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2011

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POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Cylch Dysgu 2 | *Teaching Cycle 2*

Reframing Assessment

Teaching Cycle 2 Report

Reframing Assessment

1.   Introduction: Account of the issue

FM10120 Studying Film is a core first-year undergraduate module in Film Studies. The module is designed for a large cohort of students (approximately 150) emolled on the BA Film and Television Studies. As such, it is intended to introduce students to key aspects of the study of film, including issues around representation, formal analysis, geme, audiences, stardom, moral debates and narrative. It lays the foundations for undergraduate study in the second and third years (as well as postgraduate study), so it is clearly important that the module both facilitates the future growth of the students' knowledge and helps them to develop key skills that will not only help them in their current and future studies, but will also ideally help them in their future working lives.

Studying Film has previously been assessed through a 2,500-word essay and a 2 hour, written examination (featuring unseen questions). Taking over as module co-ordinator this year, I decided to hold a meeting with other members of the teaching staff on the module in order to gauge how far it might be improved, especially in terms of assessment, but also in terms of scheduling and organisation of teaching in terms of specific pedagogical approaches. At this meeting it was suggested that the written exam might be replaced by another means of assessment. The exam, it was felt, was not a particularly beneficial exercise for the students to undertake, certainly in learning terms. So I decided to take these views on board (views that I had in fact shared and expressed myself), and I resolved to make changes to assessment on the module. I also decided that - while perhaps ambitious - this pedagogical move would make a suitable and indeed useful second teaching cycle for my

PGCTHE. After researching the nature of assessment and the pros and cons of different methods of assessment in guides to teaching in higher education, I decided that a portfolio of three written pieces might better facilitate a more obviously formative means of assessment than the formal written examination, and that this would also crucially help the students to learn *while* they were being assessed, not to learn to *be assessed* on what has been learned.

The key text I drew upon when developing this new mode of assessment for the module was Race and Brown's seminal *The Lecturer's Tool Kit* (1998). This book is excellent on methodologies of assessment. Race and Brown are clear that traditional written examinations have distinct pitfalls. For example, they point out that '[M]uch has been written about the weaknesses of unseen traditional examinations. In particular, this assessment format seems at odds with the most important factors underpinning successful learning.' (Race and Brown 1998: 53) Furthermore, Race and Brown list ten useful concerns about unseen written exams:

1. They don't do much to increase the want to learn
2. They are not ideal occasions for learning by doing
3. The amount of feedback that students receive is not optimal
4. They don't do much to help students make sense of what they have learned
5. We mark them in a rush
6. We are often tired and bored when we mark them
7. We are not particularly good at marking them objectively
8. They tend to favour candidates who happen to be skilled at doing exams, rather than at anything more important
9. They force students into surface learning, and into rapidly clearing their minds of previous knowledge when preparing for the next exam
10. There are many important qualities which are not tested by traditional exams

(Race and Brown 1998: 53)

Race and Brown develop their points in order to discuss the pros as well as the cons of assessment techniques. In doing this they notice that there are some clear advantages of traditional written examinations. For example, exams are relatively economical, and provide a kind of equality of opportunity (Race and Brown 1998: 57). But it seems to Race and Brown (and I agree with this) that broadly speaking the disadvantages of exams outweigh the advantages. Race and Brown point out that with exams students get little feedback; exam technique is too important, and exams provide a snapshot of student performance (Race and Brown 1998: 57). They further point out that 'it can be argued that the greater the diversity in the methods of assessment, the fairer the assessment will be. […] diversifying assessment so that students experience a range of assessment methods evens out the situation, and increases the chance that they will be able to demonstrate their best performance in at least some of the formats.' (Race and Brown 1998: 55)

