

Student Centred Learning - Guidance			
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1. Introduction

The University Mission contained within the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan states:

Operating on a vibrant 21st Century university campus, offering a modern innovative British style education producing distinctive, highly employable and high calibre graduates contributing to the development of Egypt and the MENA region.

This Mission and Strategic Plan provide the context within which Teaching and Learning is developed and delivered at BUE. The Plan contains six overriding and inter-related themes of which Themes 2 and 3 are of particular importance, committing the University to:

- Deliver a Vibrant 21st Century University Campus; and
- Deliver a Transformational British Higher Education Experience.

The Themes state that *BUE “will be a student-centred institution that inspires and develops students in a vibrant campus setting”* and that *“it will ensure that the students are active*

participants in their learning and are provided with a transformational Student Experience to enable them to excel whilst developing graduate attributes required by employers and for lifetime achievement.” In short, BUE seeks to develop its students into graduates with the skills and competencies to be independent, critical thinkers, to *Learn how to think, not what to think.*

Student Centred Learning and Technology Enhanced Learning are now both key elements of all BUE Faculty strategic plans. As well as being crucial to enhancing programme delivery and providing a distinctive student experience, they are also vital in contributing to BUE’s educational offer and developing its competitive advantage.

2. Why use learner centred approaches?

Higher education should not be a passive process. It is transformational and requires active engagement by all participants. In order to achieve a transformational student experience, the BUE is committed to promoting active involvement by students in all aspects of their learning and to providing opportunities for students to influence their individual and collective learning experience.

In doing so there is an expectation that staff and students should work in partnership. In the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) gives the following definition of partnership:

'partner' and 'partnership' are used in a broad sense to indicate joint working between students and staff. In this context partnership working is based on the values of: openness; trust and honesty; agreed shared goals and values; and regular communication between the partners. It is not based on the legal conception of equal responsibility and liability; rather partnership working recognises that all members in the partnership have legitimate, but different, perceptions and experiences. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned. The terms reflect a mature relationship based on mutual respect between students and staff. (QAA 2013, p. 3)

A key way in which effective partnerships are constructed is via the Teaching and Learning process. To ensure this, the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy seeks to develop a Student Centred Learning (SCL) approach.

Student Centred Learning is characterised by (cf. Lea et al, 2003):

- a. The reliance on active rather than passive learning.
- b. An emphasis on deep learning and understanding.
- c. Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student.
- d. An increased sense of autonomy in the learner.
- e. An interdependence between teacher and learner.
- f. Mutual respect within the learner teacher relationship.
- g. A reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both the teacher and the learner.

3. How to develop learner centred approaches – A framework

Strategies to support the delivery of SCL are intended to:

- a. Enable students to be active participants in developing knowledge and skills
This can include activities in class, library and research activities, fieldwork, and the use of technology enhanced learning.
- b. Enable students to understand and to reflect on what they are doing and why they are doing it
This can be done by providing appropriate IAGS and by using learning logs, analytical presentations etc.
- c. Focus on interaction
Such as by the use of tutorials, buzz groups and larger discussion groups etc.
- d. Focus on the incremental development of transferable skills
Looking beyond the immediate programme requirements to other benefits to students later on in their careers and in life such as teamwork, communication, project management etc.

It is recognised that staff will develop their repertoire of SCL approaches over time and that this will be done incrementally. It will also require staff to take risks in their teaching practice as they explore new approaches to programme delivery.

The breadth and depth of SCL approaches can be seen as a developing a continuum of activities beginning with general student support and guidance progressing through to facilitating student-led learning. Such approaches may include the following:

<i>A framework for developing student centred learning</i>							
<i>Providing information, advice, guidance & support (IAGS)</i>							
University / Faculty / Departmental Information, Advice and Guidance & Support (IAGS) systems	Initial & ongoing induction activities to develop awareness of key ideas and services	Programme Student Handbooks	eLearning & eLearning Musts	Office Hours & Personal Tutors	At risk students: systems to identify & support	Initial & ongoing inductions to Library and Information Literacy Skills	
<i>Making teaching sessions interactive</i>							
Use of feedback	Practical application	eLearning, blended learning, and technology enhanced learning	Different types of questioning	Discussion groups, debate, buzz groups	Guest and student presentations	Team and group work	Use of different media
<i>Student led learning</i>							
Formative assessment to assess progress and provide timely feedback	Summative assessment to promote student enquiry	Blended learning, problem based and activity based learning	Independent, group & team projects & research	Reflective diaries or learning logs	Technology enhanced learning and blended learning	Practical application to produce artefacts / media / articles / videos etc	Competitions to promote skills e.g. entrepreneurship
<i>Fieldwork trips, visits, placements, internships, employability, alumni & study abroad</i>							
Internships	Mentoring by alumni	Fieldwork	Visits	Placements	Employment fairs	Study abroad	
<i>Extra-curricular activities</i>							
Provision of a range of clubs and societies for students to broaden their experience and to engage with peers and the wider community							

4. The role of assessment

As well as requiring staff to re-think methods of programme delivery, SCL also requires a reconsideration of the means by which learning is assessed. With an emphasis on SCL,

assessment strategies can change the focus from assessing whether students have learned anything to creating assessments which double as learning experiences in themselves. As examples activity based learning and problem based learning provide opportunities for individual and group independent projects to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills through the activity itself and the means of assessment.

Formative assessments are a way for the lecturer and student to communicate in order to facilitate a better understanding of the material. Formative assessments can improve student understanding and the quality of teaching by providing feedback for both the teacher and the student about learning progress with the goal of improving both instruction and learning.

Audience response systems (ARS) can give students a chance to evaluate what they have learned and comment on how beneficial each lesson was to them thus enhancing motivation and engagement. Once given this feedback the lecturer can alter the plan of instruction, or students can work out misunderstandings with their peers or classroom discussion. Using clickers, or giving student the ability to text answers to questions through a website, can help more feedback to be acquired from students since their responses is anonymous.

5. Use of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) to support SCL

As outlined, the use of technology can play an important role in supporting the delivery of SCL. It can contribute to an appropriate approach to 'blended learning' in which a student learns in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some degree of control over the time, place, path or pace of their learning.

The benefit of blended learning approaches is that they support Student Centred Learning by:

- a. Providing students with a more complete learning experience.
- b. Encouraging learning by doing rather than learning by being told.
- c. Giving students greater opportunity for independent study.
- d. Helping to differentiate student abilities and outcomes.

Strategies to support the achievement of Theme 3 include but are not limited to:

- a. Ensuring all modules meet the requirements of eLearning Phase 1 and 2 Musts.
- b. Identification of modules in each year to pilot a blended learning approach.

- c. Exposing students to commercial, industry standard technology systems.
- d. Engage with BUE's Centre for Emerging Learning Technologies to look at use of portable devices to facilitate learning and assessment.

6. Where to start?

While introducing elements of SCL into programme delivery is likely to be positive in and of itself, a useful starting point would be to understand if there are specific challenges one wishes to address. This might relate to low levels of student engagement and attendance, general poor performance, failure to develop key transferable and employability skills or difficulties experienced by students in understanding particular concepts. By using the module ILOs, consideration can be given to how SCL can support the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills. Learning strategies should then inform the assessment strategy for the module which, in turn, should be reflected in the approach taken to providing feedback to students on their performance.

7. Some useful resources

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/heav/student-engagement>

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/heav/students-partners>

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/heav/curriculum-design>

[Student-Centred Learning Toolkit](#)