

Peer reviewing versus a discussion forum for promoting online learner success: an evaluation of innovative learning design

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Engagement, success and Retention in Distance Education

Retention requires online interaction (Macdonald, 2001)

What are methods of encouraging online interaction between students and how successful are these?

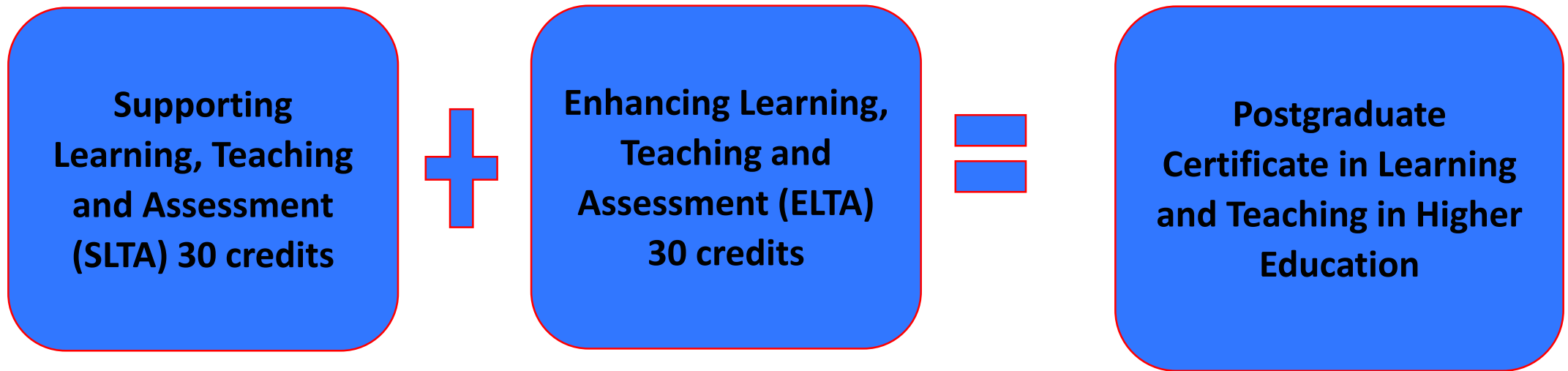
Outline

PGCert. Programme and module
Supporting Learning, Teaching and
Assessment

Design for retention and success-ipsative
assessment, peer review and reflective
practice

A comparison of peer review and
discussion forum engagement using
analytics

Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education



Target groups:

Tutors working in Distance learning programmes worldwide run by University of London.

The module included:

Online tracking and online self-reflective tools

Discussion forum linked to online weekly activities.

Introduced peer review (Nicol et al., 2013) to support self regulation and reflection on practice.

An ipsative assessment criterion (Hughes, 2017, 2014) to help engagement throughout and retention.

Ipsative assessment criterion 4

Evidence of *development* of own ideas, values and approaches in relation to critical analysis of effectiveness in teaching and learning including within their own discipline

(NB Ipsative assessment looks for *progress* throughout the module and requires comparing early ideas with later ones. Students starting from a low base can succeed.)

Research aim/questions

To explore how the online tools enable completion of the module and progression

Tools include:

Reflective journal and development notebook

Self and system tracking of task completion

Peer review workshops

Weekly topic discussion forum

Wiki presentations

Data collected from 2 cohorts (52 students)

1. Overall learning engagement in forum posting
2. Frequency of taking part in submitting for peer review, giving feedback and receiving feedback
3. Quality of peer review feedback given and received
4. Interim assignment 1 mark
5. Final reflective narrative assignment 2 mark
6. Feedback on development of ideas in response to marking criterion 4

Divided students into high achievers (both marks distinctions and or merits), moderate achievers (passes/one merit) and non-completers (fail)

Engagement in discussion forum

Only included posts about academic content and **not** social messages or requests for help.

Very good = 30+ messages (i.e. taking full part in most weekly activities)

Good = 10-30 messages (about 20 was typical taking part in some weekly activities)

Poor = 1-9 messages (posting 1 or 2 messages was typical)

No posting = 0 messages

Peer review

There were 4 peer review opportunities to give and receive feedback to randomly selected partners

With the final peer review being close to the final deadline there was reduced engagement, and so 3+ was 'strong'

Strong Engagement = 3+ peer reviews

Moderate Engagement = 2 peer reviews

Weak Engagement = 1 peer review

No Engagement = 0 interaction

Breakdown of high achievers' engagement in discussion forum and peer review n= 15

Educational discussion forum posting number of students			
Very good	good	poor	No posting
3	3	9	0
Engagement with peer review number of students			
Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
9	5	1*	0

Table 2: Breakdown of moderate achievers' engagement in discussion forum and peer review n=18

Educational discussion forum posting: number of students			
Very good	good	poor	No posting
3	5	10	0
Engagement with peer review: number of students			
Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
14	3	1**	0

Table 3 Breakdown of low achievers' engagement in discussion forum and peer review n=19

Educational discussion forum posting: number of students			
Very good	good	poor	No posting
0	0	10	9
Engagement with peer review: number of students			
Strong	Moderate	Weak	None
0	5 (early on)	5 (early on)	9

Why is peer review linked to success

"I felt the Peer Review Workshop helped me the most. I felt by looking at the review that others gave me and comparing it to mine, I learnt more than I learnt in any other activity"

(student 19a).

Peer review is managed by the system giving it formality as a formative assessment

Peer review is part of student learning journey which is assessed in criterion 4

Why is peer review linked to success?

- 'Safe space' to share a growing understanding of ideas
- Peer reviews were 600-800 words but feedback amount not prescribed
- Reviews were an opportunity to reflect on own understanding of the course material:
- 'reflective knowledge building' (Roscoe and Chi, 2008)
- 'distributed cognition' or 'dispersed knowledge' (Tu et al, 2012)
- co-construction of knowledge

Questions or comments

References

Hughes. G. (Ed.) (2017) *Ipsative Assessment and Personal Learning Gain: Exploring international case studies* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Macdonald, J. (2001) Exploiting Online Interactivity to Enhance Assignment Development. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 16 (2), pp.179-189.

Nicol, D., Thomson, A. & Breslin, C. (2013) Rethinking feedback in higher education: a peer review perspective, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39:1, 102-122