

GROUPWORK AND PEER ASSESSMENT IN A LEVEL 9 MODULE

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PROFILE

Kathleen Murray is a tutor on the BA Childhood Practice and BA Child and Youth Studies, as well as teaching several FE courses. She has been nominated several times in the student-led teaching awards including for 'Most inspiring lecturer' and 'Most engaging online tutor' in 2016 awards.

CONTEXT

The BA in Childhood Practice is a fully online degree programme taught entirely using the Blackboard VLE. Most students on the course are practitioners and managers working in childcare across Scotland who are studying part time.

WHERE HAVE YOU USED THESE METHODS?

In a module called Contemporary Issues in Childhood Practice. This is a level 9 module within the programme which explores current childcare theory, practice and policy. The module is many students' first academic experience for some time as a large proportion of students articulate directly into the final year of the degree (using prior experience and learning). Being both the first module that many students have studied for a while plus being entirely online means that some students can struggle so we employ a number of techniques to ease the transition back in to study.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

We use the discussion boards extensively as a space for informal and more academic discussion; these function as a kind of seminar space. We had already improved the module by using the discussion board to help students develop academic writing skills (see other Good Practice Case Study for details) and wanted to take this further by getting students to work together in pairs or small groups. Assessment on the module is via a written report and a plan for this report (80%/20% of the final grades respectively) and these occur quite late on in the module, so we decided to introduce the small group work as a piece of formative assessment earlier on. Students are put into pairs or groups of three, and work together to create a discussion board post. The other students on the module then critique the post. We encourage them to be critical, but also respectful and supportive in their comments.

HAS IT BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

It's hard to measure the success of this activity in isolation, because we are making lots of improvements across this, and all other modules. Certainly, I feel that it has helped the group to gel more from an early stage and this is vital in an online course. I think that this is particularly helpful for students at smaller academic partners, where they may be the only person there studying this course. I also think that it's important that students get some feedback on their performance early on in the module; feedback on the summative assessments comes too late, and I think that students really value the opinions of their peers.



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If you wish to submit your own case study, or have any questions about this resource please contact:

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