

A guide to the facilitation of Enquiry-Based Learning for graduate students

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Aims of this guide

Our aim in writing this guide was to create a user-friendly resource for people who currently lead, or are interested in leading, small groups of students. We wanted to introduce Enquiry-Based Learning (EBL) to people who are not necessarily familiar with it, to explain its benefits for students and tutors and to suggest how small-group leaders might go about implementing it. Therefore this guide offers definitions, a case study and links to further resources about the EBL process. It also offers practical hints and tips about running small-group sessions.

Methodology

We treated the collaborative writing of this guide as an EBL exercise. The process was highly interactive and iterative. In order to produce the guide we researched existing literature on the facilitation process. We also gathered the opinions of a number of second year undergraduate students, several experienced facilitators and some postgraduate students who were facilitating classes at the time of writing. All unreferenced quotes within the guide have come from these sources.

A note on the second edition

After the first edition of this guide, we went on to develop interactive workshops based on our research. The workshops developed and expanded into a series. Thanks to participants' input and experience, this second edition reflects more closely the iterative EBL process. The guide still focuses on practical aspects of facilitation, updated based on our experiences, but also includes some additional theory and areas of EBL that facilitators may want to consider, such as developing triggers and assessment.

About the Authors:

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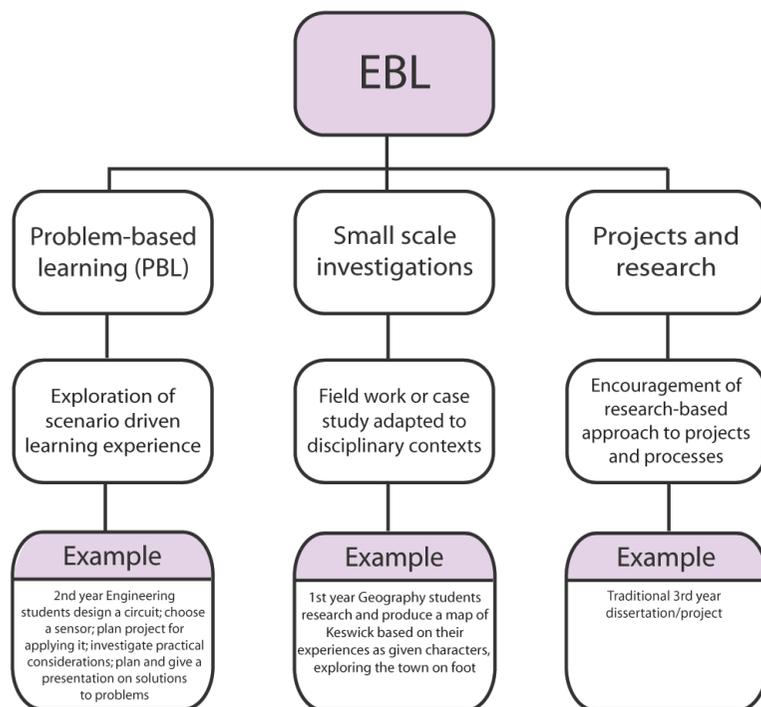
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What is EBL?

Learning which:

- is student-centred
- encourages collaborative approach to study
- is self-directed
- involves students doing research
- develops transferable life skills
- is often guided by a facilitator

EBL: Some examples



For more examples, see Further Resources at end of this guide

Links to Further Resources:

The University of Manchester

Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning (CEEBL) website:

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/ceebl/>

CEEBL's case studies of projects, downloadable files:

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/ceebl/projects/>

http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/ceebl/resources/guides/studentguide_july06.pdf

- See appendix for examples of EBL projects

'2nd Year Tutorials':

http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/ceebl/resources/guides/SEERS_Guides.zip

The University of Sheffield

Centre for Inquiry-based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences (CILASS) website:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/cilass/>

The University of Huddersfield

Case based learning in Politics: <http://www.hud.ac.uk/cbl/>

McMaster University

Resources on inquiry and learning:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/cl/inquiry/inquiry.resources.htm>

Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning

<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/ijpbl/>

The Open University

Jenny Rogers (2001), Adults Learning, 4th edition (Buckingham: Open University Press) in an article found at:

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/student/services/osmhn/he-fe-staff/give.html>

What if specific individuals don't understand or engage with the problem?

