Case Study
Developing students as writers

Project summary
Student-Staff Partnership with the Department of Criminology, re-designing first year curriculum in order to better support transition to higher education.

Background and rationale
The department currently working with Student Learning Development to review the first year curriculum in order to better support academic transitions - in particular the transition to writing at HE-level.

Current stage of the project and planned next steps
To date, meetings have been held with staff and student representatives in order to identify areas for development and generate some initial ideas. The ideas now being considered include:

- Introducing shorter, more formative, writing tasks into first semester modules (at present assessment is via end of semester essay and exam) in order to build students’ awareness of expectations and provide space for development. Tasks under consideration include:
  - Writing a brief summary of a journal article, highlighting key points, arguments and evidence.
  - Building on the above, comparing and contrasting two arguments or perspectives on the same issue to provide experience of the contested knowledge and the need for students to develop positions and arguments in relation to those encountered on the course.
  - Discussions and reflections on these tasks within content-based seminars and tutorials (Student Learning Development will work with students and the department to design the tasks to support these discussions).
  - Discussions of annotated student writing, on relevant topics, which model good
practice.

- To help foster engagement, the dept. is also considering the inclusion of self- and/or peer-assessment processes in order to engage students with relevant assessment criteria (this will draw on self-assessment processes already in place in several other academic departments).

- To further foster reflection, the department is also considering including a reflective journal, inviting students to comment on their progress as writers.