

Online Reading Lists: Encouraging Staff Engagement

What makes a good reading list? What do students do with reading lists? What helps them make the most of the reading list for a module?

Many institutions now use software to provide online reading lists for modules. At the University of Worcester (UW) we have Talis Aspire, and have worked hard to engage both staff and students with the resource. While usage and feedback have been good, and many academics have become adept at updating and publishing their lists, there is work to be done in answering the above questions and ensuring that academics engage with reading lists at more than just a surface level. Research shows that, properly used, reading lists can help promote information literacy and help lecturers communicate with students (Brewerton 2014; Miller 1999; Siddall and Rose 2014). Alongside information literacy sessions they can also play a key role in helping students to avoid library anxiety (Van Scoyoc 2003). Yet many academics remain wary of giving too much information, spoon feeding students and not allowing the students enough freedom to research their own topics, or, at the other extreme let their lists lie fallow as “static records of the tutor’s own reading experience” (Stokes and Martin 2008).

This workshop asks participants to examine the areas they would expect academics to consider when creating a reading list; types of content, format, length and layout (30 minutes). The workshop then continues with recreating a session (30 minutes) given to academic staff at the UW Learning and Teaching Conference and as part of the PG Cert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, using TurningPoint software. We will examine how to encourage lecturers to maximise the impact of their reading lists and increase library use. We will consider the pedagogy of reading lists, how to engage students with reading and how academic staff and the library can support students in using the resources available, drawing on best practice from academic colleagues at UW.

This session will give a practical illustration of how to encourage academics of the need to engage with reading lists. It will be useful to anyone hoping to further engage academic colleagues with online reading list systems or hoping to breathe new life into departments where enthusiasm is flagging.

Keywords: reading, academics, engagement

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