"Practising what we preach":
a social constructivist approach to blended learning

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Presentation overview

- What we preach!
- What we were practising
- What we wanted to practise
- What we did about it
- What the students thought
- Where we are going next

Our context

- BA QTS in Primary Education
- 120-130 Year 1 students
- New degree September 2008
- Education and Professional Studies

What we preach!

Social constructivism

ABLE OTHER

SCAFFOLDING

PEER SUPPORT

TUTOR SUPPORT

BUILDING ON PRIOR LEARNING

BUILDING TRUST

MODELLING

BITE-SIZED LEARNING

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

RESEARCH CULTURE

ENABLING INTERACTION

INVOLVEMENT

CHOICE

OPENNESS

What we were practising

Lecture slides available and key texts identified on OLC up to a week before lecture*

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Lecture input (with printed articles)

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Tutor-led seminar

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Student self-study and maintenance of file

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ES1 Assessment:
Peer and tutor assessment of file (mid Term 3)
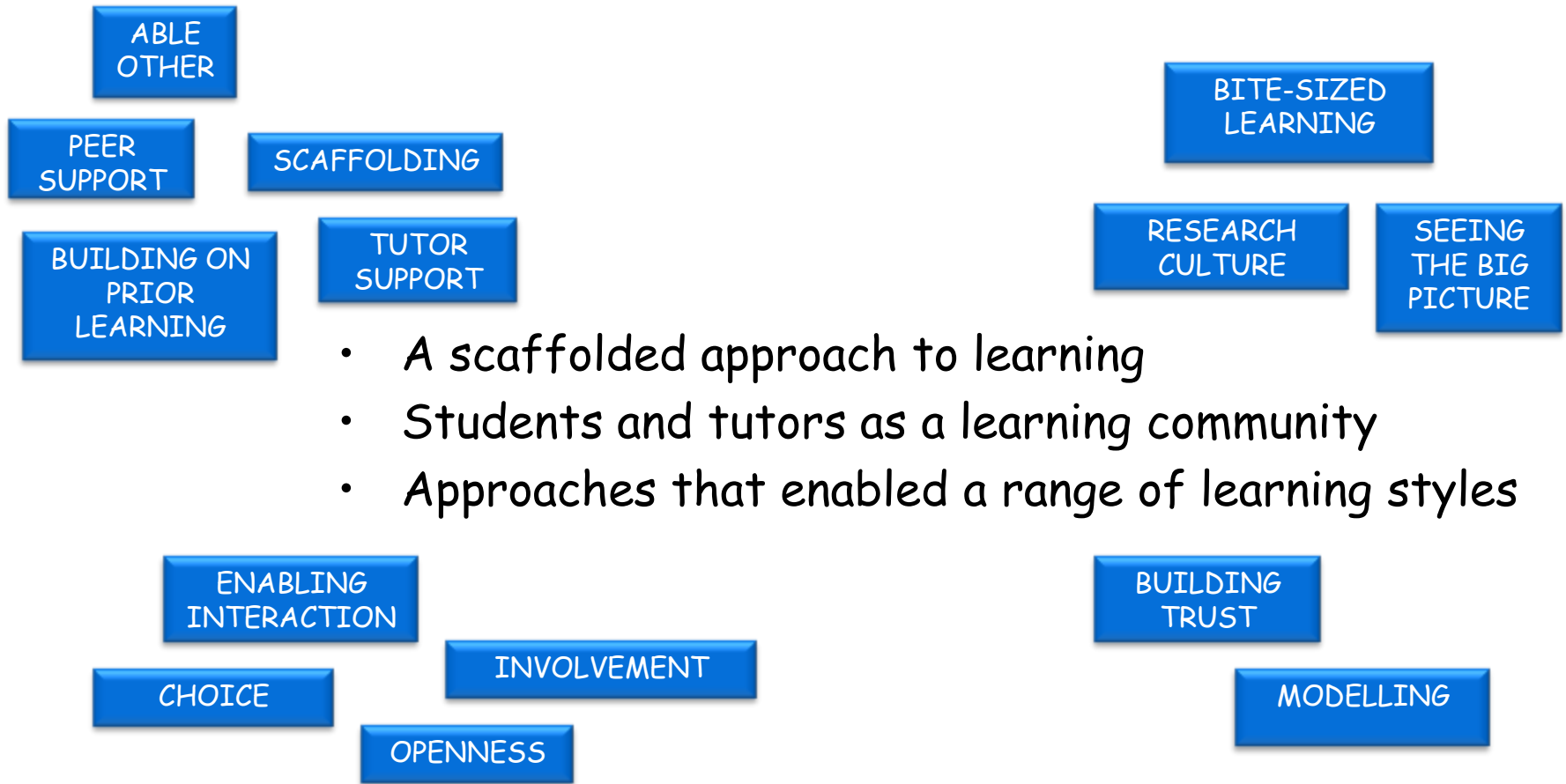Timed examination (late Term 3)
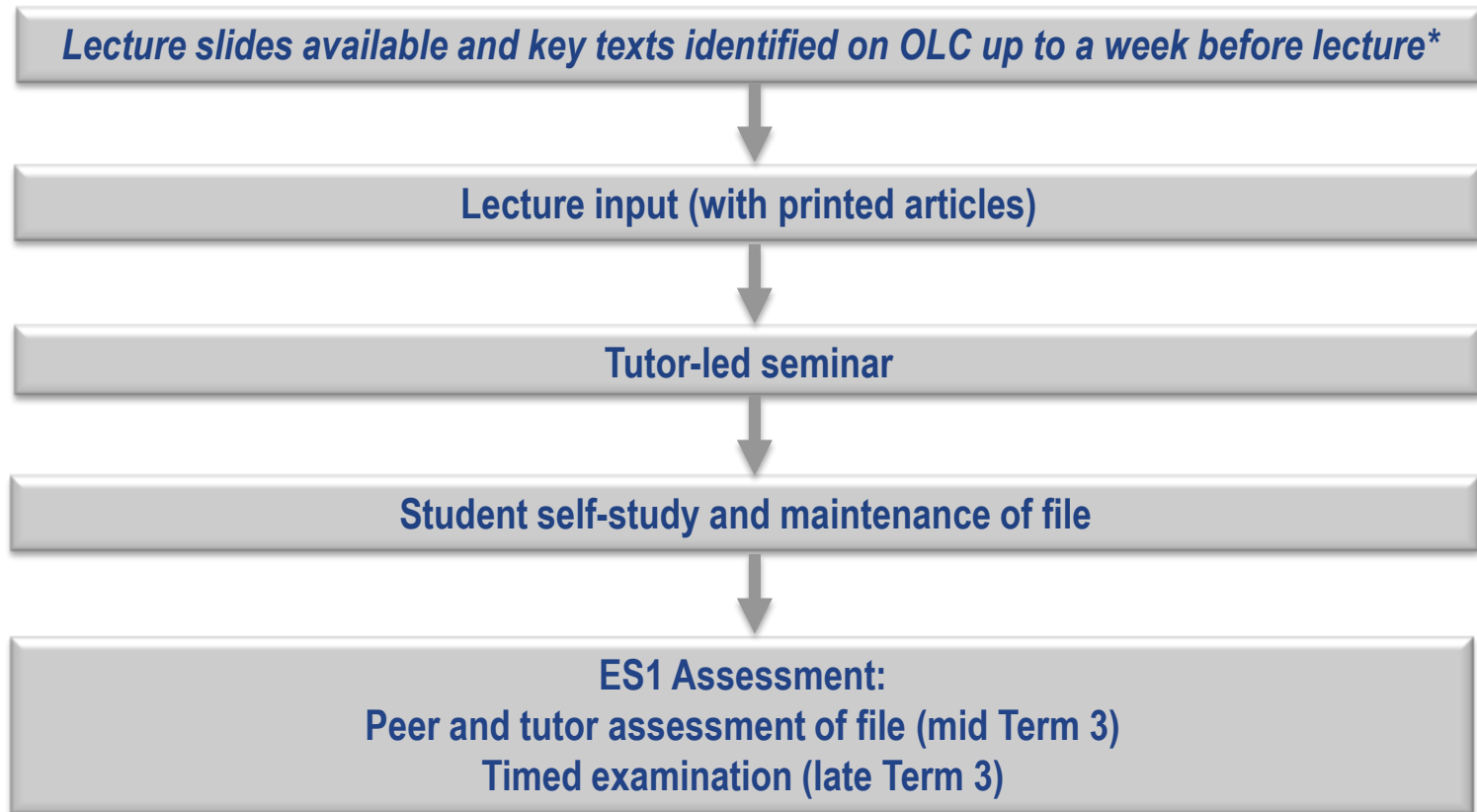
*Students were not required to print lecture slides but most chose to do so and commented unfavourably if this facility was late or not provided.

