

Sir Alastair Pilkington award in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences 2017/18

Title of case study

Developing self-regulated learners: promoting student engagement with feedback

Staff Lead

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School/ Department

School of Psychology

Faculty

Institute of Health and Life Sciences

Name of course and module (if applicable) case study took place within

Psychology BSc (Hons) - Psychology at Work Module (PSYC215)

Please briefly describe the activity undertaken for the case study

Background

A research informed approach was developed that aimed to engage four hundred second year psychology undergraduates in a critical understanding of self-regulation and its application to learning and employment. As part of the process we wished to engage students in a deeper understanding of their individual self-regulatory behaviours; which are behaviours and attitudes individuals hold, that enable them to focus and perform without an ongoing need of external supporting mechanisms.

The design and development of this supportive learning approach was inspired by Zimmerman & Campillo's (1990) self-regulatory model of learning. Workshops and lectures were designed to trigger (1) *Forethought* - where students are exposed to theories; (2) *Exploration* of one's own learning; and, (3) *Performance* – application of 1 (*forethought*) and 2 (*exploration*) to a graded assignment.

How was the activity implemented?

Students were asked to complete a series of online self-evaluation surveys prior to three interactive lectures designed to critically engage in the core components of Zimmerman's model of self-regulated learning (1990). These focused on reflection and the implications of feedback, goal setting and self-efficacy, and finally motivation.

Using the software package Qualtrix, the team designed algorithms to calculate survey scores and use those scores to map clusters of attitudes which may be indicative of adaptive and maladaptive behaviours. This enabled the team to graphically map student scores relative to the cohort. In addition, automatically generated individual reports were emailed to students. This enabled them to compare scores to suggested scale boundaries, and to other students in the cohort, prompting individual reflection.

Alongside lectures, the measurement and self-evaluation process was supported by a series of coursework magazines, YouTube Videos and workshops. These aimed to supplement the explanation of self-regulatory theory to students and to help them apply theories to their individual performance.

Students were summatively assessed using two methods. Firstly, they were required following the intervention to write an essay on critical self-regulatory perspectives associated with task performance. Secondly, students completed a reflective assignment by considering their personal existing attitudes and behaviours through the lenses of the individual survey reports and the wider literature.

This intervention, with associated tools, was designed to encourage and enable students to embed messages from previous feedback and make gains in learning beyond this assessed piece of work. Initial findings indicate that students endorsed the importance of self-efficacy, having clear goal rationale, and support from an advisor in negotiating feedback and developing learning.

Has this activity improved programme provision and student experience, if so how?

Students report high levels of satisfaction for the initiative with 80% of students feeling that the skills they developed supported their ability to deal with real-life situations:

“I have been applying it much more to my daily life, setting long-term and short-term goals. This has been keeping me much more on track and especially, this Easter break for example, ...I am doing things all the time to try and achieve my goals not just lazing around! (Year 2 student).”

The work has also been singled out for praise:

“This supportive learning environment places the development of self-regulation for success at its heart; a model key to supporting students to thrive at university and in their future careers” (Prof Ben Ambridge, Psychological Sciences, UoL).

An unexpected development was that it became possible during the grading process to comment on progress towards goal achievement, thus bolstering the feedback conversation, but also the personal development of our young lecturer grading team:

“With large cohorts of undergraduate students, the opportunity to open a dialogue which crossed the assignment-feedback boundary was both innovative and informative. I was able not only to respond directly to the goals students had set for themselves but to challenge and develop my own teaching skills to make my feedback more meaningful.” (Katie Cunliffe, Demonstrator, UoL).

Did you experience any challenges in implementation, if so how did you overcome these?

Implementation challenges were addressed as far as possible during planning. Just over ten percent of students required face to face input associated with assessment. We had considered this, but initially did not make this opportunity available to students. After an initial period, we set up a series of bookable coursework consultation clinics.

Students were advised that consultations presumed engagement with materials and they were not permitted to attend unless they came with the work they had prepared thus far. The purpose was to ensure that these workshops were for enhancing student performance and not to address gaps in knowledge for students who had not prepared.

These workshops also fitted with the ethos of the content being taught on the programme, for example, effective help seeking and feedback behaviour, managing anxiety and increasing task focus and concentration. Therefore, during the workshops the team worked with students to ensure that they had clarity about the terminology, objectives and grading criteria. We found that the greatest advantage of these workshops was to reduce student anxiety. Reflective processes are associated with improved cognitive control and goal directed behaviours (Zelazo, 2015). Once anxiety was reduced the students performed much better.

Which Liverpool University Hallmarks and Attributes does this case study relate to (tick all boxes that apply)

Research-connected Teaching	X
Active Learning	X
Authentic Assessment	
Confidence	X
Digital Fluency	
Global Citizenship	

How does this case study relate to the Hallmarks and Attributes you have selected?

Research-connected Teaching

The module introduced students to research connected approaches to self-regulatory behaviours, as previously described, by engaging with structured series of learning activities. This research associated with task-based learning applies to student regardless of domain as a key employability outcome.

Active Learning

Students were encouraged to actively engage in the work by reflecting on feedback and survey scores leading to an assessment, which in part required students to consider why this deeper level of understanding was significant for them.

Confidence

Research suggests that interventions targeting self-regulatory approaches, in particular goal-setting and self-efficacy, may be an effective route to building student confidence and resilience.

How could this case study be transferred to other disciplines?

In awarding the recent Sir Alastair Pilkington award in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences to this project, the prize judges noted the applicability of the approach to other disciplines. In this spirit, we are currently working in partnership with the School of Dentistry to deliver a version of this project to support dental students in developing these effective self-regulatory approaches.

If someone else were to implement the activity within your case study what advice would you give them?

The intervention was effective at scale, however, we consider that implementation via the academic advisory system, or through smaller workshop delivery, may provide a more meaningful solution for students. Students endorsed the importance of tutorial support in their survey responses.

References

Zelazo, P. D. (2015). Executive function: Reflection, iterative reprocessing, complexity, and the developing brain. *Developmental Review*, 38, 55-68.

Zimmerman, B. J. (1990). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview. *Educational psychologist*, 25(1), 3-17.



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