So, it was with these types of complex issues arising out of assessment in mind that I decided to re-design the mode of assessment on this important first-year undergraduate Film Studies module, replacing the traditional examination with a 3-part, written portfolio. I felt that a 3-piece portfolio - if carefully designed with both the students and lecturers/ seminar leaders' needs and requirements in mind - could prove to be much more useful from a pedagogical perspective. For example, Race and Brown conclude that as a means of assessment, portfolios can tell us much more about students. They can reflect development, and can reflect 'attitudes and values as well as skills and knowledge.' (Race and Brown 1998: 67)

2. **Plan of Teaching Cycle**

For information, I list below (in the Times New Roman font) the details of the new assessment on the Studying Film module, as it appears in the students' new module handbook (for the full handbook see the appendices). Here I try to make as clear as possible to students precisely what is expected of them with these three portfolio entries:

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Details of Assessment

The assessment on this module is divided into two components. These components together make up a total of four assessed pieces of work. The first three assessed pieces of written work together form the first component - this is a portfolio. The fourth assessed piece of work forms the second component. This is an essay. Here is how the assessment on the module is weighted:

1. 3-Part Portfolio of written work (40% of total mark for module), comprising Part 1 (10%), Part 2 (20%), and Part 3 (10%)

2. Essay (2,500 words) (60% of total mark for module)

Your first means of assessment will be by portfolio. Over the course of the module you will be expected to complete 3 key tasks which will form this portfolio. These tasks are:

Portfolio Part One: Locate a film journal article and write a 500-word summary of the article, giving the full bibliographical reference of this article at the beginning of this summary. This journal article should be locatable in the Hugh Owen Library. Please do not use an online journal for this particular exercise (however, you *can* use online academic journals for your essay). This part of the portfolio will be marked by your seminar tutor.

Portfolio Part Two: Write a 1,OOO-word mini-essay on the employment of key aspects of film language in the construction of the narrative in a short clip from a film of your choice. Feel free to ask for advice on which film to choose, and how to go about this. This part of the portfolio will be marked by your seminar tutor.

Portfolio Part Three: In the final seminar of the module you will view a short sequence from a film. Then, working in a team, you will discuss the ways in which the film represents gender relations. You should specifically discuss the filmic strategies employed by the director – camerawork, editing, lighting, costume, sound etc – in order to represent gender relations. After the seminar you will be expected to write a short essay-like summary of you

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findings, which will be marked by your seminar tutor (approx. 500 words). This third part of the portfolio should be handed in at the same time as your main essay.

Here are some further details of the requirements of the written portfolio:

Portfolio Part 1: Summarising an Academic Argument

(10% of overall mark for module)

The aim of this task is to get you familiar with a key study skill - research. You must locate a piece of academic writing about one film in a film journal locatable in the Hugh Owen Library. While they are perfectly adequate to use for other assignments, you should not use a refereed online journal for this specific exercise.

YOU SHOULD USE AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN ONE OF THE JOURNALS LISTED BELOW:

American Film, Cineaste, Cinema Journal, Film Quarterly, Film Studies, Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television, Journal of British Film and Television, Journal of Film and Video, Journal of Popular Film and Television, Literature/Film Quarterly, Screen, Velvet Light Trap

You should give an accurate (and properly presented and referenced) account of what this academic discussion of a film has to say about it, and what conclusions it comes to. This portfolio piece should be approx. 500 words long (including bibliographical information). If you need further help, guidance or advice about where to look or how to go about this task, please ask your seminar tutor, or email the module co-ordinator, Dr. Paul Newland (pnn@aber.ac.uk).

For further advice and help on how to summarise arguments in academic writing properly, fully and effectively, see your *Guide to Reading and Writing and Presenting Your Work* handbook.

