Enhancing student outcomes through a revised assessment strategy "Can formative academic writing and referencing essay's improve student summative outcomes?"

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Introduction

The aim of this research poster is to provide a means of improving the current assessment strategy for the 2022/23 Criminal Justice System module, that supports student CPD throughout the academic year. Enabling students unique needs to be identified and appropriate support be provided through transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) and signposting to other networks. Also, developing and testing a forum that supports individual, group and peer to peer feedback opportunities as they scaffold their way throughout the academic year.

Rationale for research

From personal experience, in my first year of teaching, from self-reflecting on my performance and students' outcomes, the apprenticeship has provided me with valuable knowledge and access to theories that promote student engagement, raise academic standards (written, research, delivery), build student confidence going into year 2, improve well-being and support the recruitment and retention of students

What is the purpose of the research project?

- 1. Improve interpretation, knowledge and understanding of referencing rules and academic essay writing conventions
- 2. Build student confidence and well-being.
- 3. Identify students in need of additional support to achieve the research aim
- 4. Build a more inclusive and safer environment to enable success for all students.
- 5. To raise year 1 Criminal Justice System summative assessment performance outcomes

Supporting Success for All at Nottingham Trent University Collaborative, Cross-Institutional Investment in Creating Inclusive Curricula

Main Body Short Literature Review

In the design of our assessment strategies, we need to be cognizant of the purposes and principles of the assessment, i.e. the outcomes balanced against the process of actually learning. Boud 2000, highlights the traditional focus being on the measurement, whereas Harlen (2006) described the purpose of the assessment as the methods in which to "help learning and to summarise what has been learned".

Bloxham et al (2007), describes the 4 purposes of assessment: Certification, student learning, quality assurance and lifelong learning capacity. These will steer the development of the assessment strategy to provide not only new skills for this module (CJS), but also positively impact on their wider life skills (Elton and Johnston 2002) in addition to contributing to success across other modules.

Actionable feedback will be used to produce "greater learning, less defensiveness and more appropriate action", (Cannon et al, 2005).

Inclusive curriculum design, planning to make the lectures more inclusive and treating the students as partners to develop the formative assessments and the methods of sharing feedback to aid the student learning process (Bovill, 2020). Through inclusive design wherever possible, and through individual reasonable adjustments wherever required, assessment tasks provide every student with an equality of opportunity to demonstrate their achievement

The assessments will be designed to encourage a deeper approach to learning (Gibbs, 1999). To also encourage and support the student to provide their very best version, taking the "the least dangerous" assumption" (Donnellan, 1984). This will enable and support the development of their research, referencing and, academic writing skills through a scaffolding approach to formative assessments which, when combined, aims to provide each student with the skill, capacity and knowledge to achieve new heights.

- Actionable feedback
- Inclusive curriculum
- Widening participation
- Blended approach to learning
- Responding to students needs (SFA)



Methods & Considerations

This is an experiment to understand whether such formative assessment can improve student outcomes.

Initially creating a 300-word formative assessment to establish a base line of the students current understanding of research, essay writing and referencing skill, "What influenced the creation of the Crown Prosecution Service?". This will be followed by a series of lectures aimed at providing them with the knowledge and guides to enable them to assess their initial assessment themselves. Students will be encouraged to submit formative essays based on the elements under review, it has three purposes

- a. Measure the student current understanding of the topic
- b. Encourage students to conduct research
- c. Influence early academic writing

The essays following from this will be supported by feedback, which will be a mixture of lecturer, group and peer-topeer led feedback. Exemplars will be provided within the learning room to aid to provide each student with the tools to succeed.

How? Quantitative mix with qualitative (triangulating the methodology)

- 1. Using Criminal Justice System module to test the activity
- 2. Preparing the students for their final summative assessment (3000 essay response to a question relating to the elements taught within the module).
- 3. There will be three formative written assessments, in addition to other formative knowledge checks, Kahoot's and group presentations, spread out across the 24 weeks.
- 4. Although each student will have the opportunity to engage in the formative assessments, I am conscious that some students may require more tailored support than others to enable them to develop their academic skills. I may then spend a disproportionate amount of time with some than others. This could lead to issues of favouritism and bias amongst other students.

