

Evaluation of an assessed collaborative online activity and comparison with similar activities in other Science contexts

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Introduction

An online collaborative activity based on the founder effect was first introduced on S366 (Evolution) as an extension to a face-to-face tutorial activity; in 2010 it was offered as an optional but entirely virtual activity, and in 2011 was introduced as an assessed activity, with both participation and observations being assessed in a TMA. The exercise was based on the following principles.

- Each student feels personally involved because he/she takes ownership of one particular sample
- Each sample is presented visually (as a photograph) so looks more interesting/engaging than tables of figures or text
- The first task is quick and simple so student engages straight away
- More challenging tasks follow later (scaffolding effect)
- Full interpretation requires considerable thought (stretches the more able students)



Aims of the Project

- Explore the reasons for the increasing success of the founder effect activity on S366 from 2009 to 2011
- Compare student participation over this period
- Explore whether participation improved performance
- Compare student perceptions with those of participants in similar online collaborative activities on other Science modules eg S155, S288, SDK228
- Try to establish a common evaluation framework for such collaborative online activities
- Export the pedagogy behind this activity to other subject areas

How this will be achieved

- Measure student participation in 2011 in assessed v formative parts of the founder effect activity, and student performance in the assessed part
- Compare with participation in 2009 and 2010 when activity was formative only
- Undertake structured conversations with a sample of students and ALs exploring their attitudes, satisfaction and level of engagement before and after participation in the activity.
- Compare student participation in, and perceptions of online collaborative activities on S366 and S155, S288 and SDK228

Expected Outcomes

- Produce novel assessments which are memorable and enjoyable to participate in
- Highlight the importance of collaboration, by requiring data to be pooled, or compared with that from another participant
- Produce assessment in which the 'correct' answer is different for different students, so that answers to assessment questions cannot be plagiarised
- Build on the success of this activity, and produce guidelines on how to make such activities successful
- Explore possibilities of applying same principles to iCMA and OpenMark questions
- Set up a common framework for evaluating online collaborative activities in different Science modules, and to inform interested parties in other subject areas

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