Sometimes people who don't see the point of EBL will not engage fully with the process, perhaps because their first language is not English or they are used to a different education system. In this case it is important to make sure that you have fully explained

- the objectives of the process
- the personal advantages to the student
- and how the process will work in practice

Make sure that you are available to answer questions (e.g. via email; in person in office hours), especially at the start of the course

Where can I find further resources and extra support for facilitation?

The Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning hold regular events and training for facilitation techniques. See the website at www.manchester.ac.uk/ceeb1 for further resources and a calendar of upcoming events. CEEBL also has flexible learning spaces in the Sackville Street Building and across the faculties that are available for staff and students to book.

What is a Facilitator?

A person or organization assigned to facilitate progress towards a specific objective, especially one whose role is to foster communication or understanding within a group of people, or negotiations between various parties; a mediator; a coordinator¹

Experienced facilitators gave the following definitions:

An Enabler:

'one who empowers and trusts students; who engages with, and acts as a consultant for, students in their enquiries.'

A Guide:

'Someone who guides participants through a process/ towards a goal by allowing the learners to find information/ experience things for themselves.'

What makes a good Facilitator?

Communication Skills

Includes: presentation skills (e.g. clear speaker); sense of humour; approachability; friendliness; patience; empathy; fairness; ability to give and receive feedback; positivity.

Student:

'It is important to be in an atmosphere where free discussion and comment are encouraged.'

On feedback: *'we learn more and it becomes more memorable.'*

Facilitator:

'Patience and honesty. A sense of humour doesn't hurt either.'

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary Online, <www.oed.com>

Group Leadership Skills

Includes: guiding, not telling; trust in students to reach a conclusion themselves; confidence;

Student :

'It is irrelevant whether a person is a particularly strong academic if they can't put their knowledge across'

'A bad facilitator is someone who has 'a tendency to approach seminars much like a lecture and lead with only minimal input from the group'

Facilitator:

'Someone who co-develops and co-sustains an environment of trust and openness, where information, and skills are valued and shared... who is attentive, flexible and responsive to the needs of others... who actively encourages exploration but understands the parameters of focused research.'

Organisation skills

Includes: planning and structuring the session; good time management skills; creativity; developing thoughtful tasks for students

Student:

'If a definite aim for the lesson is set out then it is easier to learn.'

'If a teacher has good stuff for the class to do it makes it much easier and more fun.'

Subject Knowledge

Includes: knowledge and enthusiasm for the specific topic; knowledge of practicalities of the course as a whole; the facilitator can be used as a learning resource

Student:

'There is no point having a group leader who can't answer questions fully/ properly.'

Facilitator:

'A facilitator can act as a consultant when appropriately approached.'

FAQs on Facilitation Techniques

How can I encourage participation from everyone in the group?

If there are members of the group who are quiet and unsure of giving their opinion, then you could invite them to offer some feedback on the presentation they have just seen. The main point is to encourage participation without trying to pressure someone into involvement.

What if one person takes over the discussion?

You could use a summary technique that includes the rest of the group but excludes that person by implication, for example, 'Does the rest of the group agree with that point?' or 'Does anyone else have a different perspective on that issue?'

What if there is a deadly silence from the whole group?

Be patient and don't be afraid of silences. Give the group time to think and let them become uncomfortable with the silence themselves. If you're unsure of doing this then you can always rephrase or clarify the question. Try breaking the question down into smaller component parts and build back up to the whole.

What if I get asked a question I can't answer?

Use the group as a resource and ask 'Would anyone else like to explain this?' Many people like the chance to show what they know and explaining to others reinforces learning for the individual and for the group as a whole. If the group is asking a large number of questions that neither you nor they know the answer to, take time to list the group's learning needs. These questions can be fed back to the course leaders. A follow up email or revision at the next class can clarify these issues. It is ok to say 'I don't know, but will find out for you later' or ask the group to find out and discuss it with them at the next session.

