, 2001) supports the PLA CETL strategic initiative in the faculty and links with ACES will be developed throughout the year.

How will this project be evaluated?

The pedagogic research project will collect data in terms of student learning, performance and staff experiences of the process. The National Student Satisfaction Survey data will provide a measure of the student experience for the whole cohort of students. The 'partnership in learning' will be measured by existing evaluation instruments developed within the CETL.

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