

Inquiry-based Learning Development Cases

Hispanic Studies Group Presentation Project



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2. *What happened*
3. *What worked*
4. *What I/we learned and how it will be taken forward*
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1. Where I/we started from and wanted to achieve

Student presentations are a common approach in the Department of Hispanic Studies. However, there was a certain amount of confusion among students as to what exactly was expected of them. This project therefore intended to induct students into what is expected of them when completing an assessed presentation in Hispanic Studies. This was intended to reduce anxiety, provide a level of preparation and self-access materials that could not adequately be covered in class time, and increase engagement and performance

2. What happened

Although it is intended that the set of resources will be used across modules to define the various skills involved in delivering a good presentation, the approach was trialled initially with second-year undergraduate students on the module 'HSS 245: Cuban Culture and the Revolution'.

It was intended that the following skills/ capabilities would be developed:

- working as part of team to plan the presentation
- devising an appropriate handout
- delivery of the presentation
- use of visual aids
- how to take questions from peers.

Students were employed to record mock presentations in order to illustrate good and bad practice. For each module, a 'good' and 'bad' version of a presentation were created. These were made available to current students electronically via the institutional virtual learning environment. After introducing students to the resource in one of the first sessions of the module, the intention was that the students would draw upon the examples to avoid making the same errors and build the good practice demonstrated into their own presentations. In addition, criteria for the assessment of the various skills involved in the presentation were posted on WebCT, also having been mapped onto degree bands. The criteria will enable students to participate in self-assessment of the recorded presentations, and the marking criteria and assessment scheme will be developed to aid students in becoming effective evaluators of their peers and of their own performance.

3. What worked

After the first iteration, and for the first time, every student presentation included PowerPoint, so students are becoming more sophisticated regarding their technical skills, the use of appropriate sources and the incorporation of supporting materials in creating presentations. In addition, the quality of presentations improved significantly, with more sophisticated and imaginative use being made of resources. The presentations were not radically different in terms of the basic information sources being used, but search parameters seem to have widened. Web-based resources were used for pictures, but book-based bibliographies were used as primary sources for their research.

Many students have indicated that they've used the resources (and have found them useful!), while some members of staff have indicated an interest in using this resource for their own students.

4. What I/we learned and how it will be taken forward

One of the main challenges was technical. The video was shot on cameras that did not provide an output in the required video format, so a lot of time was spent converting the videos to a usable format.

Many transferable skills have been included in the institutional Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy and as characteristics of the Sheffield Graduate. As a result of that, and of our experience with this project, matters relating to presentation skills have been incorporated into the Departmental Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy. This allowed me to connect classroom practice to departmental priorities and school-wide assessment criteria in a very positive way.

One of the aims was to encourage other members of staff to do similar things and so the resources were made available more widely in the department via a 'Hispanic Resources' page on MOLE. Encouragingly, since the project, several other academics have tapped into the resource. There is also scope for extending the resources beyond Hispanic Studies, into the School of Modern Languages and the University more broadly.

5. Any other comments

With contact time under considerable pressure, being able to place the learning support materials on the institutional VLE has been a great help in making them available at any time to students, and having them as a resource on which we can draw at any time in increasingly technology-rich teaching spaces. The support from CILASS made it possible to devote time to developing support materials and ensuring the participation of students as models of good and bad practice. I see the development of a high level of critical evaluation of materials, argumentation, presentation skills and teamwork as a key element of our students' experiences, and this project enables them to refine all of them in a single exercise.