



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENSURING QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE CLASS ROOM

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ABSTRACT

The learning and teaching study outlines the general principles under planning the approach to teaching and learning within the college. The precise methods of learning and teaching will vary from academic school to school, in keeping with specific traditions and appropriateness to the subject in addition to the learning and teaching involve a variety of methods and approaches. Learning and teaching approaches meet the aim of producing motivated, critically reflective and independent graduates through a graduated approach. In levels 1 and 2 the delivery of programmes is attained by means of structured units of study involving project-based learning, taught through workshop instruction, group and individual tutorials. At these levels learning is primarily tutor-driven. A number of facilities are regarded as key to the support of student learning. A recent development has been the installation of networked computer and audio-visual facilities in all lecture, theatres, enabling substantial use of IT-based learning. This is part of an ongoing programme designed to draw on the possibilities of C&IT for learning and teaching. The library service recognises the importance of library use and information finding as transferable skills, and aims to offer library use seminars and presentations in support of all taught courses. Learning Support is also central to supporting student learning. As the College meets its strategic goal of internationalising the student body, so specific issues are raised, including language support. In this paper highlight the quality of learning and teaching suggests that various components of process towards understanding. So that learning can be achieved in the classroom interaction, there by facilitating the creative involvement of students in the learning process.

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INTRODUCTION

This learning and teaching strategy outlines the general principles under planning the approach to teaching and learning within the college. It describes the philosophy and values informing learning and teaching within the college, and while it identifies various approaches as examples of good practice, it is not intended to offer an exhaustive catalogue or inventory of every individual method. It should also be noted that while the strategy identifies the shared values across the college, consonant with the college's overall aims and mission, student experience will vary from programme to programme. The precise methods of learning and teaching will vary from academic school to school, in keeping with specific traditions and appropriateness to the subject. In this paper highlight the quality of learning and teaching suggests that various components of process towards understanding. So that learning can be achieved in the classroom interaction, there by facilitating the creative involvement of students in the learning process.

General College Aims

The overall aims of the college are as follows; to foster creativity and innovation, to develop practical and analytical

skills, to produce high quality learning opportunities, to provide excellence in learning and teaching, to engage in creative research at the highest international level. Accordingly, the stated aims of its general learning and teaching strategy are;

- ❖ to ensure a student-centred approach to recruitment; learning, teaching and assessment; support and other services, ensuring clear communications and inclusion underpin a constant striving for academic excellence.
- ❖ to enhance and professionalise its academic provision in terms of teaching, learning and research to reflect its unique portfolio and to ensure, through interdisciplinary, a close fit with the creative industries and its professional and academic partners.
- ❖ to ensure the highest levels of academic and resource-based support for both students and academic programmes through a customer-focused, proactive approach to enhancing learning, teaching and research.

In addition to the specified learning outcomes for individual units of study, all programmes operate according to defined learning outcomes for each level. This permits students both to grasp the shorter-term requirements of individual units of

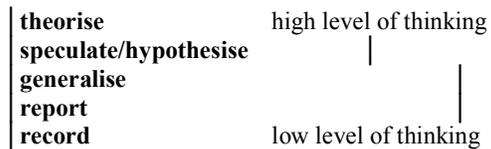
study and also to develop a longer-term strategic approach to their own learning. Traditionally, the college has provided itself on the specialist nature of its programmes, which foster highly specific skills among small cohorts of students, with small specialist staff teams. It remains committed to the ethos of the small institution, but also supplements the specialist focus with possibilities of cross-disciplinary learning.

Learning in the Classroom

Teachers cannot simply transmit information to their students and assume that it will be learned. They must become actively involved with the information they are attempting to learn, in ways that are most conducive for learning. This means that the teacher, aware of the types and variety of thinking and talk possible in the classroom, is constantly striving to raise the levels of student thinking about new content material.

