

Embedding and developing skills within an UG business module

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The purpose of this paper is to share the design and delivery of a core Level 4 'Organizational Behaviour' (OB) module, to help students develop key academic and employability skills and to assist them make a smooth transition from school to university.

Students are arriving at University with poorly developed study skills and with little experience of independent learning. They find it hard to learn and are overwhelmed by trying to manage their time, work in groups and learn from lectures that are often presented to over 200 students at a time. As many live at home, and are first generation higher education students, they lack wider support and guidance.

The delivery of the OB module has been designed to try and address these issues through a variety of ways:

- a) **Facilitating interactive student centred learning.** The module has introduced weekly tutorial sessions which are delivered to smaller groups and follow 'active learning' principles as developed by Hunt et. al. (2013). A range of pedagogic techniques are used to allow students time to interact with each other and with teaching staff so that questions may be answered and potential misunderstanding of the lecture content can be addressed. Each tutorial follows a set structure so that students know the pattern of delivery and so become confident in participating fully within it. A review of the lecture content starts each session with a set of questions. Some are knowledge based, others test understanding and application of theory by the use of brief case study scenarios. These both allow formative feedback to be given. Videos, group exercises, the reading and discussion of short academic and practitioner journal articles, questionnaires and presentations are all used to then allow students to apply what they have covered. Students participate fully in each activity and it is made clear to them that not getting an answer right first time is key to learning. Each session ends with an interactive quiz. Doing these group activities allows the tutor to check learning levels and expand on any areas that are not clear. They also allow quieter members of the group to be included and prevents the dominance of others.
- b) **Developing academic and employability skills.** Previous stand-alone skills modules have not worked and we wanted students to see the benefit of acquiring and applying skills immediately by embedding skills into the module. This module provides a hands-on experiential approach to learning and gives students the opportunity to learn and understand the OB content and to develop and apply relevant skills. Key academic and employability skills such as report and essay writing, note taking, approaching case studies, presentation and communication skills, searching for literature and referencing, team-working, CV writing are all covered and embedded. This has the benefit of students being presented **with material** in a timely manner and in context. As each skill is covered, students need to apply it within an assignment.
- c) **Supporting student learning with StudySpace.** To supplement classroom teaching and support independent learning we have produced online materials which are accessed via 'StudySpace'. Students are required to complete these online activities prior to each tutorial. These extensive resources include; online reading guides to help students navigate and read the core text and take notes, MCQ tests to check their knowledge of the OB content, skills

guides and questionnaires to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, videos and case studies provide students with real life examples of how different OB models and concepts work in practice and are aimed at establishing links with student past/future knowledge and experiences (Kim and Hannafin, 2011). All these activities are aimed at enhancing student independent learning by bringing something additional to experience and helping them to participate in class actively each week.

- d) **Creating a diverse assessment strategy.** We have developed creative approaches to assessment. A detailed Coursework brief provides explicit guidance on requirements. The marking criteria, outlining expectations for each different element of the coursework, namely a 'Management Challenge' group report, reflective journal and oral presentation, are provided. The exam uses a mix of MCQ's, short questions and 1 long essay question and thus provides a good range to test students' knowledge and understanding. Overall students are assessed in 6 different ways between coursework and examination - this enables students to demonstrate their abilities in a variety of contexts thereby simulating what they are likely to encounter in graduate roles.

Feedback from the students on the OB module has been very positive. Confidence levels have increased; they are less overawed by large lectures and less nervous of asking for clarification and further detail. They feel equipped to move into the second year of their studies with key skills in place that will enable them to succeed.

References:

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