Curriculum
Redefined

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

How Might We:

Embed Academic Literacies into the Curriculum

Contents

Overview

All new students embarking on a programme will have a different understanding of the explicit and implicit expectations of their department on the institutional processes, components of the curriculum and academic conventions required of them by their discipline.

This 'hidden curriculum' is constructed subconsciously by students (Samball and McDowell, 1998) and therefore can be difficult for educators to understand and support (Hubbard, et al., 2020), especially with regards to how students develop good academic practice through the course of their studies.

As the hidden curriculum is perceived at an individual level, we need to make the language of Higher Education accessible and the expectations of academic study clear. By adopting an academic literacies approach (Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis et al., 2015) to students' skills acquisition and development, we can offer them a more nuanced, discipline-specific understanding of the contextual and cultural shared practice of academic communication in their discipline. This approach promotes the active and collaborative engagement of staff and students in a community of practice, working together to recognise, understand, articulate, and apply ways of thinking, knowing and communicating within and across academic contexts and disciplines.

Academic skills development should be embedded throughout the curriculum, designed, taught and supported by subject specialists in partnership with professional colleagues. Assessment motivates students to learn; aligning academic literacies teaching to assessment practice is the most effective way to support and engage students and to enhance their performance. Skills acquisition should be scaffolded and not left to a single 'skills module' that is detached from any discipline-specific content. The academic skills required for success should be a regular feature of discussion in the classroom and tested through formative and summative work. Nurturing reflection as an approach to learning helps students to identify the gaps in their learning, to see the purpose and to link content and assessment, and develops them as confident, independent learners. It enables them to become partners in their own learning.

Student voice

By working together, in a 'communities of practice approach', students will develop self-efficacy in their own academic practice and support those that are at differing levels from themselves. Well-developed academic literacies enable students to engage critically with ideas and research, and to reflect on their own ethics, values and responsibilities, whilst recognising different perspectives, experiences and influences.

Supporting students to understand how they should be working, and why it is relevant to their discipline though engagement with their tutors and peers, will increase their motivation to engage in activities that increase their academic performance. Success in completing tasks well can lead to increased self-efficacy and, by working in a community of practice, students with high self-efficacy can influence others' behaviour (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 2003).

How might we...

Practitioner-based tips

- Ensure that academic literacies development is a core element of both your module and programme and is woven throughout all aspects of teaching and student work.

- Provide multiple opportunities throughout your module for students to practice and develop their academic skills, including: writing in various forms; engaging critically with a text or theory; communicating their understanding in different and diverse modes; and working together in groups to help them learn from, and support, each other's development.

- Encourage, or require, students to reflect on their skills development regularly, helping them understand the benefit of engaging with, and acting upon tutor or peer feedback to help improve their practice.

- Discuss and teach towards the skills required for each assessment and allow time for students to practice either through class-based work, peer-assessed formative work or formative assessments.

- Ensure, where skills modules exist, that academic literacies are not taught in isolation from, or out of context with, the rest of the curriculum. Weave skills development throughout every module to scaffold development from the start to the end of the taught programme.

More information

For support with embedding academic literacies development into your curriculum, the **Learning Development Team Learning Advisor** for your School or Faculty,

The **Language Centre** or **OD&PL** can all provide resources to help you with this.

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University of Leeds Libraries Academic Skills website

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