Level of Thinking

A hierarchy of level of thinking demonstrates the range of level of thinking and language available to students and teachers in the classroom:



A simple record of information (notes from the board, transcription of ideas or observations of phenomena or events) gives little opportunity for students to engage, though it might be a useful basis for further thinking and transformation. Tasks that require learners to report such recorded information to others (most simply to a partner or other members of a small group) require a deeper engagement with the information, ideas, and meaning. This is because the changes in language required for reporting make demands on the learner. Similarly, tasks requiring the individual or small group to generalise from reported instances involve students directly in reformulating and rethinking prior experience and language towards this more demanding end. When students are required to speculate or hypothesise, predicting possible results, reasons, events, phenomena or attitudes on the basis of their records, reports or generalisations, they must literally rethink their earlier experience and understanding even further. At the highest level, questions such as *What if?* encourage the learner to synthesise and connect existing knowledge and understandings in such a way as to theorise about potential possibilities and problems. It seems obvious that higher level thinking tasks, by their nature more interesting and rewarding than simple recording and reporting, are key factors in the degree to which students will become more involved and more active learners.

1. Quality of Learning

This section suggests a model through which students can move from information towards understanding. All modes of language (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are central to each stage of the learning process on which the model is based. If teachers want students to understand what they teach,

they must give them the opportunity to personalise knowledge. Teachers cannot give students knowledge; they can only help them come to know by providing structures within which students can develop their own understandings. The model of learning below can apply to single lessons, to work lasting for a couple of lessons, or to whole units of work. It is essentially a programming guide that enables teachers to plan for a class to work in small groups in such a way that learning can best take place. This model suggests that learning involves a process broadly consisting of the following stages.

Engagement

The Engagement Stage is the time during which students acquire information and engage in an experience that provides the basis for, or content of, their ensuing learning. It should involve a shared experience for students so that they have common ground on which to base their learning.

Exploration

This is a vital stage in the learning process, and time and opportunity should be provided for it as a regular part of the teaching routine. Though apparently unstructured, it must be built into the structure of the learning process. Whenever students encounter new information, they need to have the chance to explore it for themselves first, before being asked to engage with it in particular ways. In other words, there needs to be a gap between the Engagement Stage and the Transformation Stage during which no task is set by the teacher.

Transformation

Transformation activities require students to focus their attention on the aspect of the information which represent the desired outcomes of the learning activity. Students continue to operate in Home Groups during this stage, with the teacher intervening and explicitly asking the students to use or to work with information in order to move towards a closer understanding of it.

Presentation

Students are asked to present their findings to an interested and critical audience in their Sharing Groups. Requiring students to explain what they have learned can play a worthwhile part in the process of moving from information towards understanding. It provides a degree of tension and gives a sense of purpose to the work of the Home Groups. Having to explain what they have learned reinforces students' understanding and often enables them to test for themselves whether they really know what they are presenting. In addition, the feedback they receive enables them to determine how successful their work has been.

Reflection

Reflection plays an invaluable part in learning. By looking back at what they have learned and the process they have gone through, students can gain a deeper understanding of both the content and the learning process itself. This should help them

with their future learning and increase their sense of involvement in the learning process.

2. Quality of Teaching

The quality of teaching, therefore, can be conceptualised as consisting of six components: i) student characteristics, ii) teacher characteristics, iii) teacher's course decisions, iv) teacher's classroom behavior, v) the amount of significant learning, and vi) the influence of contextual factors. In order to effectively evaluate any particular instance of teaching, one must engage in the task of collecting and analyzing information about each one of these components. No single source of information, however, is adequate for assessing all six components of teaching. This means that multiple sources of information are not only advisable but are in fact necessary. Therefore different information sources need to be assessed to determine their relative value for answering questions about each of the six components. A number of different sources of information are available for this particular task, and these are: course materials, students (present students, seniors, and alumni), the teacher's own comments, peers (i.e., other faculty members), administrators, and observations of an instructional consultant.

