IMPROVING STUDENTS’ RESULTS AND COURSE SATISFACTION

Six tips for integrating academic literacies in your program

For many students, learning at university involves the practical application of new ways of thinking and new approaches to learning. These practices are called academic literacies. The following tips are suggestions for integrating academic literacies in programs and courses.

1. Audit the academic literacies required for your course

The first step is to identify what academic skills the students need to learn, and then to develop strategies to teach these capabilities. This process involves both classroom activities and assessment design.

2. Design class activities and assessment tasks to develop the required academic literacies

Through the class activities, students develop required capabilities to successfully complete assessment tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom activities</th>
<th>Assessments: types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Diagnostic (at the beginning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Formative (during program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Summative (at the end)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding your ‘voice’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and critique</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do students engage?

- Group work
- Pairs
- Mind mapping
- Structured discussions
- Problem-solving scenarios
- Peer mentoring

3. Know your students

Use an early assessment or hurdle task to diagnose:

- What capabilities do students already have?
- What capabilities do students need to learn?
- Incorporate the learning of these capabilities into assessment tasks.
- Provide constructive feedback to students on what they need to learn to be successful

4. Integrate literacy capabilities incrementally

The academic literacy capabilities (identified in your audit) need to be incorporated incrementally within a course. Higher order skills of analysis and critique would need to be introduced gradually, rather than by an ‘inoculation’ at the beginning of a program. Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives (1956) outlines the stages as:

Knowing ➔ Understanding ➔ Applying ➔ Analysing ➔ Synthesising ➔ Evaluating

5. Use deconstructed models, examples and exemplars

Use highlighted sections of previous student assignments to demonstrate what is required.

Note: It is difficult for students to know how to write something if they’ve never seen it before.
6. Make students aware of the hierarchy of elements in academic assignments

Students need to understand that in academic assignments there is a hierarchy of elements. The higher-order skills of understanding and addressing the purpose (i.e., the assessment task), using an acceptable structure, and integrating evidence from appropriate sources, are essential for success in an assessment task.

Collaborative projects with RMIT Study and Learning Centre

By focusing on key transition points, the Academic Literacies Integration Project provides a systemic and sustainable strategy for the development of academic literacies. The following diagram outlines a model of collaboration for the integration of academic literacies within programs and courses.