Festival of Learning Abstract

Assessment and Feedback

20 Minute paper

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Marketing Downloads: a comparison of two assessment methods

Marketing Downloads started post RAF when a series of activities beyond traditional lectures and cases studies were examined as options to embrace the teaching challenge of animating a 4 hour teaching session for two different marketing modules delivered to large cohorts of level 4 students.

Our experience of teaching a variety of different undergraduate and postgraduate modules with students from diverse educational and ethnic backgrounds highlighted that students enjoy practical learning activities and discussing real life examples to illustrate theory. However, we also identified that students often lack the confidence to engage fully with their academic studies, displayed by disengagement and low attendance. We were keen to provide them with the motivation to really want to come to class and engender the feeling of not wanting to miss out.

This led to an evaluation of confidence, self-efficacy and active learning literature to provide some academic principles to guide development. Prince (2004) and Michael (2006) identified that active learning enhances academic engagement. They specifically mentioned the active learning principle "discovery-based or "inquiry-based learning " providing evidence that students are more engaged in their academic work when they discover something of interest through their own research, and share their findings in the classroom with peers. We were also keen to embed employability skills into this learning experience to reflect both the university and wider Higher Education employability agenda.

Therefore the original idea was simply to ask students to be active learners and participants in the class room. Objectives were initially to invite first year students to take charge of their own learning with a high degree of freedom, by exercising their research, presentation, self-confidence and critical analysis skills, all highly valued by employers. Students sign up for a "Marketing Downloads" slot on a first come first service basis, committing to research an example of innovative marketing (e.g., a clever ad) and prepare a presentation and questions to kick start class discussions. Formative feedback is then given by both peers and tutors based on evidence of clarity of discussion of topic and ability to stimulate and lead a discussion. We developed a logo (see below) to encourage recognition and identification with the initiative which is used on all student facing material.

The assessment component motivates and rewards students who participate. The initiative was implemented in differently in the two level 4 modules during academic year 2013-14 as follows :

- An individual activity, done on a voluntary basis (students chose to do an Marketing Download or not, the date, and their topic). Students receive immediate peer and tutor formative feedback and can earn bonus marks (up to 5 marks on top of their module assessed work).
- A group activity, compulsory in the assessment plan of the module, but students remaining free to choose their topic and date of delivery. In this group setting, students are invited to lead a discussion with the class following their presentation, ranging from answering simple questions to monitoring a debate on the spur of the moment.

Informal feedback collected during the academic year illustrated that Marketing Downloads works extremely well at achieving the pedagogical objectives sought:

- Presentation skills ' built on my confidence to prepare for real ones in the future'
- Self-confidence ' increased my self-confidence in class'
- Research ' I had to do a lot of research which helped my study methods'

In addition, it appears that the individual versus group settings of the tool may develop additional and different skills depending on whether the Marketing Download was done by a student on his or her own on a voluntary basis, e.e., develops confidence and self –efficacy or in a group of students on a compulsory basis, e.g., develops learning by reciprocity and debating.

The initiative has appeared successful so modifications have been made this year following student feedback. Level 5 students share their Downloads experience at the start of the year with new Level 4 students. Students now upload their completed Marketing Downloads on StudySpace to share and for potential use in subsequent lectures.

A Primary Research programme is currently running using focus groups and a confidence questionnaire to assess impact of participation on confidence levels and development of employability skills. Student partners are being used conduct the research and analyse the results with full analysis expected at the end of the academic year. Early results are very positive, particularly with regards to student associations with the brand name, using the term "doing a download" to refer to research, presentation and discussion of an idea.

References

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