

Tales of a three-year journey to integrating academic and information literacy skills in an education course

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Presentation abstract

This session explored the journey to integrating academic and information literacy skills into CCCU's BA in primary education. The session began by presenting a rationale for the project and the principles underpinning it, in particular, by referring to the Academic Literacies approach. The presentation subsequently introduced the staged approach taken to fully integrate Learning Development work into the curriculum, including concrete examples of what that integration looked like for a range of modules. The presenter also introduced staff and student feedback from the ongoing project, and a range of future steps which will be taken to continue the process of integration. A key aspect of the session included reference to: (a) how this process has allowed students to navigate academic expectations at different points in the course; (b) staff's perceptions on the value of the collaboration needed to realise this project.

Keywords: academic literacies; academic skills integration; collaboration; primary education; embedding.

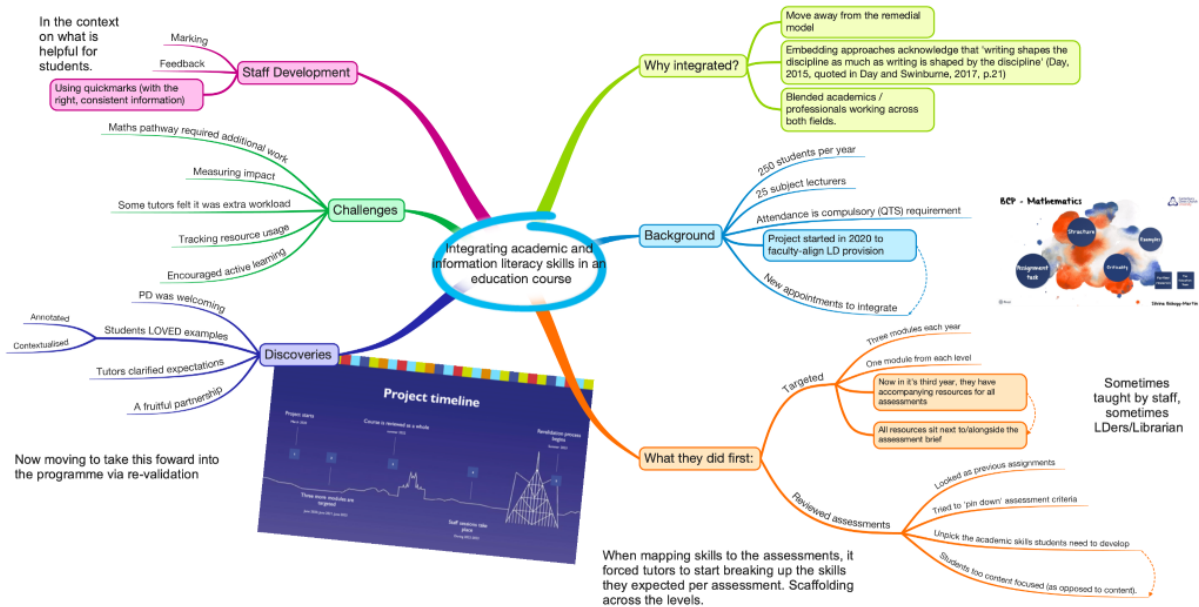
Community response

The community response to this session centred around themes of partnership and of embedding:

This session was really pertinent for my context, as Programme Director of MA Education provision at my university. I was particularly keen to hear about that partnership between Learning Development and academics. For me the realistic timeline for implementation and the focus on mapping skills to assessments was

incredibly supportive of student success. It was even more important to see how students loved the examples, and that the work between tutors and Learning Developers led to a fruitful partnership that framed LD as an integral part of their course. I feverishly took notes in this session, and am happy to share them here:

Image 1. Notes taken within the session by Lee Fallin.



The session focused on the interesting journey that Silvina and her colleague undertook in order to embed support on the education course; I thought it was interesting to hear about the changes that the academic team had made to the assessments as a result of their feedback.

Next steps and additional questions

Image 2. Slide 3 of Silvina's presentation.