How do I encourage the group to work together as a team?

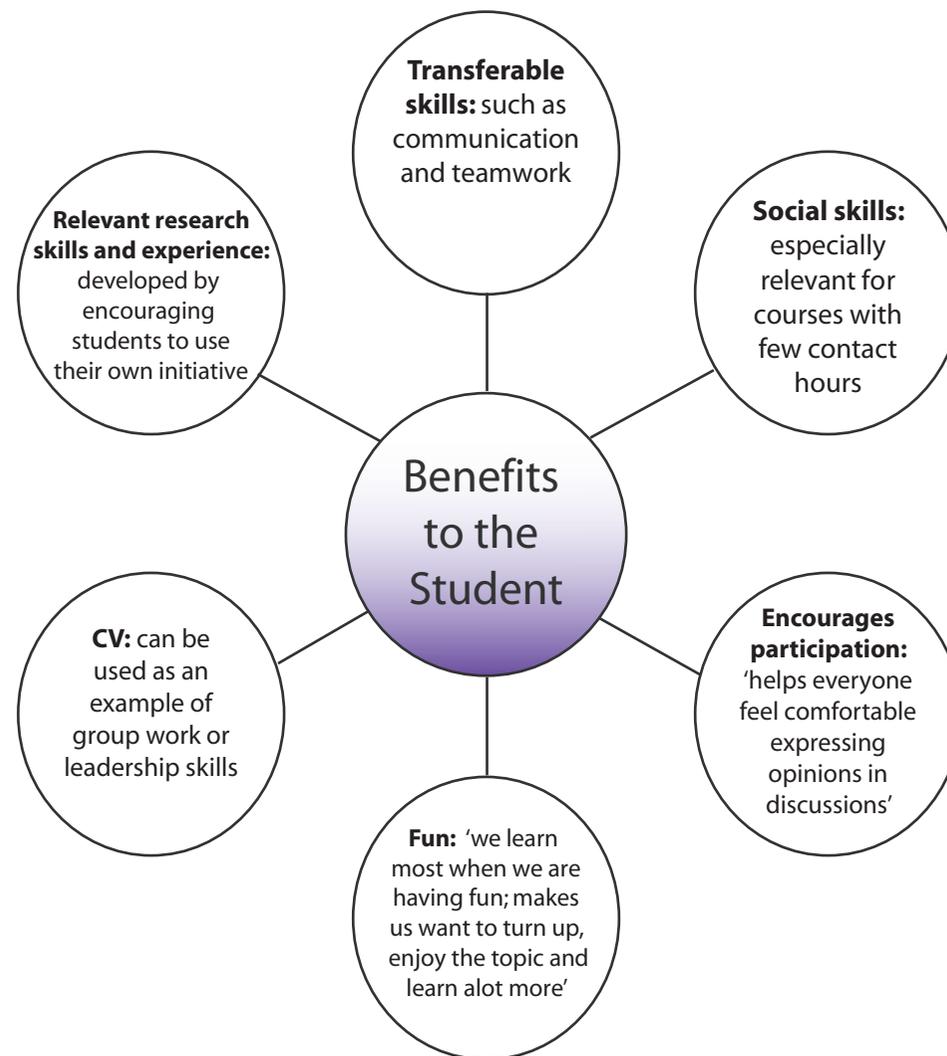
Emphasise that they communicate with each other (e.g. exchange emails, use an online Discussion Board). Ask that they identify specific rather than general problems and address these. Suggest that they have a social activity and get to know each other a little better. Make sure that everybody knows their roles within the team. Offer to sit in on one of their team meetings and suggest improvements.

