

This active learning project is part of a development for an online self-reflective and self-assessment assistive technology enhanced learning tool designed for final year project students within the Faculty of Business and Humanities, LIT.

Summary of Teaching & Learning Context

Subject domain, group size, stage of programme (year 1, 2, 3, 4)

The inclusion of the Final Year Projects in Year 4 has been a significant development in course provision that has altered the learning landscape for all student learners over the past number of years. Over all there are currently approximately 300 final year students within the faculty undertaking the FYP module and within the module students chose from either a research thesis or a business plan. Since the initial proposition to examine the Final Year Project as an active learning strategy with a solid contribution to teaching pedagogy the authors have now initial research findings to share and disseminate. Subsequently since the initial concept to examine this research area we have pilot tested the third- and fourth-year Faculty of Business & Humanities students from across multiple subject areas. While not exhaustive as other degree programme do exist, it resulted in 188 replies to our survey spread across the marketing, enterprise, innovation and applied social science discipline spectrum. For the first ever we now have factual evidence of the final year project as experienced by our undergraduates.

The specific requirements of each departments FYP format can vary moderately depending on the specifics of the course but essentially comprises a 12,000 to 15,000-word document undertaken over the course of two terms. This involves each FYP student producing a document worth one and a half times the module value and requiring them to produce it at nearly three times the credit weighting than they have been used to before now (5 credits vs. 15 credits). There is also a remarkably stark difference in the individual learning assessment here in that the student is now self-directing and self-managing their individual work for the first time on their learning journey.

The primary aim of this active learning strategy is therefore to identify best practice, key enablers, and opportunities for the enhancement of self-reflection and self-assessment while supporting and facilitating innovative assessment practices within the Final Year Project module assessment. This is supported by the development of a self-reflective and self-assessment content supported using the MS Notes software system. The overall driving aim of the FYP project is to see an increase in the embeddedness of specific active learning strategies on the fourth year FYP module component of the BBus (Hons) Marketing Management, BA (Hons) Sports Management, BA (Hons) Event Management and BA (Hons) Tourism Management by designing and utilising an online self-reflective and self-assessment assistive technology enhanced learning tool.

Brief rationale for why you use this learning approach

The project foresees the support students who are using TEL as part of their studies as an imperative development by providing technical assistance information and guidance in learning in a blended/online environment. As a longer term aim within the Faculty of Business and Humanities is the further development of a community of practice to develop a culture of academic collaboration and knowledge sharing of TEL activities.

Falchikov (2005) outlined the changing definitions of assessment and recognised that self-assessment is defined as 'the involvement of learners in making judgements about their achievements and the outcomes of their learning' (Boud and Falchikov (1989) and 'identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards' Boud (1995).

Implementing the Strategy

Specifically, this project requires:

- Roll out of self-assessment tool and paper-based assessment to fourth year FYP students within the Faculty of Business and Humanities (first survey results June 2020).
- Selection of final year students to undertake the use of Microsoft Notes from across the Departments of Marketing and Sport, Leisure and Tourism.
- Provision of weekly assessment support to selected students.
- Design of self-assessment and self-reflection work sheets.
- Provision of initial induction on use of assessment tools.
- Mid study review of student progress.
- Final review of students' progress.
- Publication and dissemination of projects findings.

Brief survey findings to date:

From the survey replies a snapshot of the FYP experience is revealed from the respondent replies below:

- 87% of respondents understood the weightings and word requirements of the FYP milestones.
- Just 55% of FYP student indicated that the FYP process is mostly or completely clear to them as a student.
- 73% of FYP/Dissertation students are confident about their choice of FYP/Dissertation topics they are pursuing.

- 74% of the FYP students indicated that they were happy (agreed or strongly agreed) with their choice of FYP topic.
- 81% indicated that their FYP/Dissertation topic is linked to their potential career or further studies.
- 83% of FYP students have follow up meetings with their Supervisors and also understand the FYP proposal feedback received.
- 67% indicated that the literature review was very clear to them....69% agreed or strongly agreed that the literature review helped them in confirming the topic for their FYP Dissertation.
- 83% indicated the literature review helped the student to engage further in their chosen FYP/Dissertation topic.
- Only 40% of FYP students utilise the exciting FYP log book.
- Just 29% engaged in self-reflection of their FYP/ Dissertation topic.
- 70% think that self-reflection could be of help in the FYP/Dissertation process.
- 67% believe online self-reflection tool would help in the FYP/Dissertation process.

Observations & Reflections

This project aligns with TUS Midwest (formerly LIT's Teaching and Learning Strategy) by aligning with many of its higher-level principles. These principles are also now reflected in the new draft strategy for learning, teaching and assessment at TUS-MMW:

- Enhanced engagement with innovation and excellence in Teaching and Learning.
- A learner centred active learning approach.
- Supporting personal development and growth of the whole person.
- Effective assessment practices that promote deeper learning.
- An inclusive, engaging and supportive learning environment.
- Developing and embedding a culture of quality enhancement.

References

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