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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)  |  |  | | --- | --- | | 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! |
| **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 |
| **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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