

Promoting learner autonomy through media production and presentations

Involving students in video production and media-based presentations to promote learner autonomy and employability skills

The aim

The module leader wanted to increase student engagement on a module that was perceived as academically dry. Previously the module was taught with keynote lectures, laboratories/tutorials and written case studies. However student engagement was problematic and learner autonomy was not explicitly developed.

The module leader wanted to explore a more refreshing and creative approach which would promote engagement and motivation whilst also developing autonomy and employability skills.

The aim was to get students more involved in the learning activities through a process of discovery and creation.

Benefits

- Development of skills around digital literacy and media technologies
- Increased confidence in student presentations
- Development of effective team working and project management skills

The approach

The module team developed an approach that required students to undertake and manage research to inform their learning. The student cohort was divided into two halves, and each provided with a slightly different problem scenario - one half was asked to produce short video clips to describe a particular manufacturing process, while the other half were asked to source video to illustrate the causes of an 'engineering disaster'. Towards the end of the semester, all student groups were asked to develop and deliver a conference presentation that incorporated their video clips. This final conference was designed as a formal professional engineering event, held in a venue outside the department, with external invited guests and a specialist keynote speaker from industry.

Students were prepared through seminars on film production techniques and supported by drop-in sessions. They undertook a self-perception Belbin review which highlighted their individual ideal team role. This was reflected upon during and at the end of the project.

Finally students presented their work at an end of module student conference. An external speaker from industry was invited as the keynote speaking on 'Engineering Disasters' to provide an authentic voice. Student presentations were marked during their delivery by a panel of staff and external industrialists. Students were assessed on their presentations, with no submission of reports, which reduced the staff assessment burden and allowed for a fast return of feedback: students received it straight after the event. The other summative assessment in the module was an in-class test based on the case study findings delivered at the conference.

“I could never speak in front of people but through doing this I feel I could do it again and again.”

The outcome

Students were interviewed at the end of the conference and encouraged to critically reflect on the assignment, the role they had played and what they had learnt about their strengths and areas for future development. Comments were positive: students felt the nature of the task had promoted engagement in the project, that they were more confident, and that they had developed numerous skills including team working, learner autonomy and employability.

- “I feel that my confidence had been boosted and would definitely like to do something like this again”.
- “I think I’ve learned much more about the materials process and how disasters are investigated as well as developing my presentation skills - incorporating video into PowerPoint was also successful”

The first time pass rate for the module increased to 95% from 80% the previous year. The only referrals were those students that failed to attend the conference. This is believed to be due to the increased attendance and motivation of the students by using this type of project work.

Profile

Tutor name:
Mike Bramhall

Faculty:
Arts, Computing,
Engineering and Sciences

Size of cohort:
Medium (30-70 students)

Technologies used:
PowerPoint, Digital
video cameras, Video
editing software, USB
memory stick

If you would like your e-learning practice captured and shared in a similar case study, please contact Brian Irwin within Quality Enhancement and Student Success.

Future development

For future developments it is proposed that students are given more time to develop their video case study projects, with better access to cameras and video editing equipment.

Recommendations

This approach may put some students (and staff) outside of their comfort zone in terms of what a typical assessment looks like. To help with this, we recommend being clear about the marking criteria and reviewing them with students.

Good planning is essential to ensure that this approach is successful, particularly around organising a conference approach at the end. We also recommend that students buy a USB memory stick with sufficient space (>8GB)