N.B. IMPORTANT: By 'academic' we mean here, simply, the following: it will be a piece of writing about a film which goes beyond discussing whether a film is good or bad; worth seeing; what happens in the film etc. Instead it will discuss why a film is significant, what ideas, themes, representations, messages, etc. it contains. Academic writing also tends to locate itself within traditions, and it does this by referencing other writers and by having a bibliography. This means that the types of film journals you will be looking at are 'academic', but articles from *Empire, Total Film, Sight and Sound* and other popular film magazines are not. The general rule of thumb is that: **if it has no references or bibliography which references other academic work, then it is NOT an appropriate piece of academic writing.**

DO NOT SUMMARISE A REVIEW OF A FILM.

Specific assessment criteria:

For Part One of the Portfolio, you will be assessed on:

- The quality of your insights into the argument set out in your chosen film journal article, and the clarity and precision with which you summarise the main points made in this article.
- The scholarly presentation of your work (in line with departmental guidelines as set out in the *Guide to Reading and Writing and Presenting Your Work* booklet).

Portfolio Part 2: Analysing film language and film narrative

(20% of overall mark for module)

The fundamental aim of this second assignment is to test your ability to look analytically at the ways in which a film narrative is constructed in formal terms. In other words, you will be expected to discuss the ways in which key aspects of film language facilitate the progression of a narrative. This task will test your critical abilities, and has been designed to allow you to get used to writing about films in a scholarly/academic fashion. This analysis should be approx. 1,000 words long, and should be properly presented and referenced (in line with departmental guidelines as set out in the Guide to Reading and Writing and Presenting Your Work booklet). You should reference at least 2 academic pieces of writing about your chosen film - you can build here on what you learned in the first portfolio task (but do not use the same journal article).

N.B. When we ask you to 'analytically' write about a film, we want you to...

... give careful, systematic attention to how the film narrative is constructed (the ways it uses the various resources of cinema – cinematography, editing, mise en scene, sound and music), so that you are able to discuss what representations and what meanings are established through these.

You must choose a segment of a film to study in detail - an appropriate length for this segment will typically be between two to five minutes in length. (Please note: if your piece of writing focuses on Citizen Kane or American Beauty, for example, then you must choose a sequence other than the ones that were looked at, in detail, in the lectures and seminars on these films). You will need to give a short account of where in the film your segment comes, and why you have chosen it. Your task then is to present an analysis of this segment in such a way that it discusses how aspects of film language are employed to aid the progression of the narrative; i.e. how is film language used (above and beyond dialogue) to help tell the story?

Important: This analysis of the narrative should clearly move away from just saying what happens towards showing how this is achieved cinematically.

When analysing your chosen film segment, do not just outline what happens in the segment or what dialogue is spoken. Although dialogue is of course an aspect of film language (as is the performance of dialogue), you need to identify the other key formal elements employed within the segment (those formal elements that seem, for you, to particularly contribute to the meaning of the segment), and then weigh up the significance of these formal elements (camera angles and/or position; camera lenses/focus; editing; music and/or sound; special effects; wardrobe and props; mise-en-scene etc.), by considering how they aid the progression of the narrative, and what they add to themes explored in the segment as a whole and the film as a whole.

This piece of work should be written and presented as a short essay, but you will not be expected to employ secondary material or include a bibliography this time.

Specific assessment criteria:

For Part Two of the Portfolio, you will be assessed on:

- The quality of critical insight into your chosen segment of film; the clarity with which you articulate your ideas; the structure of your writing.

- Your ability to distinguish (and name) the key elements of film language that can be seen in operation in your chosen segment of a film; the clarity with which you explain how film language is employed to aid narrative progression.
- The presentation of your work (in line with departmental guidelines as set out in the *Guide to Reading and Writing and Presenting Your Work* booklet)

Portfolio Part 3: Analysing film representation

(10% of overall mark for module)

During the final seminar of the module you will be shown a short sequence from a film. You will then be divided up into small teams. These teams will be asked to discuss the key formal strategies employed in the film sequence in order to represent gender relations. Here you will be expected to talk about what 'signs' of gender are in play in the clip. You should discuss how we are invited as spectators to read this sequence in terms of the ways in which it constructs gender. So you are not to talk about the narrative here. Rather, you are expected to look specifically at the ways in which gender is represented/signified in this particular sequence.