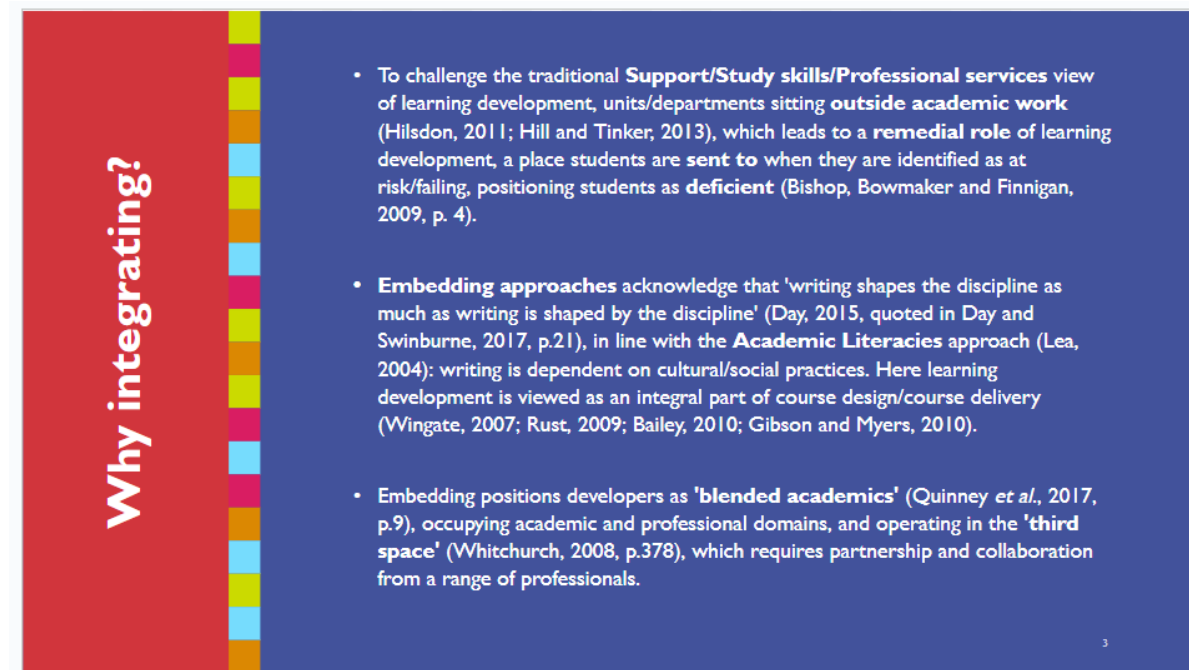
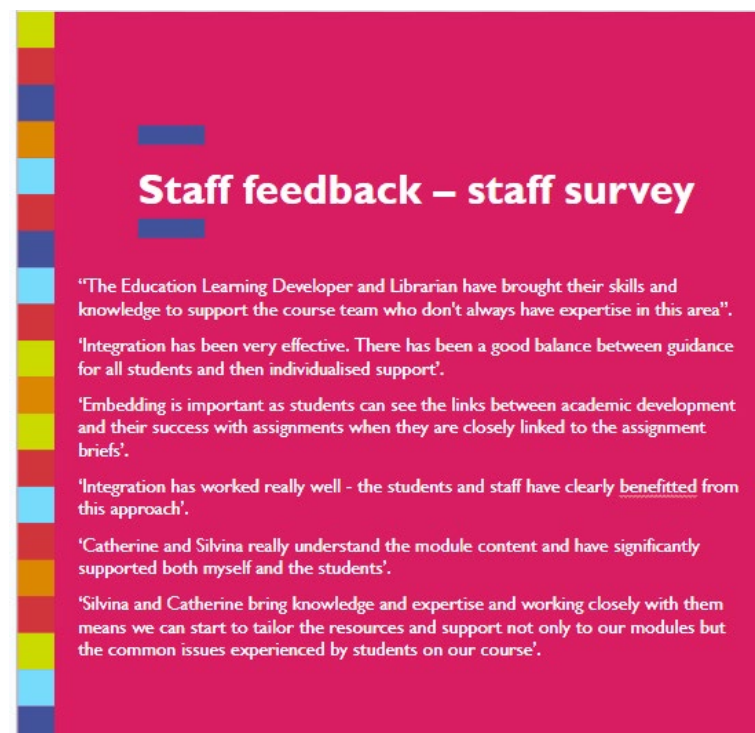


Image 3. Slide 13 of Silvina's presentation.



