

Thinking about modules: individual activity

Collection: Course design

Resource: Designing a creative-critical module

Approximate duration

Recording + one to two hours

Learning outcomes

Very often, despite best intentions, we find ourselves rushed into module design under the pressure of a validation deadline. In such circumstances, we tend to fall back on default thinking. One outcome of the kind of activity proposed here is to gain confidence in making more radical steps: to move from a vision of content to a vision of activity.

Introduction

The module discussed by Ben Knights and Chris Thurgar-Dawson in the audio clip, 'Writing for Reading' (subsequently 'Transformative Writing 1'), was a level two (i.e. second year) option in a BA English programme. The module asked students to produce, across the module, a portfolio of short pieces of creative writing responding to literary texts: rewrites of certain scenes from the point of view of a different character, parodies, switches in pronouns, and so on.

At the time it began, there was no creative writing element in the programme, so while the focus of the module was on literary practice and understanding it may – as is suggested in the discussion – have fulfilled for students some of the needs that would have been fulfilled through creative writing. Chris and Ben were seeking to create a structured space in which students could engage in developmental dialogues over which they felt they had some control, and in which they could become inward with the process of writing. Chris and Ben also felt that it would offer students the scope to make

connections, and to gain synoptic insight into their programme as a whole. (The connection with the concurrent core theory module comes up in the discussion.) The idea of a literary practice module was influenced by the tradition of working established by the Development of University English Teaching Project (DUET), the work of Rob Pope on 'textual intervention', and of Robert Scholes on 'crafty reading'. It subsequently became the subject of a 2001 National Teaching Fellowship project on 'Active Reading'. The project and its implications are discussed in Knights and Thurgar-Dawson (2006).

The activity

1. Listen to the recording (31 minutes) in which Ben Knights (English Subject Centre) and Chris Thurgar-Dawson (University of Teesside) discuss the design of their creative criticism course - The recording can be found in the folder where you found this resource in HumBox. As you listen, make your own notes on the key topics covered in the discussion. Some of the broad areas mentioned are:
 - Influences on the creation of a new module
 - Relationship to colleagues and the institution more generally
 - Relationship to the rest of the degree programme
 - Explaining to the students what is going on
 - Risk-taking
 - Choice of content, texts, topics
 - Choice of teaching methods: what will the students be asked to do?
 - Choice of assessment methods
 - Lessons learnt after the first running of the module
2. Choose an area or topic where you would –given the opportunity – like to develop a new module. Building on what you have already written, make yourself brief notes about how you might design this module in such a way as to take on board the issues raised by Chris and Ben.
3. Think in some more detail about the issues likely to arise were you to run such a module, and how you would deal with them. Write some initial thoughts. You may find the prompts below useful:



2 | 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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- How are students themselves to be involved? What is there for them to do?
- How do you find a balance between the demands of the material, the time available, and the stage (probably multiple stages) of learning which your students have reached?
- What is or will be the relationship between what happens in class (or in the VLE) and what you hope students will do when working on their own? Can the activities undertaken in class or VLE 'model' the activities which students can then carry on themselves?

Links & References

- Knights, Ben and Thurgar-Dawson, Chris. *Active Reading: Transformative Writing in Literary Studies*. London: Continuum. 2006.
- Pope, Rob. *Textual Intervention: Critical and Creative Strategies for Literary Studies*. London: Routledge. 1995.
- Scholes, Robert. *The Crafty Reader*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press. 2001.

Relationship to the Professional Standards Framework

How can the relationship between this resource and the Professional Standards Framework be evidenced? Like all the resources in the Pool, this resource bears on the key 'Area of Activity' - Designing and Planning Learning Activities and / or Programmes of Study. Further points:

- **Areas of Activity 5:** integration of scholarship, research, and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning.
- **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



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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
 - A delicate balance: individual activity
- Designing an innovative English Literature module: resource overview
 - Location, location, location: individual activity
 - Location, location, location: group activity
 - 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 (*you are here)**
 - Thinking about modules: group activity

