

## **University Collaborative Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching & Learning - Example application from 2017-18: New module in BA in Children's Development and Learning (BACDL)**

**Please outline your case for an award:** We are a group of colleagues working in partnership with students to develop a new module in BA in Children's Development and Learning (BACDL), delivered at the Institute of Education. This approach to working in partnership with students is a core part of the project's aim.

The team's aim was to develop and finalise a new module for BACDL in close partnership with the students. The new module will replace two existing modules (starting from 2018-19), aiming to reduce overall assessment at the BACDL programme level, a need which was identified during a Curriculum Review Exercise. A first draft of the module description was developed by the group of academics, with the objective to adopt an inclusive approach to student engagement when finalising the new module. This inclusive approach helped the team to:

- Go beyond feedback and engage students by listening to their voice while finalising the module.
- Co-develop effective and student-friendly assessable outcomes.
- Identify opportunities for 'assessment for learning' and incorporate these into the new module.
- Collaboratively think about constructive alignment, ensuring that the new module reflects this.
- Encourage the development of student-staff partnerships

To accomplish the above, the team leader brought together five academics and six students. Most of the students on this programme are mature students, with full time family duties (e.g. caring for young children), who are working full time while attending University one day each week. To encourage students from this 'hard to reach group' to engage with the above activity, the team leader secured funding through the Partnerships in Learning & Teaching scheme (e.g. provided cover for child care), enabling the engagement of a more diverse group of students.

The team participated in four partnership workshops, during which staff and students engaged in group activities and discussions that helped to revise and finalise the module description and the assessment design for the new module.

Specifically, during the first partnership workshop, the team discussed the aims of the collaborative work and went through the module's summary, aims and assessable outcomes. While doing so, the team looked at the two pre-existing modules and discussed how to merge them into a new module, maintaining key content and elements of quality. During the second workshop, the team explored chapter two from the book 'Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education: a practical guide' (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). This was used to guide the discussions around developing the assessment design for the new module.

During the third workshop, the team discussed aspects of summative and formative tasks and finalised the assessment design. The team leader then shared the new module description and assessment design with the whole BACDL cohort and requested feedback on these before finalising everything at the fourth and last workshop. This enabled the team to get other students' views, which ensured a diverse contribution of views and ideas. During the last meeting, the team used a game format workshop and collaboratively created a visual 'storyboard', outlining the type and sequence of learning activities required to meet the module's learning outcomes (ABC-workshop <http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/abcl/home/abc-workshop-resources/>). Students and staff formed four mixed

groups, each one of them looking at one of the BACDL modules (including the new module). This helped to identify and evaluate how the four modules come together at the programme level.

The close collaboration within the team ensured that the student voice was heard and taken into account while developing the new module. The partnership workshops gave time to the team to collaboratively think about constructive alignment and ensure that the new module's assessment enables students to learn. It also ensured that the module's assessable outcomes are clearly defined using accurate and student-friendly language. All these were achieved because of the close collaboration, and could not have been done by a group of individuals working on their own.

To evaluate the impact of this collaborative work, the team leader developed a pre- and post-workshop survey, which students completed before and after the completion of the four partnership workshops. The survey measured the degree to which students appreciate the importance of providing feedback, participate in activities related to curriculum review/design, feel part of a staff-student community and feel included in developing their programme. The survey results indicate an increase in relation to all of the above, demonstrating the positive impact of this collaborative work on the student experience. Almost all students agreed that it has been very beneficial to take part in this collaborative work, as it helped to develop a sense of belonging and feel part of the community of staff and students working together.

The key benefits of this collaborative work, include:

- Increased student engagement
- Improved student and staff experience
- Increased assessment literacy for both students and staff
- Increased sense of ownership and sense of belonging for both students and staff
- Better/smooth transitions for students (from FDCDL to BACDL)
- Consistency of practices and assessment/learning experiences between FDCDL and BACDL

At the departmental level, the project supported the successful implementation and delivery of the new module, from which future students will benefit. The work that the team produced as a result of this collaboration has also informed the work of other groups at the IoE (i.e. the peer development project on Assessment and Feedback). At the institutional level, this collaborative work has informed other work taking place in relation to assessment and feedback. It has also supported the development of the Centre of Quality support and Development (CQSD) 'Student Engagement' projects.

This collaborative work was in line with the University's 2026 strategy, as it focuses on transforming student experiences while offering to all students' opportunities to enhance and extend their learning. It also supports a University priority, which is to review programme under the new Curriculum Framework and to design complete learning experiences that enable all students to benefit from a comprehensive range of academic, developmental and professional opportunities, encouraging full and on-going engagement with the University. This is exactly what our team aspired for and the survey results clearly show this.