Data Analysis

There are three years of qualitative data available for comparison, from 2020-2023. The data is comparable as the structure of the module has remained consistent. I will be reviewing previous anonymised outcomes against the new sources of data. My aim is to improve overall scores, reduce the number of retakes and academic irregularities.

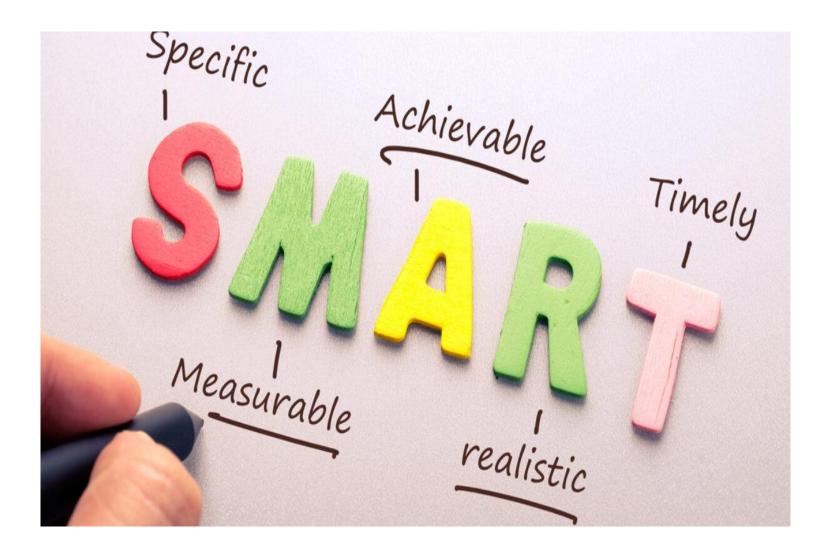
However, overall, it is the quality that matters, data will only provide a quantitative measure

Expected Impact

It is a significant commitment by both the student and the lecturer, I therefore anticipate that those that engage will be able to successfully showcase their academic prowess in their final assessment and provide an overall improvement when compared to previous cohorts.

Limitations:

- a. Although mandatory for all students, these assessments are not graded and will not form part of their final mark, therefore engagement could not be guaranteed by all.
- b. This does provide a significant additional workload for the lecturer/assessor both for marking and providing actionable feedback



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Conclusions

This research project intends to improve student outcomes through progressive formative assessments combined with actionable feedback. The process has already commenced with the first formative request (300-word essay) to establish a baseline on which to develop and identify those that require additional support to encourage personal academic development.

These will continue throughout the academic year to influence academic skills and provide equality of opportunity for all students to showcase their learning in their summative essay in March 2023. This research is ongoing and will be continued over future cohorts across different modules to identify areas of consistency and improvement.

Ultimately, it is intended to provide students with the confidence to approach academic research and writing in a way that enables them to maximise their full potential in an environment that is safe to learn and develop.



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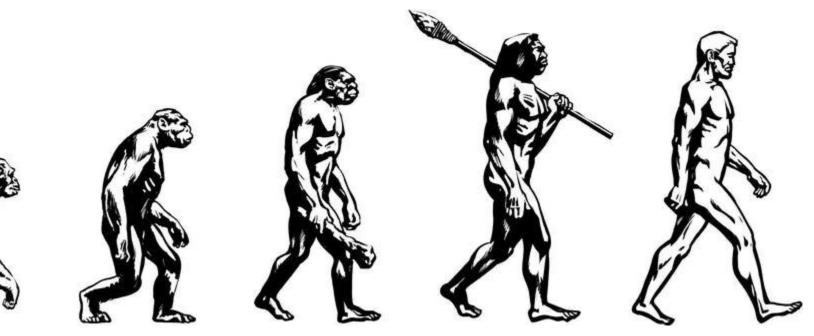
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