Your third portfolio entry will be a SOO-word summary of the key points discussed by your team. This piece of work should be written and presented as a short essay, but you will not be expected to employ secondary material or include a bibliography this time. This piece of

work should be handed in to the secretaries as usual (with your main essay), to be marked by your seminar tutor.

Specific assessment criteria:

> For Part Three of the Portfolio, marks will be awarded for:

- The critical insights displayed in your discussion of the representation of gender in the film sequence.
- The clarity, precision and structure of the points made in your 500-word summary.
- The presentation of your work (in line with departmental guidelines as set out in the Guide to Reading and Writing and Presenting Your Work booklet)

Assessment 2: Essay (60% of overall mark for module)

In addition to the portfolio, the second component of assessed work for this module comprises a 2,500 word essay. As you will see, this is the major assessed piece of work for the module. In some senses the work you have already done on the portfolio should have helped you prepare for this. This is your chance to make a strong argument in response to a specific question, and to draw on a range of secondary material in order to do this (journal articles, chapters in books etc.). Please remember that secondary material should be properly referenced and presented, in line with departmental guidelines as set out in the Guide to Reading and Writing and Presenting Your Work Handbook. You should include a bibliography at the end of your essay, where you list only the secondary reading you have used in the essay.

Essay questions will be circulated by the end of Week 6.

Specific criteria for assessment:

Your essay will be marked against the following criteria:

- How detailed, clear and well-structured is your analysis?
- How persuasive is your argument, and how insightful are your points?
- How well do you answer the question? How far do you remain focused on what it is you are being asked to do?
- How well do you use secondary scholarly/academic material in order to back up your points? How well chosen is this material? And how wide and appropriate is this range of material?
- How well written and presented is your essay, in particular, with respect to the requirements set out in the Guide to Reading and Writing and Presenting Your Work Handbook?

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The introduction of this new mode of assessment onto the module (the three-part portfolio) necessitated a slight re-design of the structure of the module, in terms of the timetabling of teaching and the deadlines required for the submission of assessed work. Ramsden has usefully developed ideas on how to structure higher education courses: 'it must be possible to defend the particular order and structure in which material is tackled from the point of view of its favourable effects on student learning.' (ibid., 139) I would argue that this also holds true not only for the mode of assessment on a particular module, but also when, precisely, this assessment is timetabled into the module. In other words, if timetabled at important moments in the schedule, the assessments can develop a particularly strong formative aspect that might further facilitate deep learning on behalf of the students. With this in mind I decided that the first two portfolio entries should be submitted approximately half way through the module (during the so-called 'Reading Week' - week 7 of the 12-week module). The third portfolio piece should then be submitted after teaching on the module had ceased, and this piece of work would be submitted at the same time as the remaining 2,500-word essay, at the end of the duration of the module. Splitting the submission of the three portfolio pieces into two (the first two pieces submitted together halfway through the module, and the third piece submitted with an essay at the end of the module) seemed to make the most sense in terms of the workloads of the students but also the workloads of the seminar leaders who would find themselves tasked with marking this work. But, importantly, the portfolio pieces were thus designed to encourage active and progressive learning across the span of the module. For example, the first portfolio piece (locating an article in an academic journal held in the Hugh Owen library and then summarising the argument in this article in 500 words) was designed to encourage the students to actively and physically research their written work. It is clear that further research of this kind would be a requirement of the major 2,500-word essay, which was due to be submitted at the end

of the module. So the structure of the portfolio - in terms of the way its constituent parts are timetabled - encourages the development of scholarly good practice. And these developments can be worked through from one assessed piece of work to the next - hopefully guaranteeing an improvement in key aspects of the quality of the later assessed work. It is hoped that the skills engaged with and learned throughout the process of working on this portfolio will stay with the students throughout their undergraduate studies and beyond. But, at the level of the current, specific learning aims of the Studying Film module, I hope that the design of the three portfolio pieces will help students to a) understand how to find academic sources to incorporate in their written work, and develop the knowledge of how to present this work, b) develop analytical and writing skills, and c) benefit from working in a small team.

