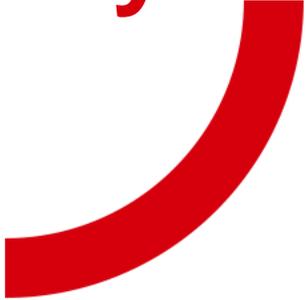




Encouraging students to listen and talk: Assessing oral skills in a level-one history module



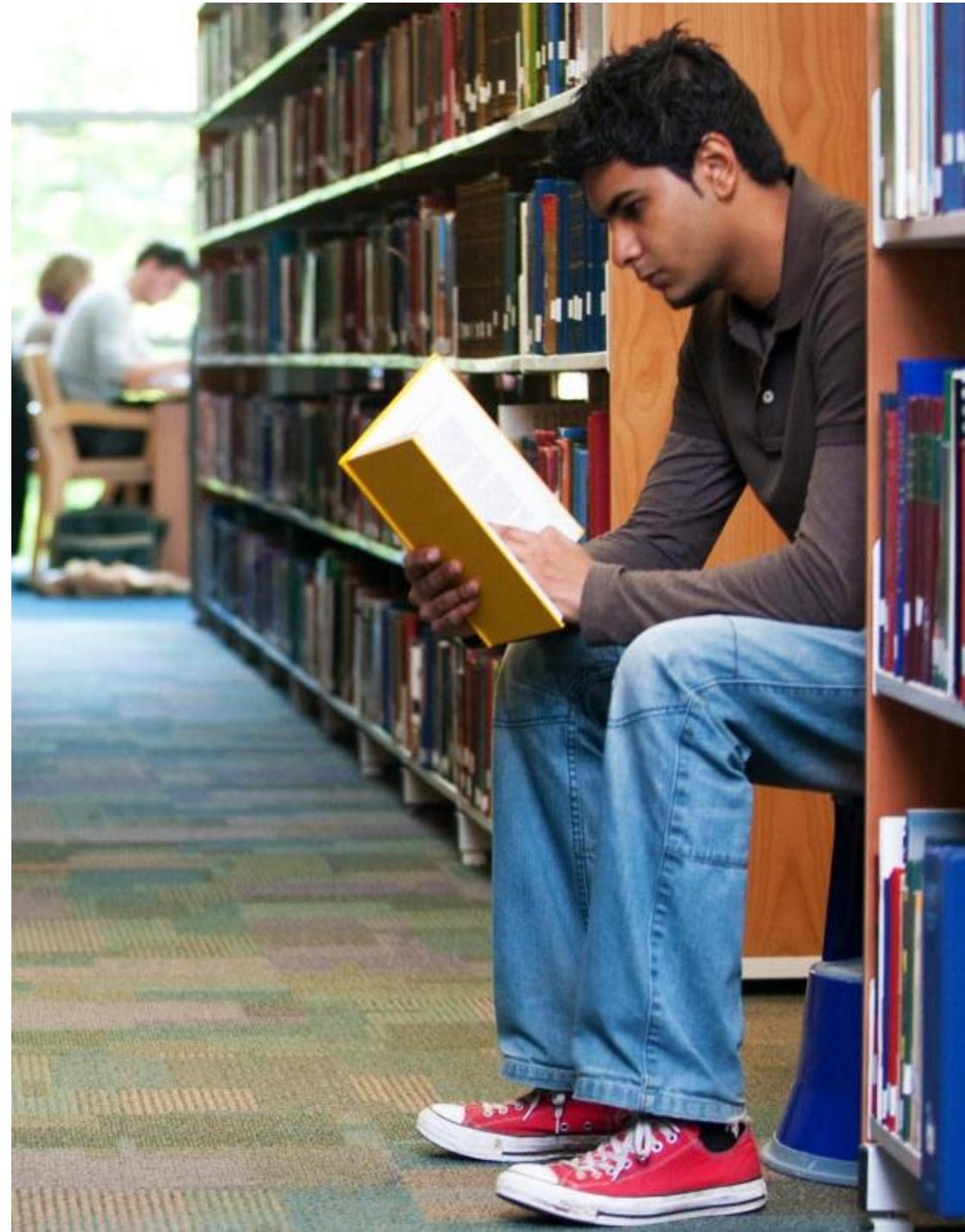
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The Aim

- Transition from secondary to tertiary education
 - Existing focus on essays; exams; group work; independent reading skills; referencing, etc.
- Tutorial/seminar skills?
 - Speaking
 - Listening
 - Critical engagement
- Oral skills
 - Presentations
 - Discursive skills
 - Formation of questions
 - Respect for other people



The Theory

‘Students often spend more time listening as a way of learning than speaking or even reading and writing’ (Caspersz & Stasinska, 2015)

- Attentive listening
 - A means to process and comprehend information
- Active listening and responses
 - Move beyond passive learning
 - Evaluative and transformative
 - Critical analysis and questioning
 - Encouraging dialogue and exchange of ideas



The Module

Revolutions (HIS1004)

- Level 1 module
- Historiography and debates
- Comparative - examine a broad range of revolutions since the 17th century: eg. American, French, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, Velvet, Arab Spring.
- Weekly 1½ hour lectures (whole class); weekly 1½ hour tutorials (12 students each)



Formative Assessment

1. Individual student presentation

- Topic – specific historiographical debate
- Immediate tutor feedback to presenter

2. Response to presentation

- Student chair for each small group discussion
- Respondent summary and questions to presenter
- Written reflection on discussion (1,200 words)
- Marking guidelines:
 - Clarity and relevance in referring to the critical questions / central issues raised
 - Willingness to engage with the presenter's argument and their viewpoint
 - Understanding of the differing debates
 - Courtesy and respect towards the presenter



Summative Assessment

Interview / Oral Exam

- 10 minutes – individual.
- Two examiners.
- Choice of three opening questions.
- Organic discussion (directed towards the other two questions).
- Audio-recorded (Mediasite) and available to both examiners and students.
- Feedback written up and mark agreed immediately after exam.

- Marking Criteria:
 - Clarity and focus of response; the formation of an argument; recognition of the key debates; explanation of key terms; understanding of the topic; use of evidence.



The Outcome

- Assessment structure was intended to develop good university learning habits
 - active listening skills.
 - tutorial engagement.
 - formation of critical and creative questioning.
- Tutors noted a raised level of student discussion and questioning during the course
 - Strong performances in oral exams
 - examiners noted the ability of most students to respond effectively to questions.
- Student feedback positive
 - 'I like the way much of the learning was done orally'
 - '..just what I needed to experience in my first few months of University'





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