One further distinction has to be made concerning the three types of evaluation situations common in academic settings: annual personnel decisions, periodic personnel decisions (e.g., tenure, promotion, teaching award), and diagnostic self-improvement. These three situations have some degree of similarity, but the differences are sufficient to warrant separate consideration for purposes of evaluation. The primary difference among the three situations lies in the nature of the basic question being asked.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

The Quality of Teaching and Learning (QTL) research and development team is one of five teams focusing on developing services, products, and other resources to assist schools in becoming high performing learning communities. This research and development effort is a five-year endeavour (2000-2005) involving 15 partnersite schools. Current challenges identified by North-west educators, particularly those in high poverty, low performing schools:

- Aligning professional development, curriculum, instruction, and assessments with a standards-based educational programme.
- Engaging all students in supportive and challenging learning environments.
- Responding to the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse student population.
- Ensuring support for instructional programmes that include job-embedded professional development focused on student learning.
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Learning Resources

A number of facilities are regarded as key to the support of student learning. These include; studios and specialist equipped workshops, and seminar rooms, Computer and Information Technology suites. The library currently

responsibility for operation of studios and workshops lies mostly with individual schools, but consideration is being given to the some form of centralised provision, where appropriate, in order to maximise access to facilities. Computer suites are mostly administered by the central department of computing services, but there remain other computing facilities run by individual schools. This is in keeping with college recognition for the need for a generic central provision coupled with more specialist facilities, employing specific hardware and software, which are not appropriate as a central service.

The college has three main lecture, theatres and numerous seminar rooms. A recent development has been the installation of networked computer and audio-visual facilities in all lecture, theatres, enabling substantial use of IT-based learning. This is part of an ongoing programme designed to draw on the possibilities of C&IT for learning and teaching. The college library service provides information services and study facilities supporting learning and teaching in the college. Library resources support studio and workshop based courses; lecture and seminar based courses; and research and information finding activities embedded in taught courses. The library's physical collections include printed material (books, journals, etc) and audio-visual resources (such as slides, videos and maps). The collections are intended both to support formal course reading requirements, within available resources, and to develop and maintain a rounded, in-depth collection in the subject areas covered by college courses. As a complement to these physical collections, the library provides access to electronic information such as bibliographic indexes and full text reference sources. These, together with the library's Voyager library catalogue, are organised and made available through the library web page. The library will monitor the developing relationship between physical and digital collections, and the availability and potential of networked electronic learning resources. The library service recognises the importance of library use and information finding as transferable skills, and aims to offer library use seminars and presentations in support of all taught courses. The library service currently exists as two physically separate units. The college estates strategy envisages their consolidation as a single Library and Information Resource Centre, thereby realising the educational gains of a unified collection and an improved study environment. The wider resources of Edinburgh as a major European cultural capital are also available to college students. Institutions such as the National Galleries of Scotland, National Museums of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland and other major research libraries, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and Royal Botanic Garden can all be seen as providing resources for learning in the college, and students are encouraged to take advantage of the possibilities these provide.

Learning Support

Learning Support is also central to supporting student learning. As the college meets its strategic goal of internationalising the student body, so specific issues are raised, including language support. Currently language is provided on a tutorial appointment basis, but as the student demand on the service grows, the basis of the provision may have to change, including formalised English language options

as credit-rated units of study and more emphasis on group teaching. No firm proposals have been made yet, but the particular needs of international students are recognised as requiring specific action in the medium term. In addition to the challenge presented by international students, art & design has a disproportionate number of dyslexic students in comparison with other academic fields of study. The college has dedicated learning support tutors for dyslexic students, and again current methodology is similar to the provision for international students. As the numbers of dyslexic students increase, and in particular, as larger number of students are diagnosed, so similar kinds of pressures will be placed on the service, leading to parallel shifts in the nature of the provision.

Conclusion

Teaching is generally future created and minimises student participation, leaving little opportunity for effective learning, as students turned to learn by memorising terms and concepts to pass final exams. Learning is an individual exercise and sharing thoughts in groups may be unfamiliar to them. Teachers who stop to give students five minutes to clarify what has been said have little trouble convincing them that talk is valuable, clearly more time is required to evaluate course materials and information from teachers than to rank order student evaluation scores. A recent development has been the installation of networked computer and audio visual facilities in all lectures, theaters, enabling substantial use of IT-based learning. This is part of an ongoing programme designed to draw on the possibilities of C and IT for learning and teaching. The library will monitor the development relationship between physical and digital collections and the availability and potential of networked electronic learning process.

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