

Back to School: educating
ourselves about students'
previous learning experience

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Why go back to school?

- My role at Kingston University
 - Retention
 - Past experience of teaching in Further Education
- University of Kent curriculum alignment work (Sellers 2005)

From this



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Outline of Project

- **Phase One**
Review A level syllabus against Kingston level 1 syllabus
- **Phase Two**
Teaching staff visit schools and colleges to observe teaching and learning
- **Phase Three**
Implement initiatives based on observation

Phase One

Syllabus review

- A level Biology syllabus was mapped against the first year Bioscience curriculum.
- There was a reasonable match BUT we aware of the difference that attainment and previous experience could make SO..

Phase Two

School and College Visits

- 7 members of the teaching team visited 6 local schools and colleges
- Observations
 - Small group teaching
 - Extensive guidance
 - Lot of classroom talk
 - Issues about classroom behaviour
 - Limited range of practical experience with relatively limited range of equipment.

Phase Three

Implementation

- Visits made a big impression on teaching team
- Very willing to review their practice in the light of their observations. This extended to colleagues who had not made visits.
- Resulted in a range of initiatives.

Initiatives that came out of observations 1

Being more explicit about the demands of higher education.

- expansion of learning outcomes
- expectations guide
- essay writing project

Initiatives that came out of observations 2

Reflecting previous learning experience

- Developing the use of smaller groups in practical laboratory classes
- Trying to make adaptations to the large lecture format

Conclusion

- School and college visits act as a powerful motivator to staff to examine the first year experience by providing a change in perspective.
- ‘Explains a lot of what was, to me, puzzling behaviour by students.’

References

Sellers, J. (2005) Keynote address. Feb 23
Cat Hill, Middlesex University Learning
and Teaching Conference