

University of Birmingham

Start Date: Spring 2010

Students: 3rd year UG (Level II)

Type: On and off campus learning

Discipline: Social Work

Scope: Five-day enquiry-based blended learning sessions based on a child protection case study

Technology: WebCT, Respondus and Articulate Studio Pro

No. of students affected: 29

Approach: Enquiry-based blended learning; role play; group work;

Learning Environment: min-lectures, e-learning, independent learning, group work

Initiative Introduction: Within a programme of study

Design Team: Tarsem Singh Cooner (Associate Director, CEIMH), Gary Hickman (Director of Social Work Education)

Introduction

This learning design aimed to provide social work students with the underpinning knowledge, skills and experiences required to operate within the child protection (CP) process from referral through to child protection conference (CPC). A blended learning design was created centered around an incrementally developing problem-based case study. Using a mixture of face-to-face teaching, online enquiry-based activities and role-play, students were able to develop the planning, recording, assessing, communicating and presenting skills required to respond to a CP referral, plan an investigation and prepare a report for a CPC.

Learning Design

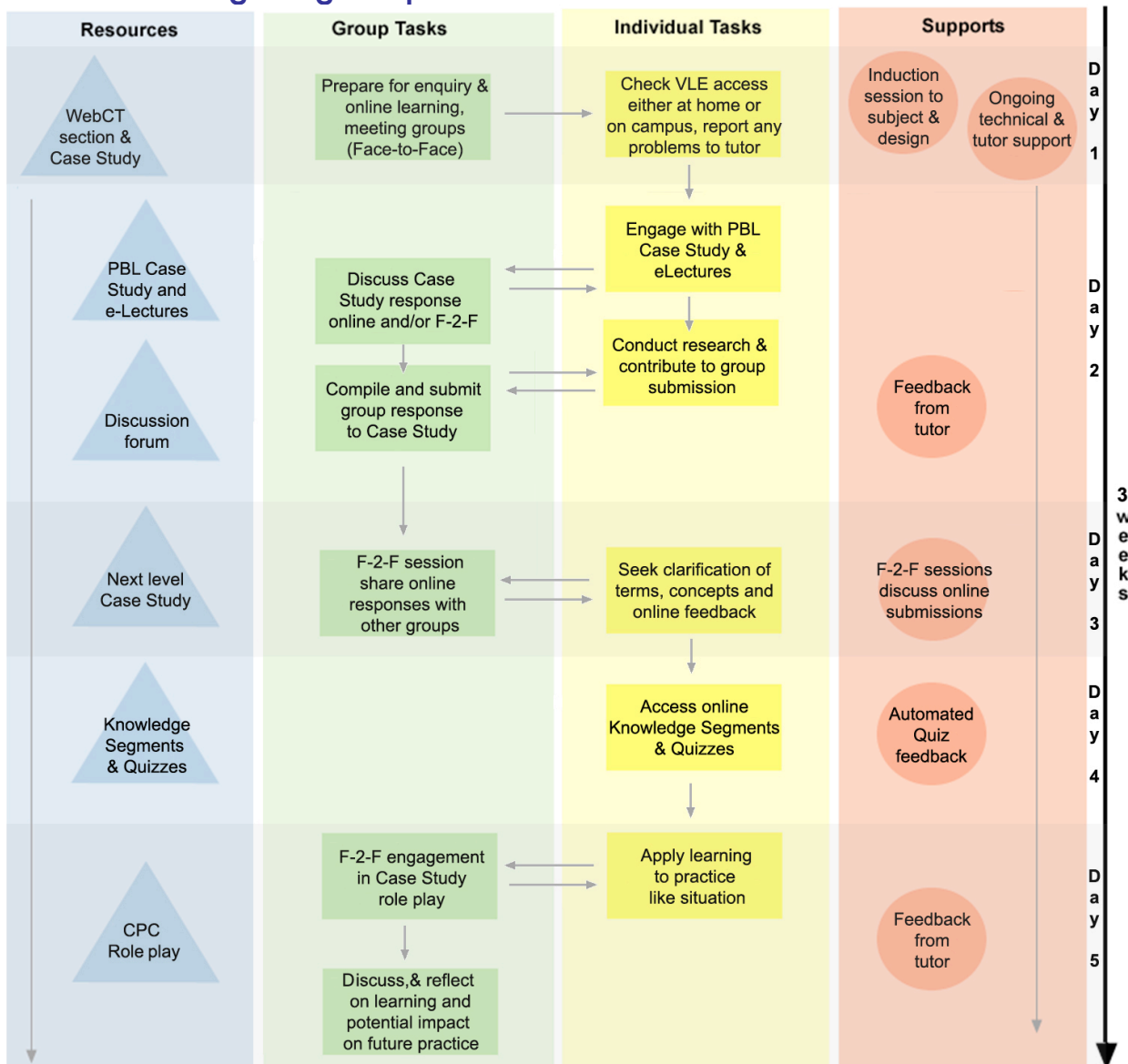
The Child Protection Processes teaching consisted of a blend of activities over a 5-day period spread over 3 weeks (whilst students were on final year practice placements). Day 1 provided an introductory mini-lecture to introduce the design of the teaching sessions along with the aims and objectives. Student roles and responsibilities along with deadlines for submission of assessment tasks over the teaching sequence were also outlined. In the afternoon the 29 learners were placed into 6 groups of 4/5 peers and carefully orientated to the online resources and enquiry-based tasks (centered on the problem-based case study).