3.   Concerns and Potential Problems with Teaching Cycle

I have a number of concerns over how well the new mode of assessment will function on the Studying Film module. Firstly, and perhaps inevitably, some possible confusion might arise with students over the specific requirements of portfolio. Students who enrol on Studying Film are at the beginning of their undergraduate studies, so they might find aspects of their experience daunting. I hope that I have made the assessment and marking criteria absolutely clear. Seminar leaders will be prepped with responses to what I imagine might be frequently asked questions about the requirements of the three-part portfolio.

One other key concern that comes out of the employment of this new mode of assessment is the fact that it will inevitably mean an increased workload for staff in terms of marking. Indeed, Race and Brown point out some of the potential disadvantages of employing portfolios as a means of assessment. They note that portfolios can require 'a lot of looking at!', and that portfolios can be 'much harder to mark objectively' (Race and Brow 1998: 67) -

although I do not really see how this issue of objectivity can be any worse that when it comes to marking examination papers. Moreover, my strong feeling is that the benefits of the portfolio to the students in terms of the development and practicing of key skills will certainly warrant the additional work required of seminar leaders to mark them. Also, as the three-part portfolio is to be submitted on two different dates, the marking of the work will be staggered, and thus spread out across the semester. So, each student will submit approximately 1,500 words (portfolio 1: 500 words; portfolio 2: 1,000 words) halfway through the semester. They will each then submit approximately 3,000 words (portfolio part 3: 500 words; essay: 2,500 words) at the end of the module/semester. I would hope that this amount of marking will remain manageable for seminar leaders. But I will reflect on this at the end of the teaching cycle.

Lastly, the third portfolio entry has been designed to be based on the screening of a film clip which will take place in the last seminar scheduled on the module, just before we break up for Christmas. As this portfolio entry is also based on some minor collaborative group work in this seminar (a critical discussion of the screened film clip), issues will undoubtedly arise when students for whatever reason do not manage to turn up for this session. I would counter this by pointing out that the session has also been designed with one eye on student attendance (which has periodically been a problem in past years across modules run by the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies), and students will know that they need to attend this final seminar session if they are to adequately engage with the work required of them for portfolio part 3. Having said this, I will make provision to provide the film clip on DVDs for any student who has a valid and verifiable reason for not attending the session, so they will be able to write up their portfolio entry based on this clip at a convenient time.

4.   Progress note - putting the Teaching Cycle into Practice

Portfolio Part One: As set out in the instructions in the module handbook (listed under point 2 above), the students were asked to locate a film journal article and write a SOD-word summary of the article, giving the full bibliographical reference of this article at the beginning of this summary. This journal article should be locatable in the Hugh Owen Library. Seminar leaders were instructed to provide additional guidelines on how to engage with this task during seminars leading up to the submission date. And lecturers were asked to begin weekly lectures leading up to submission date by reminding students of the requirements of this task, and pointing out the submission date. Instructions were also posted online on the Blackboard facility. So, I think I did pretty much everything I could as module co-ordinator to make sure students were both aware of what was required of them, and when this work had to be done by. By briefing seminar leaders on this I also felt that a substantial 'emergency blanket' had been laid out under students who might for whatever reason struggle to complete this task. Despite all of this, however, I found that I personally received a significant number of queries from students about the task - usually via email. The main, repeating issue was 'what is an academic journal article'? I was happy to send around an email to all of the students again setting this out. But what became apparent was that a number of students were lacking in initiative, and were searching for ways to 'pass' this task without perhaps properly engaging with it. At the risk of being accused of conjecture, it seems to me that a number of university students have not perhaps been used to using their own initiative during their previous studies (at 'A' level, for example). Taking these minor problems on board, my feeling was that if anything this proved that the first part of the portfolio was a very useful exercise, as it was forcing students to confront issues such as how to use their initiative, but it was also setting out, from a very early stage in their university careers, the importance of developing key research skills. Indeed, I was very

