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| **What did you do?**  | Held a formal debate in which 2 teams of students have to research evidence for and against a given topic and construct arguments which they present at a formal public forum |
| **Who is involved?**  | Sue Thorpe, Psychology students |
| **How do you do it?**  | * Teams consist of 6-8 members.
* Three people present the arguments, one person is the discussant.
* Order of speakers and time allowed is strictly controlled (see box below)

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| ORDER OF SPEAKERS | TIMINGS |
| Speaker 1 group 1 | 3 mins |
| Speaker 1 group 2 | 3 mins |
| Speaker 2 group 1 | 2 mins |
| Speaker 2 group 2 | 2 mins |
| Speaker 3 group 1 | 1 min |
| Speaker 3 group 2 | 1 min |
| Questions from the floor | 5 mins |
| Discussant group 1 | 2 mins |
| Discussant group 2 | 2 mins |

* The discussant summarises the points presented by their team and responds to any points raised by the opposition
* The team members who are not speaking do the research as directed by the whole team
* Non speaking team members present this to the speakers to use in their arguments
* All team members decide on how to divide up the tasks
* No audio visual aids allowed – the arguments will be judged entirely on their force and persuasiveness
* Members of the teams not taking part in that particular debate give peer feedback and are in turn given feedback when it is their turn to debate.
* The audience votes for most convincing argument
* Times are strictly enforced: students take it in turns to have custody of the timer and the bell. This is a much sought after position!
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| **Why do you do it?**  | * Combats possible passivity and inattention by engaging students in a novel learning exercise.
* Raises confidence and cultural awareness
* Opens up learning
* Engages students in team work
* Aids critical thinking
* Allows students to explore difficult positions in a safe context
* Encourages in-depth study of a particular topic
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| **Does it work?**  | Student feedback is positive:I thought the debate was a useful exercise. It also got me thinking properly on some of the issues I would talk about in my essay. The most important thing I gained from the debate was the sharing of ideas and breaking the ice with other people in the degree.I feel that the debate was positive in the sense that some of us got to work together as a group. The informal aspect made it more easier for people to present as well, thus, the idea of presenting in front of a larger group of people became less of an issue. This was beneficial considering that we had to present in front of the whole class at a later date. Although I had some reservations about the debate I think it is a good skill to practice and helps to grow confidence in public speaking. I think the peer review is a great idea and again helps boost confidence and highlights areas that you can work on. |
| **Your title**  | Formal debate as a teaching tool |
| **a. Coherent Curriculum themes**  | Student engagement |
| **b. Students' Stage**  | MSc  |
| **c. Students' academic unit**  | Psychology |
| **d. Learning technologies** | n/a |
| **e. Type of interaction**  | Small groups up to 40: 6-8 students per team |
| **f. Main trigger for your practice** | Desire to engage students in learning through constructive argument |
| **g. Tags** | Psychology, Student engagement, group work, debate,  |
| **Your name**  | Sue Thorpe |
| **Your email address**  | susan.thorpe@newcastle.ac.uk |
| **Your Academic Unit**  | Psychology |
| **Your subject area**  | Psychology |

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