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Designing In Student Engagement Via Course Design

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Introduction

Key drivers for revalidation of criminology:

- Departmental strategic plan
- University Strategy 2020
- Student feedback
- Revised criminology subject benchmarks (QAA).
- Critical reflection via periodic review

Course Design Processes

1. **Content mapping** of new QAA benchmarks by Module Leaders

1. **Small working groups** to tackle specific issues highlighted e.g. internationalisation

1. **Away days** arranged to discuss learning outcomes, delivery styles, assessment design etc.



4. **Blackboard repository** for working group meetings, draft module descriptors etc.

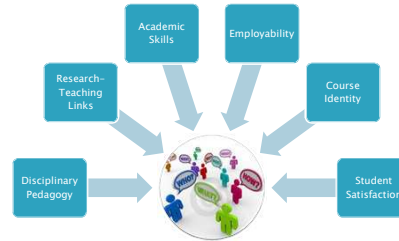
4. **Blackboard Wiki** for discussions to enable scaffolding and progression of knowledge, skills and values



6. **Course Planning Team** of senior staff /course leaders; fortnightly meetings

6. **Revalidation implementation plan:** 12 month oversight of the roll out of the new programme

Designing In.....



Disciplinary Pedagogy: 'bottom up' strategy involving whole subject group setting programme learning outcomes and focussing on three principles for course design 'knowledge, skills and values', (see Shulman, 2005 and Gurung 2009, Cleaver2014).

This then aligned with new benchmarks and the vision for the department.



Course Identity: aimed at improving student experience; led to 'bespoke' modules jointly designed, taught and tailored by staff teaching on both disciplines of joint degree.

Student Satisfaction: addressing issues of contact time and teaching provision. This led to semester long modules; increased weekly contact; renewed focus of learning and teaching; and a dedicated 'research cluster' to support pedagogic research of student experience.

Academic Skills: retained modules at level 4 which develop academic skills and PDP (*Graduate Academic Development: GRAD*); consistent Academic Advisors throughout the course; research methods teaching now a core academic skill, alongside, for example, literature searching, referencing, and reflection on practice.

Employability: building on current core and electives to include; whole semester modules, placements, simulations, the Venture Matrix, international exchange and embedded global content at each level of study.

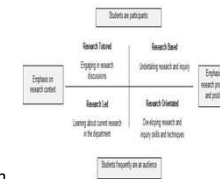
Winner of 2014 HEA award



Research-Teaching Links: research identities of the subject group inform content, supported by a new research strategy and 'research clusters' tasked to design, deliver and teach, specifically elective modules.

Research clusters promote and develop a blended approach to research-informed teaching

- *research-led teaching* as initial goal
- *research-based teaching* as longer term goal (Austen, forthcoming).



(Heeley & Jenkins 2005)

Reflections

Course teams should consider 'mindfulness' and 'willingness' as principles of course design in HE (Toohey, 1999); for example, previous iterations of design, governing agendas and processes. A collaborative approach and good working relationships also has a huge impact overall.

Challenges remain:

- time and space for the design of new teaching materials
- successful marketing and recruitment to the new courses for Sept 2015
- measuring student engagement and overall satisfaction
- balancing improved student experience with staff experiences

The QAA Quality Code for HE suggests that course design should be based on certain principles. Staff (n=18) responses were encouraging:

The course design process enabled....	Agreed	Disagreed
critical reflection	82%	18%
creativity and innovation	88%	12%
a collaborative approach	100%	0%
inclusion of all stakeholders	73%	27%
management of academic standards	93%	7%
alignment to the strategic vision	100%	0%

But work still needs to be done:

"I think the course has a much more joined up and focused core delivery but the options fit into themes which are not my specialism and thus options provide less opportunity for me currently"

Further information

A three year evaluation of these courses will begin in January 2015. Please contact l.austen@shu.ac.uk for more details.

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