University	**Strathclyde**	
Department	**Educational and Professional Studies**	
Module	**ED111**	
Overview	The traditional B Ed 1 Educational and Professional Studies module 'Learners and Learning' was a 20 lecture course accommodating around 170 students. Assessment included 10 sets of independent study tasks (each set contained a series of independent study tasks and resulting tutorial activities). Formative assessment include informal assessment of student portfolios while summative assessment incorporated one end of year exam comprising 50 multiple choice questions and one 'seen' article to be critically analysed.	
Drivers for change	Student end of year module evaluations and anecdotal evidence from staff prompted concerns about the variability of student engagement, lack of standardisation in approaches to formative assessment of student portfolios by staff and students alike and a mismatch between tasks associated with course lectures and the final summative exam. There were no clearly specified mechanisms which allowed course tutors to ensure that all students were actively engaged in developing understanding of course materials and there was wide variation between the methods of scrutiny adopted by the tutors, and between student engagement - as evidenced by the contents of the portfolios. Some students produced lengthy, multiple responses and others very little. It was agreed that this method was largely ineffective in motivating students to engage with course materials, and that it was necessary to find other approaches to monitoring student input.	
Intervention	The previous programme of course work tasks was carefully rethought and restructured to create a more streamlined progression of tasks throughout the year. The decision was made to remove the previous formative assessment task and investigate alternative methods of maintaining student portfolios and to consider how overall student engagement in tasks could be improved. A scaffolded, collaborative methodology was devised which would be supported by the eportfolio system PebblePad for peer sharing and feedback. Training was provided to the 8 module tutors and practical step by step guides produced for staff and students. The student cohort was divided further into 'sub-groups' with a maximum of five students per sub-group. Membership of each sub-group was assigned at random, but was identical to sub-groups created in other course modules. Students were instructed to work together, in these sub-groups, on module activities. The ED111 project team, with the assistance of the REAP team, identified 5 'learning milestone' points during the year at each of which students should be able to demonstrate that they had developed specific theoretical insights and understandings. A 'Core Task' was associated with each of these and the resulting core tasks became the focus of peer group activities and assessment was on a group basis. These core tasks became progressively more difficult during the academic year. The final core task was specifically related to the final exam by offering the students an opportunity to deliver an individual interpretation of the core task based on the peer feedback from their group work.	

			Activities
PROCESS — **EMPOWERMENT** — NICOL'S 7 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD ASSESSMENT DESIGN		**Principle 1** (clarify criteria)	(1) Students were provided with a criteria sheet, with carefully crafted performance-level indicators (2) Tasks were matched to specific lecture blocks and performance goals progressed incrementally (3) Students were able to link proximal task goals to distal professional development goals through working as a team on topics that related to theory and application
		Principle 2 (self-assess, reflect)	(1) Students had an opportunity to self-assess their contributions on different levels. Firstly they submit an individual on-line task contribution and have an opportunity to reflect on the peer feedback. (2) Individual responses were then synthesised to provide the group response. Students were free to offer feedback to sub-group peers during the 4 week period before task submission. (3) Students were given training in use of the "Two Stars and a Wish" strategy and were able thus to self-assess their personal response, identifying strengths and weaknesses, against those posted by other members of the sub-group. (4) To maximise effectiveness, tutor feedback was provided to only one sub-group in a tutor's class for each Core Task submission. (5) Students were then invited to participate in further peer analysis and interpretation of both the submission and its feedback to encourage development of professional reflective skills applied to their own work

