

The 'Student as Researcher' Project: Progress Report for IATL

March 2012

1. Introduction

The 'Student as Researcher' project was funded by the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) from of its Strategic Projects fund. The interim progress report from the Library comprises:

- this written report – a detailed update on activities and outcomes to date, focusing on progress against the pilot projects outlined in the Library's 'Strategic Fund' application;
- a video presentation – an overview of the programme to date, based on the recent 'Window on Teaching' session, which we plan to make available via the Student as Researcher web site.

The video presentation has been created to capture the creative nature of the Student as Researcher project, something that is very much in the spirit of IATL. It is hoped that IATL can use this as an advocacy tool to encourage further bids for strategic funding.

2. The Student as Researcher Project

2.1 Background

Undergraduate information skills provision at Warwick has often been concentrated at the beginning of the academic programme, rather than throughout the undergraduate's course. Although more structured approaches (which place skills development more at point of need) do exist, coverage is not consistent across all academic disciplines. The Student as Researcher programme looks to address this by delivering a joined-up, 'step-by-step' approach to developing the information fluency of students (alongside other academic skills) throughout their time at Warwick. Undergraduates are given the opportunity to experience research first-hand, conducting their own investigations and using primary sources, ultimately becoming producers with outputs ranging from additions to the secondary literature to poster presentations or conference papers, depending on what is most appropriate for their academic discipline. This approach helps students to develop skills around information retrieval and information management (including referencing) and supports research-led teaching. It offers a richer and more distinctive undergraduate experience which enables students to fulfil their potential and helps prepare high fliers for postgraduate study at Warwick. Academic colleagues and Library staff also work together in partnership to offer students 'the opportunity to work on an extended project or piece of research' as pledged in the University Strategy.

2.2 Student as Researcher Project Officer

In February 2011, the Library successfully bid for funding for a Student as Researcher Project Officer to work with Library colleagues, other support agencies and academic partners to progress the proposed project over 2011/12. Over the year, the role will focus on the following:

1. validation (and development) of the Student as Researcher framework (September 2011);
2. review of current practice to identify good practice in Warwick's offering/gaps in coverage (September);
3. development of modules (September and onwards);
4. trial of the Student as Researcher framework in seven pilot areas (September 2011 – June 2012);
5. formative and summative evaluation of the programme and report of lessons learnt (on-going and June/July 2012);
6. modification of the framework and development of new elements as appropriate (July onwards);
7. development of plans to roll the framework out into other areas, using the pilot for dissemination/advocacy work (July/August onwards).

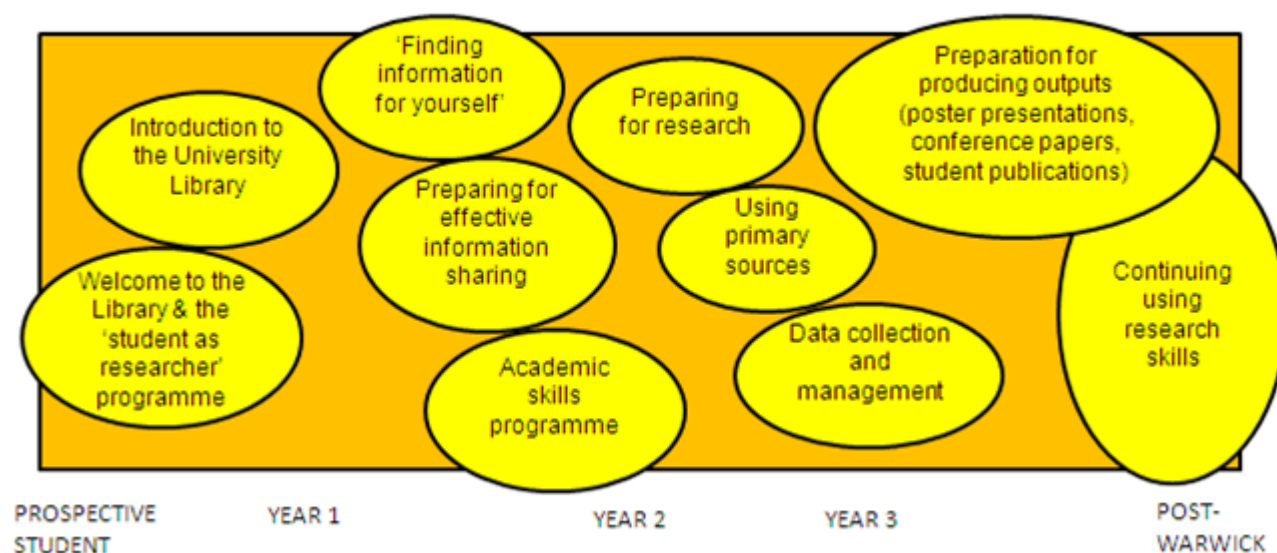
[NOTE: Dates revised from original bid due to delay in making an appointment]

