



ESCalate Developing Pedagogy and Practice 2009 Grant Project Interim Report

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Project Title Exploring the Rules of Engagement via Exemplars: enhancing staff and student dialogue about assessment and learning practice

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Project Start date 1 January 2010

Project End date 31 December 2010

Interim Report.

Exploring the Rules of Engagement via Exemplars: enhancing staff and student dialogue about assessment and learning practice.

Professor Kay Sambell, Project Director, May 2010.

Project plans: Milestone 1 (taken from original bid document)

1. Run expert seminar for lead project staff members from each course/partner site to meet, establish project and collaboratively develop the workshop for the Education staff activity phase. Includes development of resources and template for workshop process.

2. Deliver the Education staff workshop event where the ‘rules of engagement’ exemplars activity is introduced and tutors discuss how it can be adapted and applied in their contexts.

The workshop aims to promote dialogue between staff about the nature of assessment and learning in their particular area of Education.

3. Evaluation of staff views of the value of the exemplars as a method of engaging in purposeful, collaborative dialogue with other staff about classroom issues.

Milestone 2

By the interim milestone point, phase 1 (Staff workshop) will have been delivered, and evaluation/research data collected.

The next interim phase will focus on Project Leads supporting participating Education tutors to develop their own bespoke exemplar materials for use with their Education students in specific module contexts. Education staff will engage in peer review and evaluation of their exemplar materials.

Initial dissemination of research into staff perspectives conducted by Project Leads: e.g. present conference papers at HEA

Progress report

The first phase of this project is now complete. It has focused on developing and implementing a staff workshop which seeks to engage Education staff in collecting or creating exemplars of student work derived from and located within the local discourses of their own teaching practices/modules.

To achieve this, the project specifically built on previous research, including the work of the Project Leads, exploring the benefits of stimulating dialogue between staff and students about assessment (Black & Wiliam, 2004; Knight, 2002; Sambell & McDowell, 2005). According to Blythman & Orr (2002) enabling staff to have time and space to discuss their different ‘takes’ and expectations on what is acceptable or unacceptable forms a highly effective staff development process. The workshop was,

therefore, developed to enable experienced and relatively 'new' Education tutors to participate in collaborative, reflective dialogue about their tacit expectations and assumptions regarding Education students' written work.

Original ideas for the development of the workshop, a model for which is available via a Powerpoint presentation, were established during the initial project team meeting on 21st January 2010. This was hosted by Roehampton University and involved a two-day meeting between the Project Leads from each site (Northumbria University's Kay Sambell & Lynne McKenna and Roehampton University's Sue Robson & Elise Alexander). This enabled project staff members from each course/partner site to meet, establish the project, develop resources and collaboratively develop the template for the workshop's process (attached).

The next stage involved trying out the ideas with members of staff teams in the host universities. These were piloted via a series of events organised for members of Education staff teaching modules within a raft of well-established and 'new' or 'emergent' programmes, including, for example, BA Hons degrees in Early Years, Early Childhood and Childhood Studies, which attract large numbers of students looking for flexible pathways into teaching and education-related careers. It also importantly includes staff running a suite of 'new' undergraduate courses which have recently been designed to enable para-professionals already working in schools and settings to study at university in response to the Every Child Matters agenda and the Children's Workforce reform. They include, for instance, undergraduate programmes for Teaching Assistants and the BA Hons Learning in Families, Schools and Beyond.

The workshop was also piloted, by invitation, as a pre-conference workshop at the European First Year Experience conference, Antwerp, Belgium.

Evaluative interviews with selected members of staff and participant observations were conducted by the project's Research Director, Catherine Montgomery to gain insight into participants' assumptions about student writing and their views of issues and challenges in using exemplars.

The next phase is well underway. Different examples of exemplar materials, some representing actual examples of student written work (suitably de-identified), and some specifically prepared by staff to make particular pedagogic points are being shared, discussed and peer-reviewed.

The project has already had a number of papers accepted at local, national and international conferences. These include:

Sambell, K & McKenna, L. Using exemplars to promote dialogue about effective approaches to assessment: the rules of engagement project. March 30th, 2010. North East Universities (3 Rivers Consortium) Third regional Learning & teaching Conference: What does diversity mean to you?

Sambell, K. Enhancing staff-student dialogue about assessment and learning practice, European First Year Experience conference, Planitijn Hogeschool, Antwerp, Belgium, May 2010.

Sambell, K. Enhancing students' involvement in the assessment process via exemplars. Higher Education Academy Annual Conference, University of Hertfordshire June 2010

Sambell, K & Montgomery, C. 'At first I didn't know what they wanted. I was going in blind.' Students' experiences of pedagogic practices designed to illuminate the 'rules of engagement' in assignment-writing. Writing Development in Higher Education, Sustainable writing development: approaches and challenges. 28-30 June, 2010. Royal College of Physicians, London.