The project involved Learning Developers, the Librarian, the course director, and tutors. Silvina draws on Quinney et al.'s (2017, p.9) phrase 'blended academics' (see slide 3, above); there was a responsibility on the Learning Developer and Librarian to integrate themselves into an existing structure, and a welcoming of the specific skills the Learning

Developer and Librarian brought (see slide 13, above). It would be interesting to know how this felt for the Learning Developer and Librarian. Were there joys and/or challenges to becoming immersed, or to co-creating this space together? Was there a 'right level' of immersion, and how was this achieved?

Additionally, how does the role of students play out within the collaboration? Was there any shift in the student perception of, or engagement with, Learning Development as a result of this project?

The community response highlighted an interest in how the project had impacted the nature of assessments, and suggested an appetite for further insight into this, including suggesting input from academic colleagues. This could be a valuable aspect to share further with the community and contribute to the conversation of how Learning Development can impact widely.

Author's reflection

I was pleasantly surprised to notice the number of colleagues who attended the session and their genuine interest in the project. Considering that supporting a specific course such as Primary Education is quite niche, I was pleased to discover there are many Learning Developers like me embarked in similar projects.

Lee Fallin's notes (above) effectively summarise my talk. I am grateful that the staged approach came across as a realistic part of integrating academic skills into the curriculum, and that recounting my journey has encouraged others to pursue a Learning Development model where collaboration with course staff is possible. A fair amount of conversation at the conference revolved around the gold standard of *academic literacies*. However, oftentimes conversations led to focusing on institutional impediments which can hold integration back including staffing issues, student numbers, institutional pressures etc. I hope that my example demonstrates how, given the right conditions, realistic timeframes, courage and perseverance, integration is indeed possible and can position Learning Developers as experts in their own field.

For instance, I discussed in the session how setting up meetings with module teaching teams to discuss assessments and the academic skills needed to complete such tasks could often lead to incredibly useful (and challenging) conversations among staff, regarding assignment expectations. These conversations also encouraged module staff to reflect on what students have previously found testing, and as a result, assessment modifications were made to further support student learning. I firmly believe that these meetings allowed the Learning Developer to facilitate the exploration of assessments and truly collaborate with the module colleagues.

During the session, I also explored some of the main joys and challenges of the project, which have been noted in Lee Fallin's notes as well. Whilst I acknowledge that the project is still ongoing and far from finalised, the ambitious plan to fully integrate academic skills in the BA primary curriculum has offered us a place and voice which we had never had before, at course and module level, including attending assignment briefings, boards of studies and staff development sessions. Our presence and active involvement in the course mean we are treated as part of the team. In fact, all new BA primary staff are scheduled to have a meeting with us as part of their induction.

With regards to students, integration has also changed how we are perceived as, again, we are part of a range of interactions and events including staff and student liaison meetings, welcome lectures and assessment Q&As. Our visible presence has meant students have a clearer understanding of our role, and interactions with them are more targeted towards specific academic skills needed for particular assessments, as opposed to generic bolt-on skills. Students value our understanding of the running of the course and in particular, the access to specific exemplars, which are directly related to the work they have to undertake.

Overall, I am grateful for the opportunity to showcase the work I have been able to carry out in this course, and the honest interest of those who attended. As revalidation of the course is now upon us, the next big step will involve being part of the course from its inception, as opposed to integrating to an existing structure. I very much hope that we will be able to offer input throughout this journey, to continue to harness an environment of genuine partnership and collaboration.

Acknowledgments

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The author did not use generative AI technologies in the creation of this manuscript.

References

Quinney, A., Lamont, C., Biggins, D. and Holley, D. (2017) 'Optimising disruptive approaches: extending academic roles and identities in higher education', *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education*, November Issue 12, pp.1-14.
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