



Gaining Insight Into Students' Difficulties Using KWL

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Summary of Teaching & Learning Context

Peer Assisted Student Support, (PASS) is an optional 5-credit module available to second year students at TUS: MMW (only Athlone campus currently). Between 30 – 40 students attend two days of training to prepare them for their role as PASS Leaders to run timetabled PASS sessions during semester one. From induction, first year students are encouraged to attend PASS sessions to help ease their transition to higher education.

Instructional technologies allow students to submit anonymous responses to a question posed and enables facilitators to collect and analyse data quickly (Bruff, 2009). One of the advantages of identifying where students' difficulties lie is that facilitators can adapt their lesson plan or structure a discussion in response to the points raised (Bruff, 2009).

KWL is used during PASS pre-training (flipped classroom). Students are asked to complete K and W on a shared Word document before watching a video about PASS. They return to the document and complete L. Outstanding questions are noted by the facilitator to be addressed during the face-to-face training.

Implementing the Strategy

With the KWL approach students record everything they know and everything they want to know about the topic to be covered (K and W columns). Then they read/watch/listen to the learning materials. Students then return to the KWL and see if any of their comments can be moved from the W to L (what they have learned) column. Any questions left in the W column should be addressed in class.

The strategy can be used as part of a flipped classroom asynchronously or synchronously during a live lecture. The strategy can be implemented using pen and paper in class, via a shared Word document or using an instructional technology such as Moodle Board or Padlet.

Your Observations/Reflections

Students engage with the learning material on a deeper level because they have identified questions before engaging with the learning materials.

When students complete written KWLs, the facilitators have no insight into students' difficulties or areas of misunderstanding. Utilising an instructional technology makes the activity more interactive and prompts discussion. The technology can be returned to at a later time to identify new areas of confusion and/or learning among students. However, it is difficult to manage instructional technologies with a large group, therefore the number of students may have an impact on the method chosen.

KWL was implemented using a shared Word document in 2021 with limited success. It was difficult to ascertain who completed the KWL on a shared document. For example, one student contributed very detailed answers which seemed to stop other students from contributing.

Recommended Resources

Bruff (2009). *Teaching with classroom response systems: Creating active learning environments*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ogle, D. M. (1986). *K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text*. *The Reading Teacher*, 39(6), pp. 564–570.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20199156>

Padlet: <https://padlet.com/auth/login>

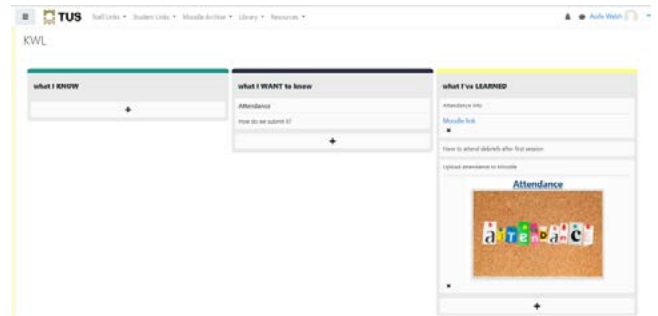


Figure 1: KWL on Moodle board

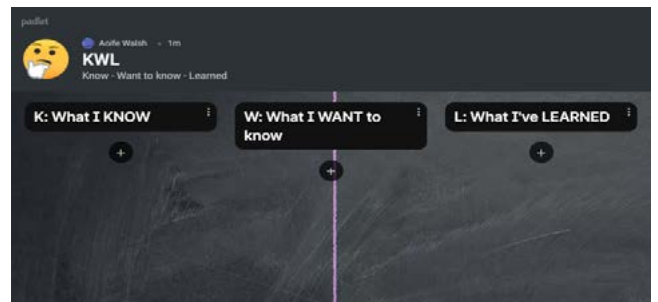


Figure 2: KWL on Padlet