Assessment competencies based on Bloom's Taxonomy

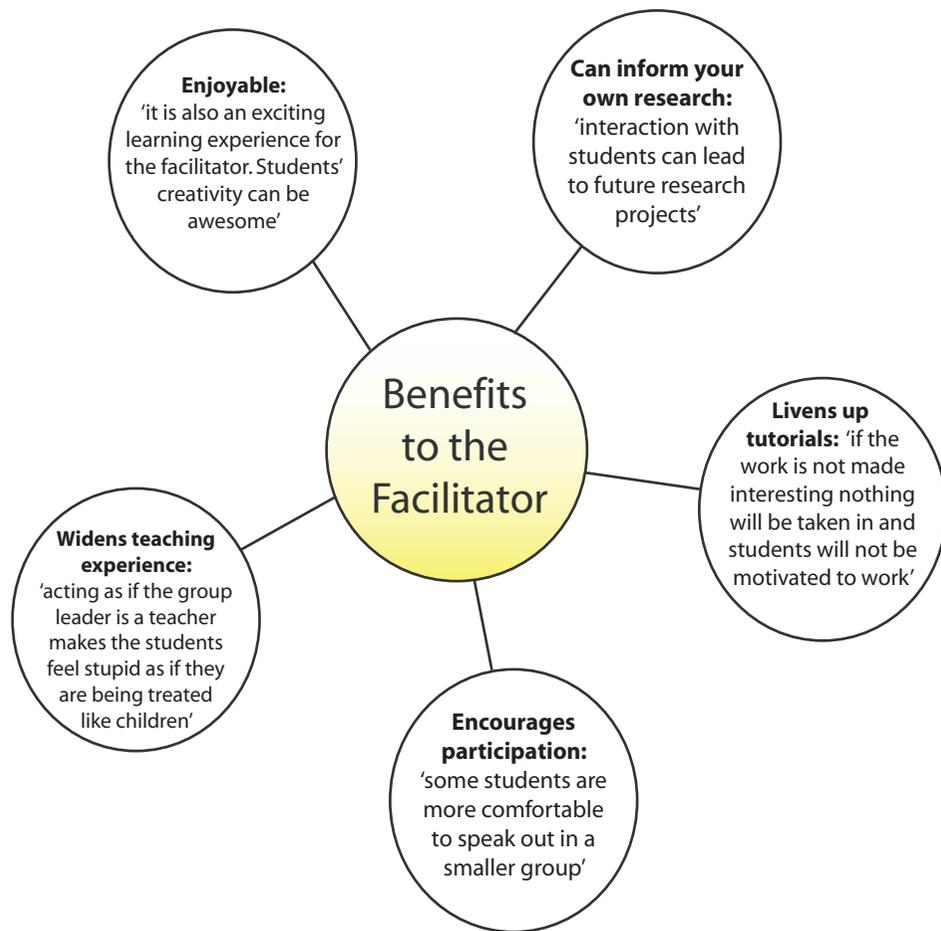


Why should you do it?

The benefits of EBL for students



The benefits of EBL for facilitators



Assessment

The assessment on a module may be decided by the course leader, with little input from other members of the teaching team. However, some postgraduate facilitators may have the freedom to devise their own assessment, or may be interested in assessing EBL in the future.

Assessment can be broadly split into two categories:

Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
Normally during a course	Normally at the end of a course
Often considers process	Often considers product/performance
Normally used to help improve learning	Normally used to grade learning
Includes feedback	Does not always include feedback
Can include peer or self assessment	Does not often include peer or self assessment

Assessment should always reflect learning objectives. In EBL, the learning objectives usually encourage students to be aware of how they are learning (the learning process). Therefore, here we examine how learning process or method can be assessed as well as subject content. The diagram¹¹ on the following page is based on the levels found in Bloom's taxonomy and considers which level is being assessed when using a particular form of assessment. The inner circle shows six educational objectives, the middle ring shows associated action words which could be used in a trigger question and the outer ring shows a broad range of assessment ideas.

