

Mini research project

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TITLE OF PROJECT:

Write-in-the-mix/SWAP

INSTITUTION:

London Metropolitan University

PROJECT LEADERS:

Etain Casey

DISCIPLINE/DEPARTMENT:

HALE/OLP English Language

YEAR/LEVEL OF STUDENTS:

All

CONTEXT

We had evidence of students' difficulty in integrating their reading into their academic writing. This problem was selected for research, as we believe it causes underachievement in all subject areas and impacts on plagiarism.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

We aimed to create an innovative, formative academic feedback process for academic writing in science, business, art and design, and law.

METHODOLOGY

We designed a language self-test and templates for practice tasks which could be posted on the university VLE; we consulted subject area experts over the content of the texts and in the design and evaluation of tasks for their particular academic literacy.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

We created a language self-test which students could use to raise their awareness of their language proficiency and provide evidence of problem areas for the evaluator. Students chose a subject area that best fitted their degree studies. They completed a summary writing task in response to the reading passage on the template and an extension question for freewriting. They submitted this for evaluation and received feedback on both the relevance of their content and their technical language ability. Our work on our second project (SWAP project) was to use evidence from this process to redesign the templates and the tasks. It is envisaged that we will create a number of templates in each subject so that students can improve their skills and also familiarise themselves with their chosen academic literacy.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROJECT

The templates were well received by the subject area experts we consulted. We plan a final evaluation of the self-test and templates to ensure the relevance of the designs to actual writing tasks and assessment within the disciplines particularly in art and design where images play a part.

We want to gauge staff attitudes to this kind of inter-disciplinary formative process in a more formal way by further interviews and questionnaires.

DISSEMINATION

In February 2010 the project was presented at the International Arts and Sciences Conference at the University of Malta. An article in the peer reviewed journal is forthcoming in October 2010. The project was presented and discussed at the SWAP group meeting in March 2010. It was then presented and discussed at the London Metropolitan Learning and Teaching Conference July 2010 and at the 8th e-learning University of Greenwich conference 'Future Learningscapes: a 21st century challenge'.

AVAILABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES

Contact the project leader, Etain Casey etain.casey@londonmet.ac.uk

FUTURE PLANS FOR PROMOTING PROJECT WORK/OUTCOMES:

The templates are used in our own language teaching. They will be discussed in our department and with subject leaders. We plan to promote the templates further in RLO discussion circles.