Case Study

Boosting students’ confidence in preparing for essay-based exams

Project summary

A project to increase student confidence in revising for and tackling essay-based exams within the School of Psychology.

Background and rationale

Feedback from students in their second year indicated that they did not feel confident revising for and tackling essay-based exams. The project was initiated to address these needs.

Current stage of the project and planned next steps

The Student Learning Development team worked with academic staff within the department to design a programme of support for the students. The project adopted a ‘flipped classroom’ model, with students first independently accessing a Blackboard learning module. The learning module led students through a series of resources and activities covering:

- Reflection on current revision practices
- An introduction to evidence-based effective learning techniques
- Planning revision
- Characteristics of effective essays
- Specific characteristics of exam-based essays
- Timings within the exam

Students subsequently attended group tutorials led by graduate teaching assistants. The content of these was designed in advance by Student Learning Development and staff within the department to ensure consistency of experience for the students. They covered discussion relating to the revision plans students had put together as part of the learning
module, and an assessment of a past student exam essay answer, using an expanded question-based version of the assessment criteria. Subsequently, students were provided with the opportunity to discuss any mock answers which they themselves had produced with their peers.

Next steps include a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the project.