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Rethinking Team-Taught Teaching: Literary Theory in English and Creative Writing

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This presentation offers an overview of, and reflection on the full-scale review of EN20120 (Literary Theory: Debates and Dialogues), the core year-2 module on literary studies UG schemes in the Dept of English and Creative Writing. The original module was rooted in an incremental delivery model of the history of literary theory, delivered by a small team of colleagues. In response to evolutionary changes to the rest of the curriculum in the department, which is supported by this core module, we as module co-coordinators decided to review the module and explore ways in which it can be made more tailored to the department’s curriculum, staff critical practice, and modes of delivery that are currently employed in the department.

Rather than attempting to offer a necessarily incomplete and piecemeal history of theoretics, as it did previously, the restructured module focusses on modelling good practice in deploying theory in students’ own critical practice via seminars that explore specific theoretical concepts and approaches via active learning. The design of the module allows for an agile response to annual changes in staff availability (workload management, research leave), and delivery of the module allows for alignment with the block-teaching model that the department utilises for option modules. The lecture component has been reconfigured into a portfolio of asynchronous recordings, and student engagement with this is assessed via a Blackboard Test contributing 10% of the module mark. This is an innovative approach in the context of the department’s assessment mix, and encourages students to actively engage with lecture-type materials.

The presentation reflects on the first year of delivering the module in its redesigned form. SES feedback, student attainment, engagement figures, and staff feedback form the basis of this reflection, but there is a wider frame of reference provided by the post-COVID context as well as a steadily increasing Staff Student Ratio in the department and the need to be responsive to changing educational contexts. The review of EN20120 has deployed learning designs that potentially maximise student outcomes while making as effective use of staff time as is currently possible.

