Where the bodies are buried

Enquiry-Based Learning for Forensics Students
The group

• First years from two courses
  • Forensic Archaeology and Anthropology
    – Very keen, very focussed. Difficult to divert from their core interests!
    – Many international students
    – Cohesive group
  • Forensic and Medical Sciences
    – Much more diverse group
    – Mixed abilities and interests
    – Taught by many areas across the university, usually in much larger cohorts
    – Course struggles with cohesion and identity
    – Don’t like to be lectured!
• Common ground
  – Neither group like transferrable skills!
  – Shared interest in dead people
  – Me too!
The module

- Previously taught transferrable skills in multiple modules
  - Coverage patchy
  - Inconsistencies

- New module: Independent study for forensic scientists.
  - Led by Julia Beaumont, the Bradford Tooth Fairy!
  - Range of transferrable skills from referencing to time management
  - Assessed by group presentation, portfolio and essay (I second-marked all of these)
  - Linked 10+10 ensuring continuity

- Feedback told us we needed to provide socialising opportunities
- Needed to keep some subject content to maintain student interest
The principle

• A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down!
• Or in this case, a spoonful of dead people..
• Try to teach the necessary skills without it being particularly obvious that we’re doing it.
• Keep enough subject content to keep it interesting
Starting point: Archaeology sessions

- Induction powerpoint
- Library tour / Paper skills audit
- Evaluation of sources
- Library catalogue / books
- Summon / journals
- Referencing / plagiarism avoidance
- Digital mapping
- EBL site evaluation
Starting point: Archaeology sessions

- Decided most of this was terribly boring so re-wrote most of it
- Evaluation of sources and referencing stayed pretty much the same
  - Referencing still pretty poor!
- Need to do something different next year!
Induction

• Kept the generic powerpoint but trimmed it drastically
• Replaced a lot of the content with a Padlet challenge
• Series of tasks to find eg how to issue books, what kind of food is allowed.
• Can upload text or pictures as answers, working in groups
• Example at https://padlet.com/s_george/Forensic_Science_2016
  – The socialising aspect didn’t work well!
  – The archaeologists love it!
  https://padlet.com/s_george/2015_iron
Library tour

• Replaced the library tour with a treasure hunt
• Paper-based, working in groups
• Treasure hunt (paper-based). Questions on:
  – Summon (journal articles)
  – Books (had to go and fetch books from the shelves and find information)
  – Library collections (not particularly relevant, just to get them moving,!)
  – My subject coverage (handy for vowels!)
• The first letter of each answer spells out their prize (sweeties!)
• Good for iterative reasoning – they get a pretty good idea of the answer by part-way through so can see where they’ve made mistakes
  – Except the group who thought they’d won”foffees”
• Looking for 7 letter sweets that could be spelled by the answers is pretty tricky!
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Confidence sheet / skills audit

• Formerly paper survey on confidence using library resources etc
• Replaced with phone poll
  – https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/39a64534-2a54-4444-bdd8-3fdad7f51fa5
• Quick, fun, can run several times to monitor progress
  – Presenter can veto rude nicknames!
• Diagnostics, fun, can erase naughty nicknames
• Makes a nice change from telling them to put their phones away!
Journal club

• Students work in groups to find journal articles then present to class
• Session 1: articles on a classic case
  – Find authoritative information
  – Synthesize
• Session 2: articles on a technique
  – Given an article, must locate it
  – Critique article and find other information on the subject
Crime Scene Scenario: where the bodies are buried

• Teaching Digital mapping (covertly!)
• Students work in groups to find out about the site where a body is concealed
  – What is on the site now?
  – What was on the site previously?
  – What hazards might the investigators encounter?
  – Can they find any other clues to help the investigators find the body?
• Given a list of websites to search and help with Digimap
• Sites listed in Blackboard, mockup and handouts at https://padlet.com/s_george/USTLG
• Findings presented to rest of group
Student findings

http://www.walkingbritain.co.uk/walk-photo-261103

Clues! - Body could be in mine shaft
- interference with body due to dangerous predator activity - sheep
What went well?

- The group work, we had a chance to socialise.
- Very informative and very useful.
- Group working, using Digimaps software, researching old case files.
- It was fun.
- Interesting cases in the past.
- Worked oursefls, mix of people, send loud people outside.
- Socialising with other students.
- Learning how to use Summon effectively.
- They were interactive and I enjoyed doing the group work.
- Everything, enjoyed it.
- Group work, working in groups to find out the information.
- Top Bants.
- Yes, it was OK, would have liked to have been a hands on experience instead of digital.
- Yea, it was OK, would have liked to have been a hands on experience instead of digital.
- Sarah's personality. Light and interactive sessions.
- Yes, I enjoyed the jokes.
- Productive. Practical. Helped with current coursework issues eg sourcing academic info.
What went well?

- Everything worked well.
- Helped the team.
- Interactive sessions with people.
- Enjoyed working with colleagues.
- Cases and activities sourced effectively.
- Found useful information.
- Learning academic software.
- Group coursework.
- Essays on Digimaps.
- Journal articles on topics.
- Fun team time.
- Working outside.
- Productive software critiques.
- Issues studied.
- Current students.
- Yes worked in groups.
- Colleague jokes.
- Group info bants.
What went badly?

- Some sessions repetitive. And not relevant to the course.
- Referencing 1000 times.
- Sitting down for too long.
- It was too early sometimes.
- It's 2 hours.
- Stress and time maybe a little short.
- Takes me longer so easier to do computer work at home.
- Nothing.
- The presentation is in front of the class (not strongest trait).
- Too much essay and learning types sessions. Too many and too close together.
- Searching for articles/books as it is good practice.
- They are lengthy sessions, some sessions seem a little irrelevant to the skills actually required. The tasks are vague and most of the time I don't understand what to do. The e-portfolio was a little vague to fill in.
- Being forced into group work.
- Repetition of how to find sources and references. Portfolio.
What went badly?
What could we do differently?

- Include more practical activities!
- Make it one hour
- Longer time to complete tasks
- Make sure there are more learning resources (computers, books) eg more chance to use the library
- More useful information
- More brief presentations at the end of the sessions
- More guidance on academic writing, structuring, frameworks, more support with e-portfolio
- Have more journal and practical sessions. Also probably just do the essay and no portfolio - otherwise it's just a feedback overload
- Nothing
- More Sarah!
- Ensure simple information and step by step instructions put on Blackboard to follow
- Mini assignments to learn how to reference
- Talk more and smile more
- More computers
- Less statistics :)
- More dead body stuff :)
- More independent work