



### Critical Incident

Challenges in improving student attainment can be seen in working with students who may be new to higher education or who may not yet have the necessary academic skills or capabilities to succeed in their studies. Within the BA (Hons) Games, Design and Animation course at UWL, we have a diverse cohort group with varying capabilities requiring additional academic support to promote inclusive and active learning.

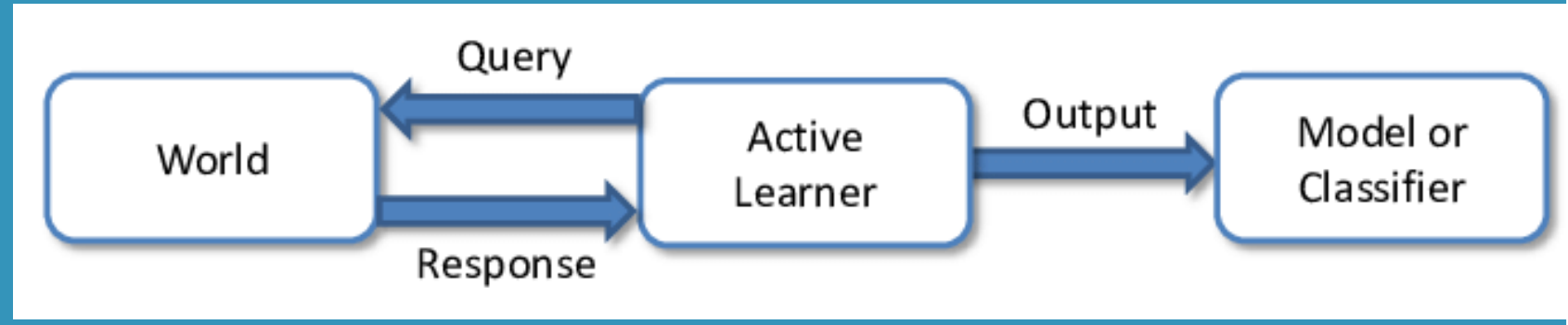
Promoting active and inclusive learning to support these students requires a focus on several areas including; curriculum & learning content development, teaching delivery & style, grading and academic administration. In terms of teaching delivery, I have seen inconsistencies across modules related to student workload & expectations in terms of level of ability and pace of learning expected by the tutors. This can be related to differing teaching styles as well as formatting for the modules which can differ in terms of amount of written analysis or practical exploration expected within the module's learning outcomes. Students new to Higher Education are also unsure of the expectations in terms of workload for the course which has been seen to create anxieties around coursework and assessment.



### Literature Review

In terms of Inclusive teaching and learning I reviewed several sources including the HEA's report from 2009-2010 which considers diversity areas including gender, age, disability, race and financial background. The research found that curriculum design can exclude certain groups and recommends that consideration be given to the following- "institutional commitment to and management of inclusive learning and teaching; curriculum design and contents; pedagogy and curriculum delivery; student assessment and feedback." Liz Thomas; Helen May – 2010

I also reviewed the book 'Inclusion and Diversity: Meeting the Needs of All Students' by Sue Grace and Phil Gravestock (2008) which highlights challenges in teaching related to processing of declarative knowledge which may vary across students. Recommendations include development of a 'spiral curriculum' which provides structured learning which builds in complexity as the student's confidence grows. Other key recommendation includes focus on summary and consolidation to 'help those who find sequencing arguments and concepts more difficult. Summary and consolidation, where appropriate, are especially important in inclusive education' Sue Grace and Phil Gravestock – 2008. To promote active learning, the recommendation is to utilize Rich Environments for Active Learning (REALs) to "encourage the growth of student responsibility, initiative, decision making, and intentional learning;" R. Scott Grabinger and Joanna C. Dunlap, 1995 REALs draw heavily on Constructive learning theories and encourage students to "utilize dynamic, interdisciplinary, generative learning activities that promote high-level thinking processes (i.e. analysis, synthesis, problem-solving, experimentation, creativity, and examination of topics from multiple perspectives" R. Scott Grabinger and Joanna C. Dunlap, 1995



### Intervention

To encourage Inclusive & Active Learning, it is important to review and enhance the Curriculum to ensure that there is sufficient scaffolded learning to support student growth and development, this is a key finding from reviewing active learning and in particular REALs as highlighted in the literature review. Within my course I also saw the need to enhance module learning materials to better build student confidence to support active learning through more thematically connected exercises which is also a key finding. In terms of enhancing teaching and assessment to better support students with diverse backgrounds and varied learning needs I have developed the curriculum and learning materials for the course. In terms of formatting teaching materials and content I worked to develop a 'spiral curriculum' that provides structured exercises that build knowledge and confidence. Key takeaway from the literature review above is that students who struggle with sequencing arguments and concepts benefit from teaching materials that summarize and consolidate learning in steps.



### Data

#### Mentor feedback -

"Lee Montgomery had very clear aims for his session. The targets for the days sessions were clearly outlined. The blackboard site is very thorough and gives students a strong underpinning of the module and individual sessions."

"Students trusted his opinion and felt confident to ask questions' "When asked a question he thought the whole class would benefit from knowing the answer to, he went to his computer and projected the answer on the screen, giving a demonstration of how to approach it."

#### Student feedback –

Students who I have spoken to after re-developing this module have been largely positive about the changes I have made to the curriculum. Structuring of module learning content with exercises used to build confidence has increased student engagement with many happier with their personal development. Recent adoption of online forums to support student development has also been appreciated by the students in supporting active learning.

#### Personal Reflection –

I am pleased that my mentor has acknowledged that the changes made to the learning materials for this module has provided more structure which was a key aim for me in adopting scaffolding learning. It is also pleasing that he has acknowledged the work I am doing in summarizing and consolidating learning through structured Q&A with the students between major sections. Student engagement has also improved recently for this cohort through more open forums being provided to support active learning which has been well received.

### Conclusion

In recognizing challenges in supporting student growth and development I have been keenly aware of the need to draw on the available literature to improve course curriculum content and formatting to improve teaching and learning. Reformatting module learning content to provide more scaffolded learning content that builds student confidence as the modules progress has been instrumental in improving student attainment. Introducing regular Q&A between major learning sections during my lectures has also enabled me to gauge student learning and level which has been highly useful in providing individualised support to students. Proving forum for students to provide feedback during the sessions has also allowed me to re-adjust the curriculum where gaps have been seen in student understanding. In recently adopting online forums which provide open and individualised support to students I have also seen the benefits in leveraging online platforms to support active learning. Throughout this process I have also been keenly aware of the need to be adaptive in adjusting how I develop and present learning content based on feedback from colleagues and students which has been fundamental in enhancing my teaching practice.