

# Academic-skills based curriculum

## What did/do you do?

Modules for the MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL have been structured to integrate a coherent approach to development and scaffolding of academic skills through connecting modules and seminar teaching across the one-year (FT) degree programme.

## Who is involved?

Dr. Clare Wright and other module leaders for the MA programme structured the skills-focused curriculum for a large cohort of primarily international students.

## How do you do it?

Rather than run as three-hour content-focused lectures with little connection between modules, selected modules form a connected "Coherent Curriculum," consisting of a two-hour lecture and a one-hour academic skills-based seminar (usually with 15-20 students) with themes running across both semesters. In Semester 1, students are given a set of guided questions along with reading assignments; put into groups, they discuss the questions and prepare an "agreed upon" response to post on Blackboard. Over the course of the semester, questions get increasingly broader and require more extensive critical thinking and analysis. Generic formative feedback is provided at the end of the semester to summarise key points and enable students to track their personal development. In Semester 2, students present group responses to key papers, through an oral presentation designed to facilitate discussion among their peers in the seminar. In this way, students build academic skills from guided readings, to critical reading and analysis, and finally to mini-presentations, oral presentation and group discussion skills.

## Why do you do it?

The skills-focused seminars were initially redesigned in response to an unusually large cohort of primarily international PGT students. The question was not only how to handle a large group of students in a room that was too small, but also how to encourage individual development and learning across a large body of students.

## Does it work?

Because this teaching structure has only been in place in selected modules for the past two academic years, it would be difficult to measure improvement in students' mean marks. Student evaluations do suggest that they highly value opportunities to speak in seminar and to work in small groups and that they perceive a greater clarity in programme expectations. Module leaders also feel confident that students are being given the necessary tools to succeed in summative forms of assessment.

## Teaching and Learning Case Study

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### Coherent Curriculum themes:

- Research-informed teaching
- Assessment and feedback
- Skills and employability
- Student engagement

### Other keywords:

Postgraduate taught,  
Blackboard