

Title of paper: Introducing learning strategies to increase student engagement on a BA Event Management final year course

Rationale for workshop and how it relates to the conference theme:

The growing importance of student engagement has been highlighted in two recent publications by the HEA: Keenan's (2014) Mapping peer-lead academic learning UK survey and Buckley's (2014) UK Engagement Survey. A number of researchers such as Bonwell and Eison (1991) have found that active learning strategies (students acting in the role of instructors) can engage students because they are thinking about what they are doing and not just recording information. Increasing student ownership and control in other areas such as assessment (Irwin and Heppelstone, 2012) can also increase their engagement with learning.

A number of studies examine active learning on science and medical courses (e.g. Bernot and Metzler, 2014; Collins and Calhoun, 2014) however there are few papers which explore these strategies on a business degree programme and even fewer which cover Event Management courses. Event Management is a relatively new field of academic study with the first degree programme offered in 1996. Over the past 18 years, it has grown in popularity with 109 institutions now offering events-related subjects and 84 undergraduate programmes currently being offered in the UK (UCAS, 2014). We decided to introduce active learning strategies to improve student engagement on a final year undergraduate course: Contemporary Issues in Events Management on the BA Event Management programme.

The course has been running since 2005 however it has suffered from poor attendance and lack of preparation by students who do attend which Chad (2012) has noted as a growing problem. This has led to students becoming over-reliant on tutors' knowledge in contrary to the course's objective to facilitate the development of Events Management students into autonomous and life-long learners. The course learning outcomes require students to critically examine current issues affecting the events industry, evaluate different perspectives and reflect on solutions however this was not being supported through the course design.

A number of strategies were introduced in September 2014 to encourage student engagement. These included student-led lectures and tutorials to be created and delivered in groups. The benefits of group work as an effective learning strategy are well documented e.g. Burdett (2003) and Chad (2012). In addition, students were given some control over the course content and choice of assessment. Our paper will present this case study for discussion.

Objectives/Outcomes:

Our main objective in introducing these learning strategies was to increase student engagement on the course. We will be conducting qualitative and quantitative evaluation at the end of the course to find out if we met our objective. A preliminary questionnaire survey emailed to 90 students on this course has shown that of the 25 students who responded, 17 are unhappy with students in the role of instructors, believing it to be 'a waste of time' to be taught by other students. Our workshop will explore the benefits of different learning strategies from a student perspective and reflect on how we can better communicate these benefits to students.

Outline plan for the session plus timings (not included in word count):

15 minute workshop:

5 minutes – presentation of the case study: the Contemporary Issues in Events Management course on the BA Event Management degree programme at the University of Greenwich;

5 minutes – evaluation undertaken of the learning strategies introduced on this course;

5 minutes – discussion of the challenges resulting from the learning strategies (to be discussed further in the question and answer session).

List of key references/resources (not included in word count):

Bernot, M.A. and Metzler, J.M. (2014) 'A Comparative Study of Instructor and Student-Led Learning in a Large Non Majors Biology Course: Student Performance and Perceptions', *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 44:1, 48-55.

Bonwell, C.C. and Eison, J. A. (1991) *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom*. (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1). Washington, DC:George Washington University.

Buckley, A. (2014) *UK Engagement Survey 2014*, The Higher Education Academy.

Burdett, J. (2003) 'Making Groups Work: University Students' Perceptions', *International Education Journal*, 4:3, 177-191.

Chad, P. (2012) 'The Use of Team-Based Learning as an approach to Increased Engagement and Learning for Marketing Students: A Case Study', *Journal of Marketing Education*, 34:2, 128-139.

Collins, E.S. and Calhoun, T.R. (2014) 'Raising the Bar in Freshman Science Education: Student Lectures, Scientific Papers, and Independent Experiments', *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 43:4, 26-35.

Irwin, B. and Heppelstone, S. (2012) 'Examining increased flexibility in assessment formats' *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 37:7, 773-785.

Keenan, C. (2014) *Mapping peer-lead academic learning UK survey*, The Higher Education Academy.

UCAS (2014) UCAS Search Tool

<http://search.ucas.com/search/providers?CountryCode=&RegionCode=&Lat=&Lng=&Feather=&Vac=1&AvailableIn=2015&Query=events&ProviderQuery=&Acpld=&Location=&SubjectCode=> (accessed on 30 December, 2014).