Triggers

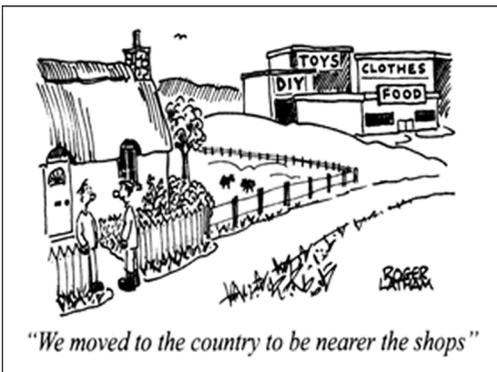
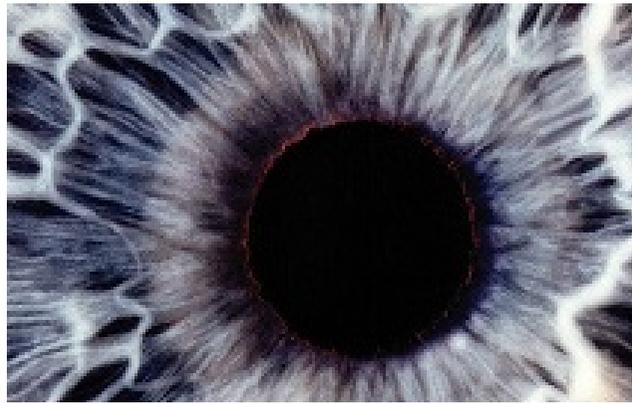
A Trigger is ... *a clear, but open, starting point*⁹

A good trigger initiates a process of enquiry that:

- Encourages students to find more information than is initially presented to them
- Is unique and provides enough freedom so that there is no 'right' process or formula that will 'solve' it
- Changes as information is found
- Encourages students to make decisions and provide solutions to real world problems
- Stimulates independent learning¹⁰

Triggers can be:

- Journal articles
- Patient notes
- Newspaper headlines
- Artefacts
- Cartoons
- Photographs
- Props for role play
- Scenarios...



Make history compulsory to at least 16, say inspectors

9. Kahn, P. & O'Rourke, K. (2004). Guide to curriculum design: enquiry-based learning. York: Higher Education Academy, Imaginative Curriculum Network, p. 5 http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/ceeb/learning/guides/kahn_2004.pdf

10. Amalgamated from Kahn and O'Rourke and Barron, C et al (2008) "The Child's World": A creative and visual trigger to stimulate student enquiry in a problem based learning module, Nurse Education Today, Volume 28, Issue 8, November, Pages 962-969:

Some Theory

Why EBL?

Students can quickly forget the information they have gained through rote learning, during lectures and revising for exams, and can find it hard to apply theory to real situations, later on in their University or work life.

EBL allows participants to experience learning that simulates real life situations and this increases retention and application of knowledge. The research below provides further evidence.

Most people learn:

- 10% of what they read
- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they see and hear
- 70% of what they talk over with others
- 80% of what they do in real life
- 95% of what they teach somebody else²

