

Developing Enquiring Teachers Through Peer Group Learning



What are the aims of this project?

This project aims to develop cross subject approaches to developing ITT students' enquiry skills through collaborative practice across subjects. It also aims to extend the use of independent peer group study and to make existing uses more effective.

The specific objectives include:

- To evaluate current practice across the programme and student needs in terms of supporting enquiry skills particularly in the use of and learning from reports of educational enquiry/ academic papers etc. to support Level 7 learning.
- To develop shared activities/materials or if more appropriate frameworks for activities and materials to be used in individual subject sessions, initially in Mathematics, Science, RE and English.
- To develop a number of new innovative cross subject learning experiences to support the development of enquiry skills. These are likely to involve highly interactive sessions for large groups (70-100), peer learning and independent enquiry in student groups as well as collaborative team teaching by tutors.
- To evaluate and develop appropriate materials and activities for the formation and effective use of peer learning groups in ITT.
- To disseminate the above to other subjects in the programme and beyond.

The final anticipated outcomes of this project are expected to include improvement in students' enquiry skills and attainment on assessment tasks as well as the development of students' ability to work autonomously.

In addition to this a variety of flexible course materials/ activities to support the development of inquiry skills will be developed. Initially these would be for use in the Secondary Programme but in a form that is adaptable in other programmes.

What is the background / rationale?

Developing teachers as educational enquirers has been put at the heart of a newly revalidated secondary education programme. Students now engage in a new 40 point Level 7 module (PGCE) or Level 6 module (BSc) on reflective practice developed and assessed through educational enquiry. The focus on educational enquiry and the move to include level 7 learning outcomes makes new demands on students and tutors. Subjects have initially addressed this for the most part in a separate manner through the development

of autonomous student peer learning groups and new curriculum activities specific to each subject. This project will enhance the evolving inter subject collaboration that has developed through the creation of cross subject modules and through the recent co-location of subjects as part of the transition to learning hubs. It will also develop and extend the outcomes from TQEF funded project and SIG Transitions funding in Mathematics education (2004-7) across the secondary programme as whole.

What are the benefits to student learning?

The move to Level 7 study in ITT and a more sustained focus on educational enquiry places greater demand on students with the greatest need often felt by those from non-traditional academic background; this project address the need to support students to succeed in this area.

The innovative teaching sessions that will be developed will both develop understanding and skills and be examples of how peer group and autonomous learning can be supported in large teaching groups.

The project will also have the benefit of a significant increase in cross subject professional collaboration in supporting student learning that is likely to have important 'ripple' effects in terms of on-going enhancement of LTA quality and tutor professional development.

How will this project be evaluated?

The project will be evaluated using a variety of methods including student surveys dealing with their experience of both the autonomous learning groups and the materials and activities to support them. another important tool will be peer evaluation by tutors using the materials who are not part of the project team (potentially in other faculties).

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