

USING A TEMPLATE TO HELP STUDENTS STRUCTURE A REPORT

Kathleen Murray, Inverness College UHI

KEYWORDS

Discussion board, academic writing skills, writing for assessment

SUMMARY

Discussion boards are used in a module in the BA Childhood Practice for students to practice writing in a formal academic voice.

Students were asked to complete a few of the weekly discussion board tasks in a formal academic style. These posts were 'marked' by staff who would be commenting on e.g. language, critical analysis and referencing

Students enjoyed the experience and pass rate have improved

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.

Contemporary Issues in Childhood Practice 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). There are two assessments on the module: A plan for a research report (20%); research report (80%)

WHAT, WHERE?

In 2014/15, students were given a template to help them structure their first assessment (plan for their research report). The template listed each of the module's learning outcomes and asked students to indicate how each of these would be addressed in the research report.

WHY?

In previous years, students often failed to address all of the learning outcomes in both their plan and their final report. Although the guidance for the assessment clearly states that all learning outcomes must be addressed (and failure to do this was highlighted in feedback on the first assessment) many students still missed out some learning outcomes. It was felt that students did not perform well in the final assessment as a result.

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DID IT WORK?

Pass rates were improved for 2014/15 as all students who submitted both parts of the assessment passed the module. However, this change was implemented at the same time as a change to the way the discussion boards were run (see case study: Using Discussion Boards to Improve Academic Writing) so it is not possible to attribute the improvements solely to the use of the template.

WAS IT WORTH IT?

There was no extra work involved in making this change as the template was already used to mark students' plans; the change merely shared the template with students. Using the template also made marking much quicker, as it was easy to identify how and where students' plans had (or had not) addressed the learning outcomes. This improved the turnaround in marking time which allowed students to begin work on their final assessment promptly.

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

Dr Heather Fotheringham

Quality Enhancement Impact Officer

heather.fotheringham@uhi.ac.uk, 01463 279237

The Template: Report Plan

You are asked to select a current issue relating to your own workplace and write a plan for how you will analyse and discuss the issue, explore the implications of the issue and suggest how a manager/leader might implement a change based on the chosen focus. This plan will be the basis for assessment 2 where you will explore, analyse and discuss the issue in detail and discuss the process and proposal to implement change. This is not a detailed plan (approx. 500 words) but you will need an indication in each section of how you will meet the learning outcomes

Your report will...	This relates to
Briefly identify the issue to be addressed in your setting and the rationale behind the need for change	Weeks 1-2 Outcome 1
Introduce the key policy or initiative which is relevant to your setting and is in use in Scotland today (and supports the idea of children as active thinkers and learners). <i>You will use this to discuss and analyse the issue.</i>	Weeks 1-2 Outcome 1
Identify the current research in learning theory you plan to investigate and suggest why this is relevant.	Week 3 Outcome 1
Identify the theoretical perspectives and current research (<i>you should include at least 2</i>) on play and active learning in the early years and childhood that you plan to investigate, and link this to the principles and practice of Play and Active learning of the relevant framework	Weeks 4-6 Outcome 2
Identify the research (European/International) perspectives which you will evaluate and reflect on to inform your proposal for change.	Weeks 7-10 Outcome 3
Indicate here models of reflection / evidence based practice you will use to evaluate the context of your own practice	Weeks 11-12 Outcome 4
Indicate here the some considerations (barriers/implications) of process and proposal for change	Weeks 1-12 Outcome 4
Suggested reading list: <i>This will not be included in the word count</i>	
References: <i>This will not be included in the word count</i>	