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TYSTYSGRIF UWCHRADDDEDIG ADDYSGU MEWN ADDYSG UWCH

POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Cylch Dysgu 2 | Teaching Cycle 2

Planning and Delivering a New Undergraduate Module

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4 Teaching Development Cycle 2: Poster

This section presents a poster as representative of a key aspect of my second teaching 'cycle', planning and delivering a new undergraduate module.

4.1 Introduction

During my second teaching cycle (2004-5) I was faced with the need to plan and deliver a different set of modules from those that fell within my responsibility in 2003-4. Of these, one was a completely new first year undergraduate module, ‘Archival Inheritance’, designed as an integral component of a new undergraduate scheme ‘Historical and Archival Studies’. I had not been involved in the initial planning of this scheme or its constituent modules, and my only guidance as to content was the Module Outline from the module database (see Appendix 6), which encapsulated my predecessor's otherwise unformulated plans for module delivery.

This was a completely new experience for me, other modules with which I had been involved had all been relatively well established – I could build on previous year’s module handbooks, assessment, handouts, and in some cases utilise open-learning materials. The Module Outline gave me a useful starting point, but I also had to consider where this module sat in the wider undergraduate scheme, and what would be covered in future core modules (notably the undergraduate ‘Archive Management’ and ‘Records Management’ modules).

The poster, illustrated overleaf, traces the considerations and activities involved in planning how to structure the module sessions, and in designing and formulating the module assessment. The following sections break down the poster into its different components, with further commentary and personal reflection.

4.2 Outcomes-based planning

Course / module design is often based on outcomes-based planning. D’Andrea (2001, p. 42-4) traces the origins of these ideas, to the need to make the teaching and learning process more explicit and transparent, and the resulting focus on the development, initially, of learning objectives (which can be criticised for being teacher-centred), and latterly of learning outcomes (which are learner-focused, addressing what the student will be able to do at the end of their programme of study).
APPROACHES TO MODULE DESIGN

Outcomes-based Systematic approach:

1. SPECIFY LEARNING OUTCOMES
2. IDENTIFY/SEQUENCE TOPICS
3. ASSESS STUDENT NEEDS
4. DESIGN TEACHING UNITS
5. IMPLEMENT TEACHING STRATEGIES
6. ASSESS MODULE OUTCOMES

Aligning Learning and Teaching:

LEARNING OUTCOMES
What do we want students to be able to do?

MODULE CONTENT
What do we have to teach students to address the Learning Outcomes?

SEQUENCE TOPICS
How can we structure the module to best facilitate student learning?

Structuring the Module:

SEMESTER 1:
The nature of Archives, and their role as evidence
SEMESTER 2:
The management of Archival Resources

Designing teaching sessions:

ASSESS STUDENT NEEDS
What will affect the learning experience of the students?

DESIGN TEACHING
How is session content best delivered?
Depth of coverage?
Teaching strategies?

Aligning assessment with Learning and Teaching:

LEARNING OUTCOMES
What should students be able to do?

ASSESSMENT
What are students taught, and when?

Implement and Evaluate:

IMPLEMENT TEACHING STRATEGIES
Deliver module teaching

ASSESS MODULE OUTCOMES
Student Assessment and Evaluation

Reflect and Revise:

REFLECT
Were Learning Outcomes met?
Was student learning effective?

REVISE
HOW COULD WE DO IT BETTER NEXT TIME?
A focus on learning outcomes has been adopted across all programmes of study at Aberystwyth, and can be linked to a systematic approach to course / module design, which itself reflects experiential development.

This systematic approach starts with the specification of learning outcomes, which are used to identify and sequence the constituent topics; how these topics are actually then addressed at the level of teaching and learning design depends on analysis of student characteristics, such as levels of prior knowledge, and the personal learning styles and motivation of students which contribute to the overall class dynamic.

Outcomes-based Systematic approach:

1. Specify learning outcomes
2. Identify/sequence topics
3. Assess student needs
4. Design teaching units
5. Implement teaching strategies
6. Assess module outcomes

Implementation and evaluation of the extent to which outcomes are achieved can then feed into a revision cycle, refining the design of teaching and learning.