Fig 1: EPS model 2007-8

What we wanted to practise

ABLE OTHER

PEER SUPPORT

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BUILDING ON PRIOR LEARNING

TUTOR SUPPORT

RESEARCH CULTURE

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

- A scaffolded approach to learning
- Students and tutors as a learning community
- Approaches that enabled a range of learning styles

ENABLING INTERACTION

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What we did about it

Introductory Lecture
with slides, readings and workshop activities available to view/download beforehand

Reading group activities

On-line workshop readings and activities, including written submissions by groups/individuals

(e.g. reading logs, reflections on school based tasks)

Group presentation: research and preparation, including group tutorial

Tutors written feedback to groups and individuals on online submissions

Seminar:
Group presentation
Tutor-led activities and discussion

EPS1 Assessment:
Joint Report on school-based observations/learning theory (early Term 2)
Peer assessment of portfolio/reflective commentary (late Term 2)
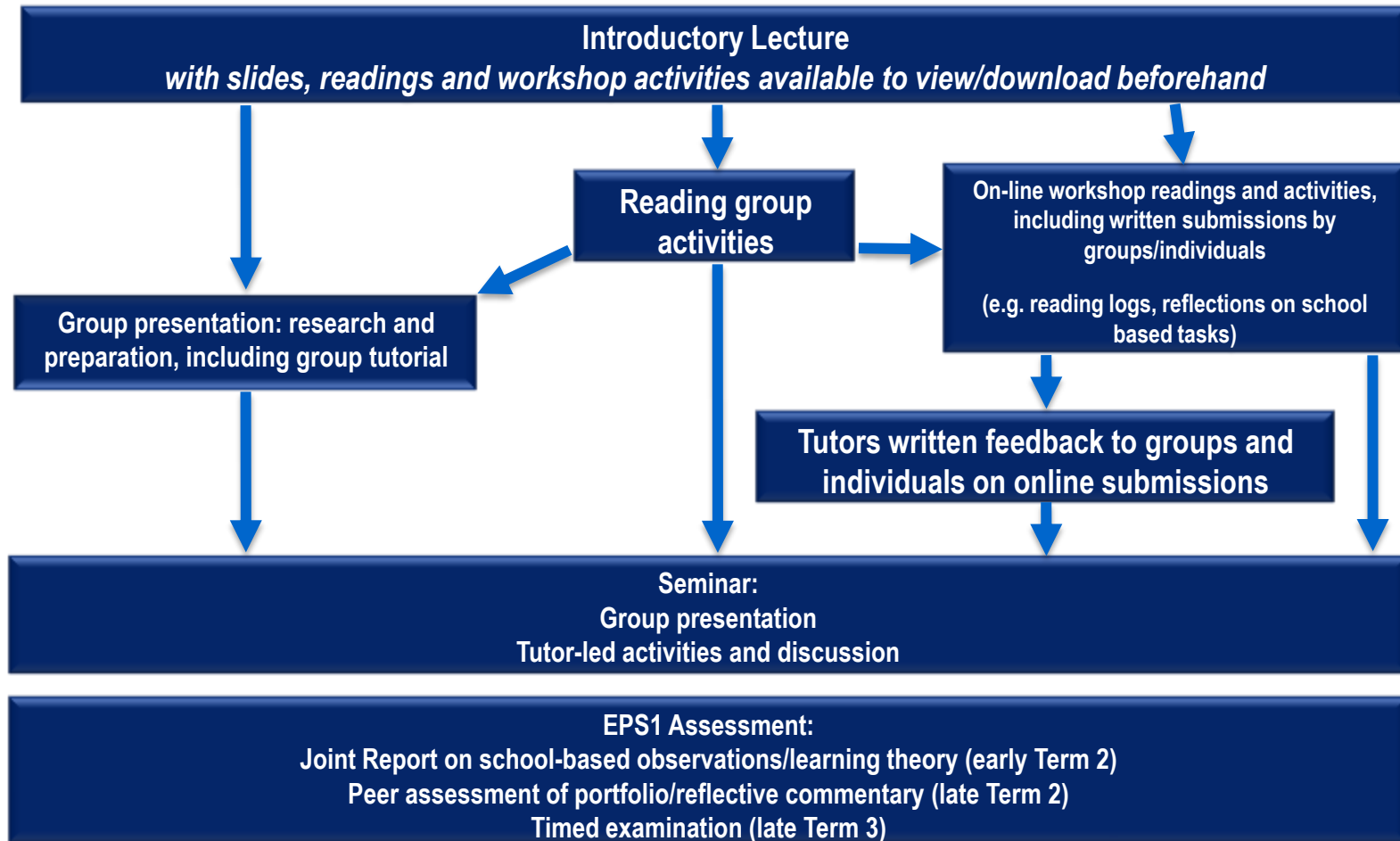**Timed examination (late Term 3)**

Fig 2: EPS model 2008-9

What the students thought

I surprisingly enjoyed contributing to the discussions and reading fellow-students responses

The reading groups whilst an excellent idea just haven't been practical to carry out to any useful degree due to pressure of work and different levels of commitment etc!

I felt like I had support with EPS 24/7

...it is helpful to share a range of perspectives on experiences....

Joint Report - concerned that our grade relied so heavily on the other person making an effort

With regards to the reading groups: Sometimes it's easier to get on and do it yourself... But the presentation groups really boost your confidence...

lectures, seminars and online, it kept the work varied and interesting

Was very disappointed and concerned with the continuous lateness of feedback, after all students would not be allowed to hand in work late at all. Most importantly, if feedback were given on time, it could have further improved my learning throughout the course

It's much easier to give encouraging, positive feedback to your peers about their presentations...I think confidence building is important in the 1st year

It was good to have someone to work with

Where we are going next

- Review aspects of the VLE
  - **Improve layout and design**
  - **Discussion areas**
- Review our use of aspects of the VLE
  - **Formative feedback**
  - **Coffee bar**
- Explore development of new features
  - **Mini wikis**
  - **Blog comments**