ENGAGEMENT	**GIBBS & SIMPSON'S 4 CONDITIONS OF TIME & EFFORT ON TASK**	**Principle 3** (tutor feedback)	1) During the third stage of the core task process, sub-groups received feedback from tutors which aimed to support and develop self-regulation by offering a more in-depth evaluation of the response to the core task. 2) Tutors undertook to offer feedback to one sub-group within one week of the group submission 3) Tutor feedback posts were made available to the entire tutor group and students were advised to check their individual and group responses against the response selected for feedback on that occasion. 4) When posting tutor feedback to the e-portfolio system, staff were asked to re-visit the success criteria for the core task, but, in order to ensure that students really understood tutor feedback, tutors were invited also to discuss their comments on each task, with the whole tutor group, during tutorials following submission. 5) Lecturers who devised core tasks also offered written advice to tutors so that some standardisation of response might be achieved. Tutor responses to each group remained online for the remainder of the course so that students might re-visit them if desired.
		Principle 4 (peer feedback)	1) During staffed tutorials students were provided with feedback for only one sub-group per task in order to facilitate greater peer dialogue around learning and to increase self-regulation. 2) Regular opportunities for face-to-face informal peer discussion have been built into the course Students were timetabled to use the 3 hour non-lecture period on Fridays to organize their own non-staffed tutorials
		Principle 5 (motivation)	1) Using the e-portfolio system allowed students to take personal responsibility for monitoring their own learning, at a time and place of their own choosing. Thus the process of developing self-regulation was enhanced. It was intended that the increase in autonomy would have a beneficial effect on self-esteem and motivation. 2) The division of public/private on-line space increased the sense of students ownership over their learning materials, thus increasing autonomy and control, which could potentially lead to enhanced self-esteem and motivation.
		Principle 6 (close feedback loop)	1) The core task was visited on at least three occasions with feedback used to scaffold learning each time. Feedback between each stage was used to improve the quality of the submission on the next and tutorial discussions allowed feedback to become part of the teaching and learning process. 2) The final core task was tied to the summative end of year assessment in order to provide more of a synthesis between course components in a bid to close the gap between current and desired performance.
		Principle 7 (shape teaching)	1) The setting of frequent assessment tasks allowed teachers to gather data about student progress. 2) The five learning milestones, and related core tasks, undertaken at regular intervals during the module, allowed staff to monitor student progress more closely than the former system of examining one individual portfolio per student, with no standardised evaluation system, at the end of semester one.
		Condition 1 (in and out of class)	1) The flexibility of the on-line system enabled a greater ease of access for the students to allocate evenly distributed study time to the tasks because they could access the material and contribute to it from anywhere within or outwith the campus.
		Condition 2 (spread evenly)	1) Each of the core tasks was clearly associated with its equivalent 'Learning Milestone' and was designed to allow an incremental increase in the demands placed on students as the year progresses. 2) Because each of the core tasks were tied to independent lecture blocks, students had the opportunity to apportion their study of each of the material from each of these lectures blocks in intervals throughout the year.
		Condition 3 (deep not surface)	1) Each of the core tasks were matched to the appropriate lecture block content and the tasks were staged with incremental progression of difficulty. This scaffolding enabled each learning activity and assessment to be matched with students' ability. 2) The dialogue between students and tutors in tutorials, and the use of the e-portfolio system to store submissions and responses, allowed participants to engage in meaningful discussion which developed deep, rather than surface, learning. 3) In tutorials students were able to develop understanding further by exploring alternative perspectives and by discussing feedback on tasks that they found helpful.
		Condition 4 (high expectations	1) High expectations were placed on the students in terms of them assuming a substantial level of responsibility for their own learning and time management. This was conveyed by the structure of the core task submissions for which students had to be accountable for their own learning and to their peers for submitting their individual posts.

OUTCOME	**Efficiencies**	1) The replacement of an ineffective, time-consuming task that required individual marking of 20-25 students per tutor, with a group assessed task has achieved a huge saving of staff and student time and anxiety as well as offering a higher quality of feedback. 2) Potential efficiencies include further restructuring next year to reduce staffed seminars to 6 with 5 being directly tied to each core task will achieve a reduction of 32 hours of staff time.
	Informal Learning Gains	1) Staff perception that students were substantially more autonomous in their approach to learning than in the traditional format. **2)** Staff observations that peer feedback increased student reflection through active engagement and debate. 3) Student questionnaire and focus group responses indicated that group work was a useful aide for reflection but requests for more individual feedback and increased staff monitoring 4) Staff perception that students were more confident and more likely to seek individual tutor feedback than previous cohorts 5) Group cohesion increased through standardisation of seminar groups over different modules and increased electronic and physical peer contact via PebblePad software facility. 6) Student questionnaire and focus group responses indicated that both tutor and peer dialogue increased learning 7) Staff observations that students were more motivated and committed than in previous course iterations. 8) Staff considered students to take tasks more seriously in this years cohort than in previous ones. 9) Tutors regarded technology assisted tasks as resulting in greater alignment between tasks and the final exam. 10) Staff observations of increased and more evenly distributed student time on task since tasks were tackled as soon as they went up. 11) Student questionnaire responses indicated that students considered the new system to offer them more flexibility in their learning
	Formal Learning Gains	1) Final summative exam analysis on an identical multiple choice array between years, showed higher scores for 2006-7 Improvement was statistically significant implying that the new course design had a positive impact on student attainment. (t=2.383, df=328, p=.018). 2) Scores from part two of the exam (critical analysis of a seen text) were also collated and analysed. Despite the text chosen being more difficult than the one used in 2005-6, the arithmetical mean score for 2006-7 was 70.2% compared with 59.8% for 2005-6.