

A delicate balance: group activity

Collection: Course design

Resource: Designing an English degree programme

Approximate duration

One hour to 90 minutes

Learning outcomes

This activity is designed to help participants focus on the particulars of designing an English degree programme. After completing the activities participants should have

1. acquired insight into the benefits of interrelating or segregating Literature, Language and Creative Writing in the curriculum;
2. acquired the confidence to propose and argue to colleagues for new module configurations within the degree;
3. acquired a critical understanding of curriculum and its constituent parts.

Introduction

Some degrees include only English Literature modules, only English Language modules, or only Creative Writing modules. Most degrees in 'English', though, will combine elements of both language and literature, and an increasing number also build in Creative Writing. Commonly, a variety of degree combinations can be taken, placing more or less stress on each of the three main elements. This activity will help you think about the best ways for your programme to interrelate these key subject components.

The activity

1. This activity requires either (a) online access for each participant, or (b) handouts printed out from three websites describing English programmes striking a balance

between Literature, Language and Creative Writing. You might want to use the following websites:

- [Birmingham City University](#)
- [University of Newcastle](#)
- [University of Surrey](#)

The Surrey website can be supplemented by the video below, in which Marion Wynne-Davies talks about the balance their degree programme strikes between Language, Literature and Creative Writing. (We are very grateful to our colleagues for allowing us into their classrooms, lecture halls and offices to observe and discuss their teaching. As you work with these examples of teaching and course design please keep your commentary focused upon the activity and refrain from criticisms that would be unhelpful or unkind in a face-to-face encounter.)

You may also like to look at this video, in which Marion describes the overall structure of the Surrey degree:



You can also, of course, source your own programme descriptions from the web.

2. Divide the participants up into groups, each group consisting of three students.
3. The three members of each group must each look at a different one of the three programme descriptions.



4. When everyone has read their programme description, tell each group to discuss the different programmes in the following way: in turn, each group member argues for the the advantages of 'her/his' programme (whether or not s/he is really enthusiastic about it). After all these pitches, each group decides together which of the three programmes it prefers, and why.
5. In a concluding plenary session, ask the groups to share their discussions with the larger group. Focus on different contexts in which the different types of programme might be useful/attractive.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

- **Core Knowledge 2:** Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- **Professional Values 3:** Commitment to the development of learning communities
- **Professional Values 4:** Commitment to encouraging participation in higher education, acknowledging diversity and promoting equality of opportunity

More information about the Professional Standards Framework can be obtained from the summary factsheet in the *Subject & Pedagogy* collection in HumBox.

<http://humbox.ac.uk/2731/>

Resources in the Course design Collection

- Course design: introduction to the collection
- Designing an English degree programme: resource overview
 - Designing in employability: individual activity
 - Designing in employability: group activity
 - Managing transition from A Level: individual activity
 - **A delicate balance: group activity (*you are here)**
 - A delicate balance: individual activity
- Designing an innovative English Literature module: resource overview
 - Location, location, location: individual activity
 - Location, location, location: group activity



3 | This resource is part of a set of professional development resources for Higher Education English (including English Literature, English Language & Creative Writing) called 'The Pool'. The resources were developed by the English Subject Centre in 2011 as part of a JISC/HEA Open Educational Resources (OER) Project.

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- Questions, questions
- Integrating research into a module: individual activity
- Integrating research into a module: group activity
- Filling the gaps: resource overview
 - Filling the gaps between sessions: individual activity
 - Filling the gaps between sessions: group activity
- Adapting a module: resource overview
 - Adapting a Literature module: individual activity
 - Adapting a Literature module: group activity
 - Pacing it out: individual activity
 - Curriculum framing
- Mapping and applying desirable student attributes: resource overview
 - Imaginary modules: individual activity
 - Imaginary modules: group activity
- Designing a creative-critical module: resource overview
 - Thinking about modules: individual activity
 - Thinking about modules: group activity