pleased that I made it clear in the instructions for this task that students should not use an online journal for this particular exercise, as it has been designed with the development of extra-Internet research skills. This required them to make a physical journey into the library, which, while it has obvious pedagogical benefits, also demonstrated the kind of effort we expect of them. This part of the portfolio was handed in and marked by the students' seminar tutors.

Portfolio Part Two: Students were tasked with writing a l,OOO-word mini-essay on the employment of key aspects of film language in the construction of the narrative in a short clip from a film of their choice. They were told to feel free to ask for advice on which film to choose, and how to go about this. Perhaps not surprisingly, this portfolio piece did not generally cause as many problems as the first portfolio piece. Students on the whole seemed happy to make a choice of the film sequence to write about, and then to engage in close textual analysis of this sequence. The skills they could employ in doing this were effectively set out in lectures on the module on representation, narrative, and close textual analysis, which were all scheduled to take place in the weeks leading up the submission of this portfolio piece. Moreover, these skills would also be key to the writing of the 2,500-word essay due to be submitted at the end of the module. This part of the portfolio was again marked by seminar tutors.

Portfolio Part Three: In the final seminar of the module students viewed a short sequence from the Marilyn Momoe, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon film Some Like it Hot (Billy Wilder, 1959). Then, working in small teams, they were instructed to discuss the ways in which the film represents gender. More specifically, they were encouraged to discuss the filmic strategies employed by the director - camerawork, editing, lighting, costume, sound etc - in order to represent gender relations. After the seminar the students were tasked with writing

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a short essay-like summary of their findings, which were marked by seminar tutors. This task appeared to go very smoothly indeed. I had barely any questions from students or seminar leaders about either how to approach this task or what specifically was expected of them in the portfolio entry. The only problem that developed out of this third part of the portfolio was non-attendance of students. Indeed, a number of students decided not to attend this last session before Christmas. This seemed to be a particular problem with overseas students, who often spoke of the fact that they had booked flights home during the week. This is despite the fact that the Department make it absolutely clear that students are expected to attend all scheduled teaching sessions.

5.   Summary of relevant data and feedback on student learning

Data on student learning on the Studying Film module during and in the immediate aftermath of this teaching cycle was very hard to collate and analyse accurately for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is the issue of the sheer numbers of students enrolled on module (150). To attempt to collate mark averages across the three portfolio pieces and the essay has proved very time-consuming. Secondly, trying to discern improvements in grades across the whole cohort is fraught with problems. This is for a variety of reasons. Firstly, a large number of students did not for one reason or another submit all of the relevant pieces of coursework. This of course might prove to be a problem with the new mode of assessment (I will deal with this under point 6 below). Secondly, while the marking of work by individual seminar leaders is performed to strict criteria offered not only by me as module co-ordinator but also the Department of Theatre, Film and Television, alongside generic marking guidelines provided centrally by the University, there will always be a slight differentiation in marks awarded by individuals for specific pieces of work, especially as this first year

module does not require second marking or the moderation of marks. Having said all this, there is evidence to be found in the broad cross-section of marks on the module this year (see appendix) that at least 50 per cent of the students who did submit all of the required coursework recorded an improved mark in their essay (submitted at the end of the module) compared to the marks they received for their first and second portfolio pieces (submitted half way through the duration of the module). This would indicate a number of things. Firstly, we might surmise that the design of the first and second portfolio pieces had enabled students to learn and develop some of the key research, writing and analytical skills that are required in their scholarly essays. Importantly, then, the new portfolio mode of assessment has broadly facilitated the improvement of written work across the duration of the module for the majority of students who submitted all of the pieces required of them. While some students saw their marks for their essays dip below their marks for their portfolio entries, this might be put down to a number of things - nerves and stresses around delivering a longer piece of work which is more heavily weighted towards their overall mark for the module, for example.