Day 2 (out of class activities) students accessed the case study along with a series of short online lectures (created using Articulate Studio Pro) hosted within WebCT. Using WebCT forums student groups explored, discussed and collectively created responses to the issues raised by the case study CP referral. A clear deadline was set for submission of tasks with the tutor providing feedback to groups within 24 hours. Day 3 was a face-to-face discussion of the group's submissions allowing students to ask questions and clarify concepts to consolidate learning. Day 4 required students to undertake online activities individually. Student's had to read a series of six short "knowledge segments" outlining the information they would require to engage effectively with the next level of the case study. To begin with only one knowledge segment was visible, students had unlimited attempts to score eighty percent on related quizzes before the next segment(s) became available (this was achieved by using the WebCT Selective Release feature). This process ensured a sequenced development of knowledge. The quizzes were created using Respondus. Day 5 was a face-to-face session beginning with students working in groups to apply the information gained from the Knowledge Segments to the developing case study. The afternoon session consisted of a CPC role-play based on the evolving case study enabling students to apply their learning in a life like situation. The teaching ended with reflection on learning, debrief and evaluation.

Summary

Student feedback has consistently shown this to be a popular and effective teaching approach. The design has not used technology to "add to" the student workload; it has instead thoughtfully integrated in and out of class activities to meet a range of learning styles resulting in effective learner experiences. A recent evaluation indicated that 89% of the students either Strongly Agreed or Agreed that the Social Work Programme should offer more enquiry-based blended learning sessions like the Child Protection Processes teaching sequence.

Temporal Plan: Learning Design Sequence



Student Learning Outcomes

- Show an understanding of the changing policy context within which child protection work is carried out.
- Show an awareness of how research informs child protection work.
- Recognise and explain how personal values can influence professional responses to 'child abuse'.
- Explain the concepts of 'significant harm' and 'risk assessment'.
- Explain the process and procedures involved in conducting enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and in accordance with Government Guidance i.e. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.
- Demonstrate an understanding and knowledge of the role and purpose of the case conference system.
- Demonstrate a knowledge of the steps a social worker must undertake to prepare for case conferences.

Contact Information

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Further Information Available: Cooner, T.S. & Hickman, G (2008) 'Child Protection Teaching: Students' Experiences of a Blended Learning Design', *Social Work Education* 27(6) p. 647-657

Web: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a901336998>

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