In developing a programme of study the learning outcomes of one module may need to be related to the student characteristics of another; so that students can progress in a structured way through a particular learning pathway, or to ensure that module content does not significantly 'overlap'. Some modules may act as pre-requisites for others, but this is not necessarily the case; in other circumstances completion of one module may preclude a student studying another module, because of significant areas of duplication of content.

The ‘Archival Inheritance’ module, situated as it is within the ‘Historical and Archival Studies’ programme, is potentially related to the allied modules (‘Archive Management’ and ‘Records Management’) in years two and three. However, the fact that students from other programmes (who may not have studied ‘Archival Inheritance’) can elect to follow ‘Archive Management’ or ‘Records Management’ as an option, precluded a pre-requisite relationship. Although the incoming student’s topic knowledge was expected to be minimal, the learning outcomes had to be applicable to, but not a necessity for completion of the forthcoming modules.
4.3 **Aligning learning and teaching**

Basing my planning on an outcomes-based approach to module design, I initially focused on aligning the learning outcomes and the indications of module teaching content provided by the Module Outline (Appendix 6).

### Learning Outcomes

**What do we want students to be able to do?**

### Module Content

**What do we have to teach students to address the Learning Outcomes?**

I started by comparing and grouping the stipulated learning outcomes with the suggested module content, this highlighted two apparent 'gaps' – D and G – as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Module Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students should be able to . . .</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaching therefore needs to encompass . . .</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Outline the history of the collection, use and management of archives in the UK</td>
<td>A. A historical review of the collection, use and management of the United Kingdom's archival inheritance and the establishment of major national repositories and institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2) Discuss the nature of archives and explain their value to present society | B. An overview of the nature and extent of the United Kingdom's archival inheritance  
C. An examination of the current significance of archives to society |
| 3) Evaluate selected archival documents | D. *Skills in evaluation of archival documents* |
| 4) Explain the difference between primary and secondary sources | E. An examination of the importance of archives as 'primary sources' and evidence, and comparison of the use of primary and secondary sources |
| 5) Locate archival sources through familiarity with the pattern of archive keeping in the UK | F. The current pattern of archive keeping in the UK  
G. *Knowledge of the resources available to locate archival sources* |
| 6) Describe the functions of an archive service and the work of a professional archivist | H. The role and work of an archivist  
I. The functions of an archive service |
4.4 Structuring the module / Designing teaching sessions

Having developed an overview of the learning outcomes of the module, and the teaching requirements associated with this, my next step was to think about how the content could best be structured to facilitate learning.

Within the content / learning outcomes I could already discern two clear strands: knowledge about the nature of archives and their role as evidence; and knowledge about how these sources were managed by archivists and archive services. Since this was to be a 'thin' module, delivered over two semesters, it seemed logical therefore to divide the content between the semesters on this basis, first of all providing students with an understanding of what archives actually are, and then introducing the requirements for their care and management. This latter aspect would require some thought in developing content, since vocational best practice in the management of archival resources forms the subject of the later module 'Archive Management'.

ASSESS STUDENT NEEDS
What will affect the learning experience of the students?

DESIGN TEACHING
How is session content best delivered?
Depth of coverage?
Teaching strategies?

SEQUENCE TOPICS
How can we structure the module to best facilitate student learning?

SEMESTER 1: The nature of Archives, and their role as evidence
SEMESTER 2: The management of Archival Resources
The module itself was to be delivered over 10 two-hour sessions (combining lecture and seminar elements); five in each semester. In designing the approach to teaching across these sessions, thought had to be given to student needs and characteristics (such as prior knowledge) which would affect the learning experience. For example, since it is often much easier for students to assimilate knowledge about a subject when there is an experiential element to learning, the opportunity to conduct visits to archival establishment during one session in each semester was also taken. This would, respectively, enable the students to see and handle a range of original materials, and visit an operating archive service, thus reinforcing the theoretical knowledge gained from the other module sessions.

