Responding to student feedback: From full-cohort lectures to MOLE content and small group tutorials

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The School of Health and Related Research responded to student feedback regarding the delivery of the HAR6030 Research Methods module to provide students with more practical workshop style activities. With the introduction of a Learning Technologist, the delivery of this module was changed from full cohort lecture-style to small discussion tutorials which students attended having already accessed information about each topic and interacted online.

What issues were you trying to address?

In changing the delivery of this module, we were aiming to create weekly small group tutorials where students had the chance to interact with the tutor as well as carrying out ‘workshop’ style activities where they could gain the practical skills required for Research Methods training.

Materials are delivered online with tutorials giving the opportunity to discuss and practice the various skills. This model replaced the previous ‘lecture’ model where students were in large groups, listening to material being delivered didactically, with only two tutorials provided throughout the module.

What impact did your initiative have?

Feedback on this module has been positive over the two iterations delivered so far. The introduction of formative online journals has helped tutors keep track of students’ abilities and provide appropriate feedback to them.

What advice would you give others if they were to implement a similar approach?

Formative assessment is important as it enables tutors to see whether students are engaging with online materials. Weekly feedback sessions for tutors are helpful in providing support, evaluating sessions and raising issues before they get out of hand.

Online materials need to be engaging and interesting. Key messages can be summarised in tutorials, but not re-delivered as ‘mini-lectures’ as the emphasis in tutorials is on consolidating the ideas and practising skills.