In September 2011, Cate Mackay was appointed as the Student as Researcher Project Officer and began work on the programme as outlined. This report focuses on steps 1-4 but also touches on steps 5 and 7.

2.3 Validation of the project framework and the development of programme details

The first stage of the project was concerned with validation of the proposed project framework and the development of programme details. The Student as Researcher Project Officer worked with Academic Support Librarians to test the framework and identify existing good practice in information skills teaching to inform the development of project content. She also worked with Emma King, Learning and Development

Adviser, Learning and Development Centre, to develop learning outcomes for each of the Student as Researcher modules:



2.4 Web presence

This initial work informed the development of the Student as Researcher web presence which provides:

- i. an outline of the component modules, with details of learning outcomes and modes of delivery;
- ii. case studies of the seven pilot projects;
- iii. a shop window for student work and reflections.

The web site (www.warwick.ac.uk/lib-studentasresearcher) is being used to explain the programme to staff and new students, and will act as an advocacy tool as we roll the programme out beyond the pilot departments.

3. Progress with the Pilot Projects

In 2011/12, the Library is working with academic departments to test and develop this programme in seven pilot projects for:

1. Warwick Business School
2. French
3. Psychology
4. German Studies
5. Law
6. Film & Television Studies
7. Early Childhood Studies

Rather than tackle all seven pilots concurrently, we have taken a staged approach. This has been informed by the elements of the programme undertaken for each discipline: for example, WBS focused on induction, so the emphasis was on Term 1; for Film & Television we are working with colleagues around dissertation skills and the production of outputs, so this will be covered in Term 3. Experience gained with the earlier projects has helped inform the development of modules for the later pilots.

Below we will outline progress to date against each pilot.

3.1 Warwick Business School

For Term 1, Cate worked with Grier Palmer (Principal Teaching Fellow and Academic Director, Teaching & Learning) and Emma Cragg (Academic Support Librarian (ASL) for Business) to develop an embedded information skills tutorial for the 'Markets, Marketing and Strategy' module which covered c.300 students, half of the first year undergraduate cohort for WBS. The purpose of the programme was to direct students to the most appropriate sources of information for the topics covered in lectures, and teach them how to search for quality information, evaluate sources and reference them correctly.

The programme was delivered in weekly instalments from Week 2, Term 1. Each week, new web content was released, connected to that week's lecture theme. The students were given an activity to find a relevant resource to discuss at the following week's seminar.

Delivery was via a blended approach, with introductory lectures backed up with PowerPoint slides available via *SlideShare*, plus the weekly online tutorial comprising printable instructions and brief video guides to using relevant databases (<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/lib-ib1170>). The videos could also be accessed through the Library's *YouTube* Channel. Engagement with online content has been impressive: 1,000 accesses of *SlideShare*, around 200-300 hits on each *YouTube* video and over 12,000 visits to the module's web site.

Formative assessment was carried out in three ways:

- a multiple choice examination covering the concepts behind searching and referencing;
- the production of an annotated reference list, assessed on:
 - correct referencing of resources (including a book, journal article, report and data set);
 - the quality of justification for including resources.

Overall, c. 90% of students passed these assessments (with students scoring particularly well on referencing). The remainder were given additional face-to-face support by Emma.

Summative assessment via an essay was carried out in Term 2, whilst student feedback was obtained via an online questionnaire and focus groups. The questionnaire showed the programme had helped students to feel more confident about information retrieval and information management. 44% responded that they did not feel confident in finding relevant information before completing the module, compared with 87.5% reporting that they felt confident after completing it. Likewise, 50% said they felt they could not reference correctly before the module, compared with 78.2% expressing confidence afterwards. Students reported liking the 'step-by-step' nature of the programme.

