



Academic Skills Development

Talking About... Learning & Teaching: Case Study 001



University of Birmingham

Start Date: Autumn 2007

Students: 1st year undergraduate (LC)

Scope: Entire credit bearing module

Approach: Enquiry-Based Learning (EBL); eLearning: Role Play

Technology: WebCT (VLE), Wiki, Delicious, Twitter

Type: Campus

Discipline: Education

Cohort Size: 90

Initial Funding: LDU / TOEF

Initiative Introduction: Within a programme of study

Impact: adopted by School and across the College of Social Sciences (cohorts of between 30-200+)

Design Team: Dr Matt Bridge (senior Lecturer) and Danielle Hinton (Learning Design Consultant)

Introduction

This learning design was created to address a number of challenges in three parallel 1st year academic skills modules within different subject areas (sport coaching and English language & Literature). Student engagement and ensuring the same quality of experience were key motivators for change. An enquiry-based learning design (authentic real-world scenario & role play) was chosen in order to address issues of subject and engagement.

Learning Design

Time constraints meant that most of the group working mechanisms was predetermined. Each group (5-6), was pre-allocated and given a name corresponding with famous people within the discipline, authors, book characters were pre-selected for each group. All students were assigned group working management roles (chairperson, recorder, reporter, accuracy coach, time keepers and summariser) along with their matching responsibilities. Group roles changed each task (each 3 weeks) allowing everyone in the group to experience between 3 and 6 roles depending on the module length.

All the module EBL tasks were situated within a scenario that placed the students as employees of an organisation where they could typically expect to go to on graduation. The tutor took the role of their line manager and all tasks were delivered in email style via WebCT. Initially (2007-09) students collectively in their groups all took on the role of "Sarah Dodd" who had just joined the organisation after completing our degree. During the 2009/10 session student groups took on the role of a "Research Team". Tasks will be slightly adapted bringing the module into line with the research informed teaching agenda of the University's Learning and Teaching strategy.

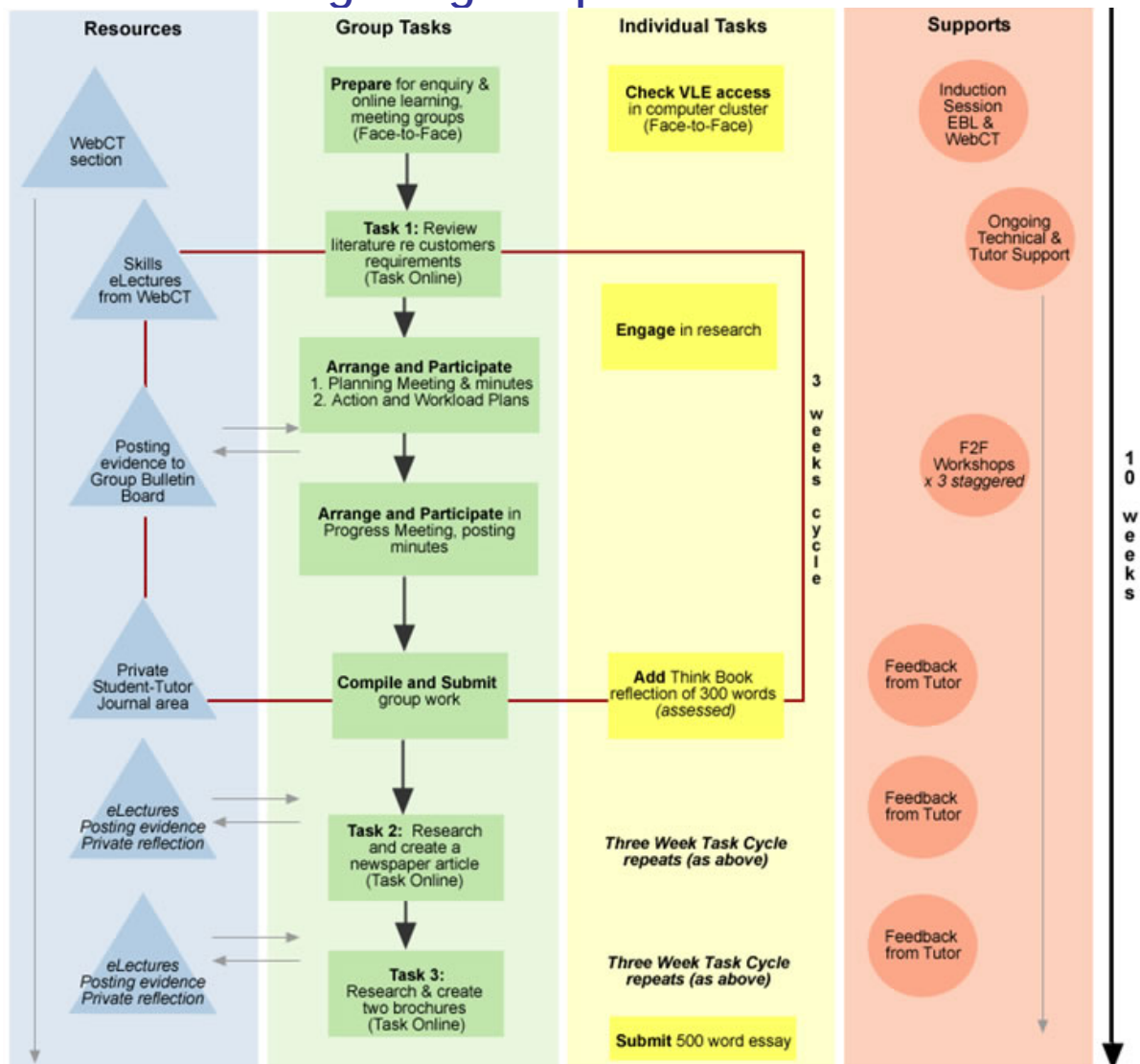
Each EBL task was released at a three week interval and is underpinned with a series of online lectures. The trigger for enquiry was a "mock email" (via WebCT) which required students to unpick the task. Each task was completed almost entirely independently by the students in their groups. Each task required included the following elements to be completed and post online as evidence of independent working: planning & progress meetings (agenda and minutes), workload & action plans, planning notes and evidence of working (including photographs). Think Book postings (reflective journal) and individual written work is required for assessment purposes. The reflective postings are scaffolded using a modified set of structured debriefing trigger questions (Gibbs, 1988).

Summary

The learning design has been adapted to fit a wide range of disciplines with the College of Social Sciences to date to include Business and Social Policy. As it was originally adapted from a Post Grad distance programme design, it has scope beyond academic skills development.

Gibbs, G (1988) Learning by doing: a guide to teaching and learning methods, Geography Discipline Network, http://www2.glos.ac.uk/gdn/gibbs/ch4_3.htm#4.3.5

Temporal Plan: Learning Design Sequence



Student Learning Outcomes

- Use a variety of written and IT sources to obtain information and opinion, with a focus on English Language and/or Literature and/or Education
- Use a variety of written and IT forms for organising a coherent presentation of argument and evidence
- Manage own skills development

Contact Information

Dr Matt Bridge
 School of Education,
 University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, B15 2TT
 Tel: +44 (0)121 415 8394
 Email: m.bridge@bham.ac.uk

Ms Danielle Hinton
 eLearning Team, College of Social Sciences
 University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, B15 2TT
 Tel: +44 (0)121 414 3468
 Email: d.m.hinton@bham.ac.uk