According to D'Andrea (2001, p.55) each 'unit' (or session) "should be related to at least one outcome and the teaching, learning and assessment methods should be chosen so that the outcomes can be achieved." The structure of sessions in semester one encompassed the following topics, learning outcomes and elements of module content:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Learning Outcome / Module Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What are Archives / Where are they Located?</td>
<td>2 / B &amp; 5 / F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Types of Records</td>
<td>2 / D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Lecture: ‘Fakes and Forgeries’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Archival Documents:</td>
<td>3 / D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What Can They Tell Us?</td>
<td>4 / E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Visit to National Library of Wales</td>
<td>2 / B &amp; 4 / E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Why are Archives Important Today?</td>
<td>2 / C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Uses of Archives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first two sessions provided students with a basic understanding of the nature of archival materials (physical format and types of records) with an introduction to the question of who keeps them and why. This was done through the use of interactive presentations interspersed with activities and discussion. A guest lecture on ‘fakes and forgeries’ reinforced the authenticity aspect of archival resources in the second session. The third session was explicitly designed to support the students in undertaking the first assignment (the documentary analysis) by considering the distinction between primary and secondary sources, the types of information and evidence archival sources can supply, and in providing practical guidance and examples of evaluating archival documents. The final session addressed the value and uses of archives in modern society.
The semester two sessions (outlined above) gave the question of how archival resources are managed a slightly different perspective, by approaching this from the point of view of how the nature of archives requires certain management approaches. This effectively distinguished the module content from that of the later ‘Archive Management’ module, and helped students to understand why archives are managed as they are. The sessions included a substantial component of interactivity – incorporating activities and associated discussion – based around a set of associated lecture presentations.

### 4.5 Aligning assessment with learning and teaching

A systematic approach to course / module planning demands that that all aspects of course design are interrelated, with each step in the process informing the next. Assessment activities, as the primary measure of achievement of learning outcomes need to be carefully aligned both with these, and with teaching activity.

For example, assessment should be carefully scheduled to ensure that it falls at an appropriate point in the module (i.e. where students have had the opportunity to learn from the teaching and learning sessions related to the same learning outcome).
For the ‘Archival Inheritance’ module, the basic form of the assessment had already been set: a ‘documentary analysis’ of selected archival material; a 1,500 word essay; and a 1,500 word evaluative report. These had to be aligned with the learning outcomes, and with the module structure – how this was done is illustrated by the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Complete after Sessions</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentary Analysis</td>
<td>1 – 4</td>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay on the nature of archives and their value to society</td>
<td>1 – 5</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report evaluating the functions of an archive service</td>
<td>6 – 9</td>
<td>5 &amp; 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Implement and evaluate / Reflect and revise

Module delivery, and implementation of the teaching strategies devised, is not the end of the story in the systematic approach to module planning.

By analysing the results of student assessments and undertaking summative module evaluation, an assessment of the outcomes of the module can be arrived at. While the focus is likely to be on how well these accord with the original learning outcomes, it should be recognised that unintended outcomes might also be constructive.

Biggs (2003, p.160) considers that any “rich teaching context is likely to produce learning that is productive and relevant, but unanticipated.”
The opportunity to reflect on the success or otherwise of the approach, as part of a 'revision cycle' is integral to the systematic approach.

D'Andrea (2001, p.55) notes how this is meant "to allow for the improvement of the course / module delivery and achievements of students' learning."

4.7 Final reflections

As with the teaching developments addressed in section 3, my positive evaluation of module outcomes for 'Archival Inheritance' meant that I did not engage as fully as I could have with the opportunity to reflect deeply on the module and make revisions. Minor alterations to content were made, however pressures on time inevitably mitigated against much 'fine-tuning'.

This was nevertheless, an extremely useful learning experience for me, if a somewhat back-to-front one. In many ways I was reverse-engineering the module design; a situation which was unlikely to arise again. However, this did mean I had to think particularly carefully about the relationship between the learning outcomes, the module content, and the design of the assessment components. This had the added value of highlighting to me the need for meticulous planning in developing proposals for new modules and programme schemes. Something which has relevance in my particular context, as the archives and records management team are currently seeking to revise and update the content and structure of the programmes delivered.