

# Study and research groups in SELLL

## What did/do you do?

Staff in SELLS organise student-led study and research groups.

## Who is involved?

Information provided by Stacy Gillis, senior tutor, and Jennifer Richards, Head of School.

## How do you do it?

A. Format of the groups

I run seminars of 12-20 students; there are 3-5 students in each study/research group (never more than 5) which meet before the seminar (there are no lectures). Groups are set up in Week One and each group is allocated a title for my Technocultures modules, groups are allocated the names of key figures in the field (e.g. N. Katherine Hayles) and their first task is to find out about this individual (posting information on Blackboard and doing a short presentation). It is a shorthand way for me to refer to a group in the seminar I just call out 'Hayles' and everyone in group knows they are on board. Students sort out a time/place to meet each week. I ensure they have each other mobile phone numbers and email addresses in Week One.

B. What do I give them to do?

It varies from seminar to seminar and, occasionally, from group to group. I use the research groups as a space often in which to link between seminars so rounding off the material we covered and preparing material for the following week. I might set a series of questions that I want each group in each seminar to cover but I also might use the research group time as a time in which one seminar might catch up on material that wasn't discussed in the seminar. I don't get them to post reports rather, they have to post answers to some questions on Blackboard and not always the same questions. I don't ask them to appoint a particular person to be the secretary rather, I encourage them to identify with their research group and to want to post material. I also chase them a lot in the seminars and on email, reminding them!

## Why do you do it?

It allows me to cover more material throughout the semester.  
Gives students who don't want to speak in the larger seminar an opportunity to speak.

Encourages students to work together.

Allows students to think about the process of assessment.

## Does it work?

With direction and support from the tutor, yes. Students post material on Blackboard as requested, with non-posting students chased by the tutor and by other students - including peer assessment as a proportion of the total assessment gives students an incentive to police their peers.

Feedback from students in SELLS largely commended the study groups as a way of helping student prepare for seminars and to extend seminar discussion. Students also complained about other students being 'lazy coasters', so in contrast to their own participation in study and research groups.

## Teaching and Learning Case Study

HaSS 'communicating with students' project, 2010/11

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### Coherent Curriculum theme:

- Student Engagement
- Research-informed teaching