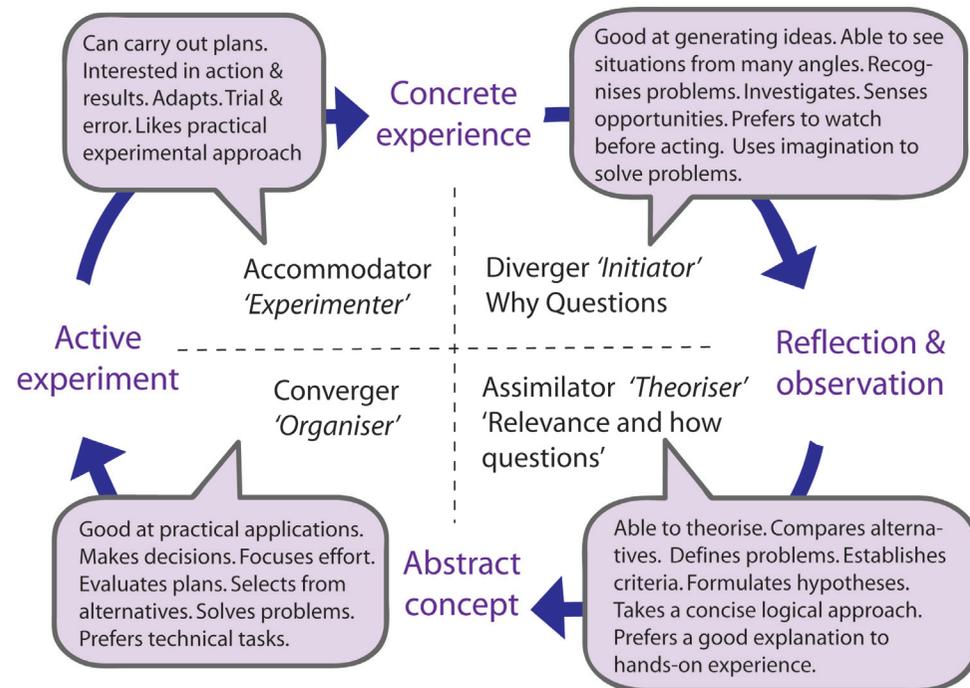
Passive Learning
↓
Active Learning

Further information about levels of learning can be found in Benjamin Bloom's work. Bloom examined levels of knowledge, comprehension and thinking that students could be expected to engage in. Bloom organised cognitive processes into a hierarchical taxonomy that has proven influential in the establishment of learning objectives for educational activities³. You can see an adaptation of Bloom's ideas in the 'Assessment' section of this guide.

2. Biggs (1999), Teaching for Quality Learning at University, SRHE & Open University Press: Buckingham
3. Bloom, B.S. (ed.) (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The classification of Educational Goals: Handbook I, Cognitive Domain, New York: Toronto: Longmans

Why group work?

EBL often involves an element of group work and the diagram below⁴, based on Kolb's learning cycle (in this instance adapted for Geography students), shows how working as a group, bringing together skills and knowledge, can result in a much deeper level of learning, since each stage of the cycle is likely to be experienced more thoroughly.



4. Adapted from Kolb's (1981, 1984) experiential learning model and Healey et al. (2005) and Healey and Jenkins (2000) associated learning styles

Feedback

*"The aim of feedback is to help students diagnose their strengths and weaknesses. As the facilitator you should support the student in finding their own way of correcting problems rather than doing the work for them."*⁸

There is a lot of research surrounding feedback to students. These are just some of the models that have been developed.

Feedback should be:

- S** SPECIFIC - always give examples and explain why it was good/not good and how it can be improved
- T** TIMELY - closely follow event/presentation
- R** RELEVANT - focus on a few key things, not many things at once
- O** OBJECTIVE - always be factual and don't attack someone's personality. Focus on the work, not the student.
- B** BALANCED - include both good points and constructive ways to improve on weaknesses
- E** ENTHUSIASTIC - being positive will help to motivate

The Feedback Sandwich

1. Give the good news
What have they done well? This encourages self-confidence which will aid further learning.

2. Give the bad news constructively
What needs improving? How can it be improved? Be specific, constructive and kind.

3. End on a high note
Reinforce what they have done well. Be encouraging and truthful.

8 Jenny Rogers (2001), Adults Learning, 4th edition (Buckingham: Open University Press)

Other useful things - Questioning and Feedback

Questioning

Asking the right kind of questions can be the key to successful facilitation.

Closed questions, those that normally elicit a 'yes' or 'no' response, can be useful for a facilitator in order to clarify the group's learning. For example, a facilitator could ask 'Does everyone understand?', if the answer is no, a member of the group who does understand can be asked to summarise or clarify for others. If the group do all understand, the facilitator can then ask another closed question in order to move on to a new subject; 'Can we move on?' This encourages the group to feel ownership and responsibility to the discussion.

Closed questions can also be useful when trying to discourage a group member who is taking over the discussion, for example, asking 'Does everyone agree with that?' allows other group members to share their opinions.

The type of questions that a facilitator would use most of the time, in order to further a discussion, are open questions. These questions tend to start with 'what', 'where', 'which', 'who', 'when', 'why', 'how'. Open questions encourage much more detailed, evaluative responses from group members as they are required to consider their responses more carefully.

Turning closed questions into open questions:

An example of a closed question might be:

'Did you take the bus this morning?' – This would require a simple yes or no response.

In order to create more of a discussion around this subject a facilitator might ask instead:

'How did you travel here today?' – The response to this question could be a series of answers that could then encourage more questions and different answers from other group members.

