

O11. Enhancing literature review skills within forensic science undergraduate project work through techniques of concept mapping

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All science students engage in project work, normally in their final year of study. A crucial part of that exercise is in understanding the context of and being able to evaluate their work through a sound knowledge of the relevant literature. Despite being able to identify some publications of relevance students frequently fail to fully assimilate previous work and to acquire sufficient understanding to be able to properly evaluate the results of their own study. This project aims to enhance the skills of final year forensic science students in reviewing and critically appraising the primary literature on a specified topic using techniques of concept mapping. Concept maps facilitate the organization and extraction of key information from very many sources with a view to helping the learner to assimilate the material in a structured and systematic manner.

The project has been structured in three phases. Firstly, software tools to facilitate the production of concept maps were evaluated and the VUE package from Tufts University selected. Three presentations on the purpose and use of concepts maps together with exemplar maps on forensic topics were prepared. Secondly, the student cohort was surveyed as to their experience and expectations of preparing a literature review and three lecture/ workshop sessions were held at the start of the year to prepare the students for using concepts maps in their own literature work. Over the following weeks students were given individual support where requested in working on their draft maps. Finally, the maps prepared by students were evaluated and the literature reviews that they submitted towards the end of semester one, were assessed in our usual manner which included an interview examination. A final evaluation questionnaire on the exercise overall was also completed by the students.

The results and evaluation of the project are being examined currently and will be disseminated in this presentation.

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