

ACTIVITY-BASED LEARNING IN HN ACCOUNTING

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PROFILE

Sarah Sutherland is the programme leader for the HNC and HND Accounting and is based at Inverness College UHI. In NSS 2015, the programme scored 100% for student satisfaction

CONTEXT

The HN accounting programmes are run face to face at various academic partners. At Inverness College UHI students spend on average 16 hours in class per week over three days. All staff involved in delivering on the course are also Personal Academic Tutors (PATs).

WHAT IS ACTIVITY-BASED TEACHING?

In the accounting programmes a lot of the content is quite theory-heavy. Instead of teaching this by lecturing the students about the theory, and then sending them away to work through some examples I like to mix these two elements within the classroom setting. The class as a whole goes through an example or activity, and I introduce the theory as we go. Then students split into smaller groups to work through exercises or activities themselves. I try and find activities that the students will find fun and engaging to keep their interest; the internet is a great resource for this kind of thing.

WHERE DO YOU USE THIS TECHNIQUE?

I have tried this in a number of modules, but it has worked really well in the Economics unit as I came across an online 'fiscal policy simulator' which the students really enjoyed using. The simulator lets students plug in the different conditions of their fiscal policy and then runs a simulation to show the outcomes of introducing such a policy. I found that students were really engaged with this activity, and found they were drawing on content learned from other units to complete the activity too. Since introducing this activity, I have noticed that I get a better quality of answer on this topic in the assessment.

I have also used activity-based learning the Graded Unit: I found that the grades were poorer for the more theory-based topics so I decided to try and engage the

students a bit more with these. I used a 'racing car quiz' programme that we have on the SMART boards and set up some questions relating to these topics. Small groups of students take turns to compete against each other in a quiz with correct answers causing the cars to advance round the track. It was surprising how engaged (and how competitive!) the students were during this activity. It also led to an improvement in grades for the theoretical topics in the assessment.

HOW DIFFICULT WAS IT TO MAKE THESE CHANGES?

I found out about activity-based-learning when I was studying for my TQFE, so I was really motivated to try it out myself. Finding the fiscal policy simulator online was great, and all I had to do was spend a couple of hours familiarising myself with the programme before introducing it in the classroom. The SMART board activity took a bit longer as I had to set up the quiz questions myself; probably about 1 day in total. I will be using both of these activities again this coming



academic year, and will spend a little bit of time over the summer refreshing things. There is a new version of the fiscal policy simulator which I will have to get used to. I really enjoy pushing myself to do something a bit different each year, and am constantly trying to improve my teaching.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO COLLEAGUES?

I found the TQFE a real source of inspiration and motivation to change my practices; I would recommend that colleagues use the TQFE to explore something of interest to them, and then to bring it back to the classroom. I also think that a few hours spent making improvements is worth it: I think that I will definitely get a return on my investment in terms of happier more successful students.

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

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