Hiding library training in other classes

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- Students not keen on library classes.
- Students not convinced by “it’s important”.
- Optimism bias?
- What do they care about?

University of the West of Scotland
- 19,500 students on 4 Scottish campuses.
- Many non-traditional students.
- Wide range of subjects including science, engineering, creative industries, social sciences, nursing.

Heriot-Watt University
- Around 7000 students on Edinburgh campus.
- 1/3 Scottish campus students are non-UK.
- Mostly science, engineering and technology degrees. Also textiles, business, languages.

Hiding IL in first year essay classes
- Taught with Effective Learning Tutor.
- Two sessions:
  1. introduction to essay writing (tutorials).
  2. essay feedback (lecture).
- What did we do ...
Writing styles (group work)

Institutes link up for dairy cattle research work

When to reference (in pairs)

Class discussion of plagiarism

● Three activities about essay writing:
  1. Styles of writing.
  2. When to reference.
  3. Plagiarism.

● ...two of these are traditional library topics, hidden in an essay class.
Student opinions

- What were the most useful things you learnt in this class?
  - Referencing 75.2%
  - Plagiarism 36.2%
- Things they liked:
  - “pointed out how to use textbooks, the web to help with essays”
  - “working with examples to practically understand referencing”
  - “discussing with other students”

Essay feedback class

- Same cohort.
- Essays submitted via TurnItIn. Got added to the VLE as lecturers so we could see these – very useful!
- Alison spoke about problems with essay writing, e.g., lack of structure.
- I covered finding/using illustrations, and referencing (again!)

Other hidden library training

- 2nd year PDP “mini-conferences”.
- Organised by the department:
  - Study skills:
    - Library session: “Using evidence in your coursework”.
    - Covered note-making (vs note-taking), referencing, using TurnItIn.
  - Careers:
    - Library session: “Researching employers”.
    - Too early for these students?

Tips for getting into curriculum

- Use department meetings.
- Volunteer to help: offer classes about any information literacy problems.
  - Taught classes on topics I initially knew nothing about - reading techniques, note-taking, etc.
  - Make contact with other support departments and do joint classes.

Tips for student engagement

- Design class from student viewpoint:
  - needs to be relevant to students’ interests/worries.
  - Students aren’t studying to be librarians.
- Be convinced that your class is interesting:
  - students respond to your enthusiasm.

- Think carefully about name of your class:
  - “Avoiding plagiarism” → “Copy & Paste: Just Say No” → “Using evidence in your coursework”
Not entirely successful ...
- “Library induction”
- “Library resources”
- “Using the library”

Need to improve on these titles so that students see relevance.

Lessons I’ve learnt
- Don’t give up on idea too quickly ...
- ... but be ready to change classes that aren’t working.
- Try to get lecturers to link classes to an assignment ...
- ... also offer to do feedback after assignment.

Future plans
- Shorter IL input within standard lecture.
  - Difficult to get an hour in crowded curriculum.
  - Some negative feedback from students about “taking up teaching time”.
- Want to do 10-15 minutes, e.g., in lecture/lab where students are given assignments.