6.   Evaluation of student learning experience in relation to intended outcomes

Overall, as I outlined under point 5 above, I am happy with the fact that a discernable improvement in the quality of written work was evidenced for the majority of the students. But my feeling is that the tasks undertaken in the three portfolio pieces should see a gradual improvement in the level of the skills demonstrated by students as they continue their undergraduate studies (even if it is perhaps next to impossible to measure this in real terms).

Unfortunately, however, I now realise that I was not adequately clear about the ways I which I wanted the new portfolio assessment to be built into some of the stated aims and objectives of the module. Indeed, I have come to realise that some of the aims and objectives

of the module (listed below) might in future be more clearly weighted towards key skills and the concomitant future employability of the students. This requirement to factor in learning objectives into modules in order to make students ultimately more employable has been instigated by the University and by Faculty (and then by the Department of Theatre, Film and Television), and while I was conscious of the fact that the portfolio could and indeed should reflect these requirements, I do not think, in hindsight, that I adequately considered this when I drafted the learning aims and objectives of the module, as set out in the students' module handbook. My feeling that this constituted a slight lack of foresight and judgement is perhaps borne out by remarks made by Ramsden: 'Objectives must be connected quite forcefully to the learning activities that are designed to enable students to achieve them […]. There ought to be a definite educational justification for every activity, every piece of content, that is present in a course of study.' (Ramsden 1992: 134) But, as I will try to demonstrate, the overall outcomes of the shift in assessment from a traditional written examination to a written three-part portfolio was overwhelmingly positive.

7.   Comments on implications for professional development of teaching
      practice.

Bransford et al remark that , [O]ne of the hallmarks of the new science of learning is its emphasis on learning with understanding.' (Bransford et al 2000: 8) Furthermore, Biggs argues that' [T]he teacher's job is then to support students by aligning teaching methods, assessment tasks, and classroom climate to acquiring the skills and understandings that we want them to acquire.' (Biggs 2001: 225) I think that broadly speaking there is enough evidence to have come out of this teaching cycle to suggest that the students found that they

learned key research and analytical skills through engaging with the new portfolio tasks. I certainly will press for modes of assessment to be closely monitored on all of the modules I am involved in co-ordinating, because I have learned that assessment can be very cleverly geared towards the ways in which students learn. In other words, it has become apparent to me at the end of this teaching cycle that assessment is not just something lecturers can employ in order to measure student performance, but also about something that can facilitate deep and active learning.

But one distinct area of future improvement (in terms of the planning and delivery of this mode of assessment) did come to light. One thing I want to do in future is to make sure that I design modules which feature learning aims and objectives and assessment which are constructively aligned, and that learning aims, objectives and assessment not only refer to the specific subject matter of the module, but also key skills that the students might take on into further study and future life. For example, in the 2010/11 Studying Film module handbook, the learning aims are currently listed as follows:

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By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- Explore the ways in which individual film form and content may be related to wider historical, cultural, political and social contexts.
- Understand the purposes of the key theories and concepts that have dominated the academic study of film, and be able to apply these theories and concepts to film examples.
- Effectively and purposefully analyse the formal construction of film texts.
- Draw critically upon a range of reading from the field of film studies.

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In future years I want to re-draft these learning outcomes to make them take account of the key skills students will acquire through assessment on the module that might make them more employable in future. I want to be much more clear about how the modes of

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assessment on the module (which I think will continue to embrace the successfu13-part portfolio) will more accurately reflect the kinds of key skills that students might learn on the module and ultimately perhaps benefit from throughout their working lives.

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