

Write Now Mini-Project

Report produced: September 2010

TITLE OF PROJECT:

Change in culture of writing for new BA English Language Studies students at London Metropolitan University

INSTITUTION:

London Metropolitan University

PROJECT LEADERS:

Marion Colledge

DISCIPLINE/DEPARTMENT:

HALE

MODULE:

LE1003C Introduction to Texts: Written and Spoken, LE1001 Business Communication, LE2002 Stories of English and others.

YEAR/LEVEL OF STUDENTS: First-year

NUMBERS OF STUDENTS IN MODULE:

50 (45 per year) between 2006 and 2008, 25 in 2009

CONTEXT

Many students were unused to the structure and style of academic writing at university.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

To improve student writing in first-year modules.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire to two cohorts of students and interview of four staff, and text analysis of student work within action framework.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

Initial student survey showed that:

Students were concerned about language accuracy and volume of reading, and they could not judge the quality of their essays and the mark they might receive.

Our analysis of student essays demonstrated that:

Rather than writing style or accuracy our main worry was the unevenness of 'evidence' within students' arguments (though some Italian and Polish students, new to essay assessment, nevertheless showed great strengths in written argument). Weaker students were plagiarising popular websites instead of using the material from their reading list.

Staff interviews revealed that:

Three out of four staff interviewed felt that essay-writing skills should be incorporated into module teaching, rather than left to the Higher Education Orientation module.

Teaching and student support:

Both face to face and VLE-embedded holistic and analytical strategies (genre approach) were adopted for developing the essay-writing skills of these students, and subsequent cohorts on the BA in English Language Studies (ELS). In Autumn 2008 new modules were validated for the BA ELS incorporating essay-writing support across the board. Unfortunately these have not been run as the university decided to cut the degree from Autumn 2009.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROJECT

Student writing in the first year modules improved. This has not always carried over into the second year where new students join the degree. Quality of learning has improved as procedures are made clear to students. Some impact will have been made on staff as the research was broadcast widely.

DISSEMINATION**Conference presentations**

Colledge, M. (2007) The change in culture of writing for new BA English Language students at London Metropolitan University. Poster presentation at: Liverpool Hope University, July 2007.

Colledge, M. and Jones, S. The change in culture of writing for new BA English Language students at London Metropolitan University. Presentation to London Metropolitan University Centre for Transcultural Research, November 2007.

Jones, S. 'The change in culture of writing for new BA English Language students at London Metropolitan University' Stephen Jones. Presentation at: IPED conference, Coventry, 10-11 September 2007.

Colledge, M. (2008) Essay writing with New BA English Language Studies Students. Presentation at: IATEFL Biennial conference, Exeter, April 2008.

Colledge, M. (2008) First year undergraduates on a BA in English Language Studies – Adaptation to the Culture of Essay-Writing. Presentation at: WDHE conference, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow 2008.

Publications

Colledge, M. (2008) Essay writing with New BA English Language Studies Students. *IATEFL 2008 Exeter Conference Selection*, Beaven, B (ed.), pp.159-160.

Colledge, M. and Jones, S. (2009) First year undergraduates' adaptation to the culture of academic essay writing on a BA English Language Studies degree in a University in the UK. *English for Academic Purposes* (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), Krznowski, M. (ed.), 33 Winter-Spring 2009.

Colledge, M. and Hargreaves, S. (2008) Assisting Dyslexic Students Negotiate the Challenges of Essay-Writing: a Case Study. *Investigations in University teaching and Learning*, 5(1), 36-41. London Metropolitan University

Colledge, M. (2009) The Culture of Essay-writing in a UK University. *Intercultural communication: Proceedings of the International Conference of the Bulgarian American Association and the Bulgarian Society for British Studies*. Plovdiv 2006, pp 470-484.

AVAILABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES

Publications as shown above.

Colledge, M. and Hargreaves, S. (2008) Assisting Dyslexic Students Negotiate the Challenges of Essay-Writing: a Case Study. *Investigations in University teaching and Learning*, 5 (1). London Metropolitan University Autumn 2008. http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/604/1/MC_dyslexia.pdf

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FUTURE PLANS FOR PROMOTING PROJECT WORK/OUTCOMES

We hope to give papers on dyslexic students and essay-writing. Steve Jones, my co-partner on the project, and I are being transferred partially to another department (International Foundation at London Metropolitan University) and will broadcast the ideas there.