

Promoting Learner Autonomy through Assessment



Commenced: 2005

What is it?

The project seeks to enhance the student learning experience by fostering the development of autonomy through effective use of self-assessment, collaborative/ peer formative assessment and portfolio-based assessment within the new undergraduate programmes in the Faculty of Organisation and Management. It is estimated that the two-year project will impact on 1,200 students and 30 staff in the first year building up to 3,000 students and 70 staff in the second year.

What is involved?

The project builds on the work of the Smarter Assessment project which began in 2003 in the School of Business and Finance (now part of the Faculty of Organisation and Management) and was rolled out to the whole Faculty in 2004/5. The Smarter Assessment project provides useful baseline quantitative data on assessment practices as well as qualitative data on good practice, including innovation.

The current project involves the redesign of level 4 and some levels 5 & 6 assessment within the new programmes in accordance with the Faculty revalidation framework. It will build on existing good practice from the Smarter Assessment Project, and use the Faculty Assessment database facilities to model the assessment at level 4. The project leader is coordinating activities across the faculty in conjunction with the Head of Learning Teaching and Assessment, the Faculty's Assessment working group, course planning teams/ subject groups and other HEFCE funded project teams (e.g. TQEF/ FTDL project teams) within the Faculty. In addition to making full use of existing student feedback, student representatives/ volunteers are involved as appropriate at both the planning and design stage. The project is drawing on developments arising from the CETLs' Special Interests Groups and the support of the University's Learning and Teaching Institute.

Why is the project important to the CETL and the University?

A major revalidation exercise is a valuable opportunity to change the way in which students are assessed in order to enhance their overall learning experience. Developments in the Faculty of Organisation and Management will be shared with other CPLA projects linked to revalidation in the Faculty of Development and Society, and disseminated across the University through existing networks and CETL events.

What do you hope the project will achieve?

Assessment practices which demand self-awareness, reflection, meta cognitive knowledge and collaborative learning necessitate more student-centred approaches to teaching and learning than traditional types such as unseen examinations. Such approaches empower learners to take more responsibility for their own learning thereby increasing their engagement in the learning process.

Future Developments

It is hoped that the project will lead to significant changes in assessment and pedagogic approaches, particularly at level 4, to enable students to participate more actively in the learning process at levels 5 and 6 and beyond. The success of student-centred approaches depends in many ways on the skills and beliefs of the staff involved in their delivery. The tutors' conceptualisation of learning and their role in the learning process may influence their perception of such approaches and, ultimately, their commitment to them.

Links

Boud, D (2002) Assessment and learning: Contradictory or complementary? In: P.Knight (ed) *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*. London: kogan Page, pp. 35-48

Ramsden, P. (2003) *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning in Higher Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Hargreaves A and Fullan M (eds) (1992), *Teacher Development and Educational Change*. Falmer

Little D (1995), *Learning as dialogue: the dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy*. System 23:2 pp 175-181

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