Case Study

Developing students as writers

Project summary

Student Learning Development are supporting the School of Biological Sciences in embedding the development of academic skills, including writing skills, into two new core modules, BS1040 and BS2000.

Background and rationale

BS1040 is the first module that most students will encounter at University, so it aims to support the development of academic literacies and skills, in particular writing. Writing development activities will take place mainly through tutorials, with students working towards an assessed 1500 word essay with formal feedback. Writing skills for entry into academia will be covered, including using ‘academic’ language, avoiding plagiarism, referencing accurately. Students will also be introduced to questions of structuring essays and critical writing.

BS2000 Research Topic is a second year module that aims to further develop the key academic skills that will help students excel in their third year projects. Students will collaborate in teams (Team Based Learning) to produce a poster and a 5000 word research proposal. Whilst the main focus for Student Learning Development, in this case, is to support the formation of successful teams, this is also an excellent opportunity to enhance writing skills. The aim will be to develop the literacies and skills that students have learned during BS1040, focusing on clarity of expression, and communicating critical engagement with literature.

Current stage of the project and planned next steps

To date, several meetings have been held in order to identify how Student Learning Development can support both staff and students. The kinds of ideas which are now being
considered further include:

- Introduction of the BS1040 essay topic alongside guidance on essay writing during tutorials.
- Student Learning Development running a workshop as a forum for BS1040 tutors to discuss techniques for developing academic writing.
- Group help sessions for students run by Student Learning Development, primarily on managing Team Based Learning for BS2000, but may also include academic skills.
- Encouraging students to make use of additional Student Learning Development through online resources; consultations or central workshops, as appropriate.