3.2 French

Cate and Peter Larkin (ASL for French) worked with Dr Cathy Hampton (Teaching Fellow) on the second year 'In the Family Way' module (of c.20 students) during Term 1. Following lectures on the use of relevant databases, students were given a project to develop a collaborative bibliography. They were not given a reading list but used an online wiki which enabled them to:

- collaborate on developing the bibliography, with students giving the rationale for including selected items;
- access a 'research toolkit', a collection of links to support for undergraduate research (Library pages, Learning Grid services, etc.);
- discuss ideas online – facilitating discussion outside lecture times and extending the amount of time spent on creative activity;
- access group pages – to facilitate group work, share files, etc.;
- get support – for example, online interventions provided by Library staff on how to find resources when students faced difficulties.

A student symposium around the project will take place in Term 3 in the Teaching Grid. Students will be given the choice of presenting a paper, creating a video presentation or delivering a poster presentation. Students have been encouraged to make use of support from the Learning Grid's student advisers to help them to develop their presentation skills.

At the end of the programme, students will be asked to reflect on their experience and these reflections will be captured on the Student as Researcher web site.

3.3 Psychology

Cate and ASL Sam Johnson are currently delivering a Term 2 programme for first year Psychology students, working with Dr James Adelman (Assistant Professor). The structure of this programme has been informed by our experience with WBS, including a step-by-step approach and instructional videos. A new development, though, has been the development of EndNote Web bibliographic software support to help students develop more in-depth skills around referencing.

Again, a blended approach has been taken. The programme was introduced by Cate and academic colleagues in lectures. PhD tutors have subsequently led tutorials and referred students to drop-in sessions run by Library staff. An online self-assessment test has just gone live.

We will seek student feedback in Term 3.

3.4 German Studies

Informed by developments with French, Cate has started working with Dr Seán Allan (Associate Professor) to develop a wiki approach to support collaboration around translation classes. We plan to build on this experience to develop a collaborative approach to developing information skills for the first year media project in Term 3.

3.5 Law

Building on detailed information skills sessions delivered in Term 1, Cate and Helen Riley (ASL for Law) are currently working with Dr Jane Bryan (Teaching Fellow) on the first year property law module. Students are being encouraged to complete a team or individual project to develop information and collaboration skills and revise key property law topics. This is being supported by an online information skills tutorial and a wiki for group collaboration and submission of projects. A creative approach to outputs is being encouraged and it is envisaged that these could range from reports to presentations, to posters or even poems. The wiki will also act as a showcase for the finished products and students' reflections.

3.6 Film & Television Studies

The Library is working with Catherine Constable (Head of Department) and colleagues to provide dissertation support for second year students. Richard Perkins (ASL for the subject) and Cate are currently planning a module to be launched in Term 3 which will blend face-to-face support (on research skills, guides to tailored resources to support dissertation topics, etc.) with online elements – including alerting services for relevant sources – which students can access over the summer vacation.

3.7 Early Childhood Studies

Chris Bradford (ASL for Education) and Cate are currently developing an online resource bank for ECS which combines access to selected resources with value-added elements promoting information skills development to students. Work is at an early stage but will be progressed further in Term 3.

4. Dissemination

So far, the web site has been our primary tool for dissemination. When meeting with academic colleagues, we have used this (and examples of work to date) to explain how the programme could be adapted for them.

Other dissemination has also been undertaken:

- a. a 'Window on Teaching' event on 22 February 2012, aimed at colleagues interested in innovations in teaching, explaining the programme and describing work undertaken in the pilot projects (see www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/teachinggrid/exchange/recent_events/studentasresearcher);
- b. a presentation to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) on 2 February outlining progress to date and advocating the programme to senior faculty colleagues;
- c. a presentation to the Academic Sub-Group of the Employability Working Group on 10 February;
- d. the potential of the Student as Researcher model was highlighted at the Teaching and Learning Review 2011 Faculty Engagements (16, 19 and 22 March) and in allied documentation.

A Strategy Bites session is also currently being planned for later in the year.

5. Moving beyond the Pilots

We have also been keen to promote the project's framework to develop programmes beyond the pilots. By using Student as Researcher activities for advocacy we have been able to further embed information sources and information skills into the curriculum more widely. For example, Mark Harrison has built tutorials around MRC resources (digitised on request) for his 'War and Economy in the 20th Century' module which has led to impressive engagement around primary sources on the module's discussion pages (see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/ug/modules/2nd/ec224/details/seminars/>). The Library is also working with Mark Knights to embed MRC resources into the History first year 'Making History' module next year, using a wiki approach informed by our experiences with the 'In the Family Way' module.

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The Library
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