Deeper Questioning:

Follow questions with other questions to provide a deeper analysis and understanding of the topic, for example:

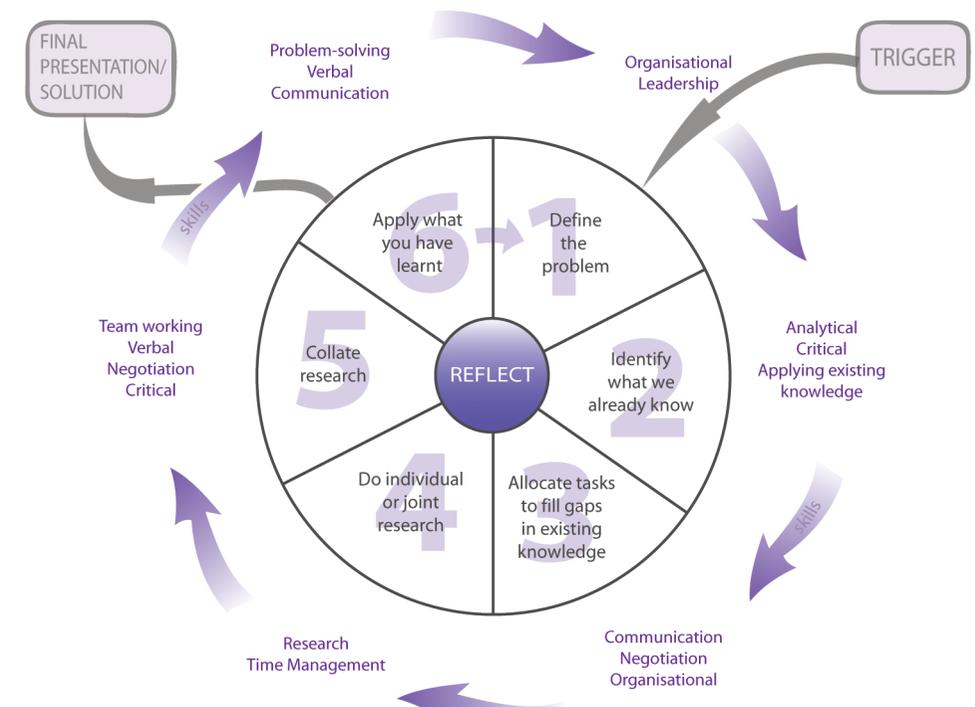
- How?
- How does that work?
- Why does that work?
- How would you improve it?
- How would it work in a different context?

How do you do it?

The following sections give practical suggestions for the facilitation of EBL activities. We begin by conceptualising the EBL process: the way it works and what skills are developed in a typical EBL cycle. A concrete example, from English literature, then demonstrates the processes students and facilitators go through in practice. At this point it is important to note that 'triggers' (or problems, enquiry tasks, questions) are usually central to EBL. They provide the initial impetus to the students' enquiries and can help to motivate the students and to establish the parameters of their investigations.

There follows a number of suggestions on questioning and feedback techniques and on how to interact with the students and the learning environment. This part of the guide concludes with a series of frequently-asked-questions on EBL and facilitation.

The EBL process-skills wheel⁵



⁵ Adapted from Jenny Blumhof
<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/ceeb/events/archive/graduateskills/jblumhof251006.pdf>

Setting Up Group Work

Two features are essential to a group⁶:

A common identity - usually a common purpose - for all its members

Interaction between the members allowing for the development of shared attitudes and feelings, some emotional involvement, a minimum set of agreed values or standards.

Successful group work can be achieved by allowing groups to have a stake in their development and purpose. This can create greater team bonding through a shared understanding. Some suggestions for creating shared understanding and purpose in groups include:

Ground rules

Groups begin their interaction by discussing and agreeing on a basic set of rules which often includes things like 'everyone will participate equally'

Defining/rotating group roles

Groups identify specific roles for members, such as 'chair', 'scribe', 'communicator' (this is someone who is responsible for ensuring all members know when and where meetings are)

Action plans

Groups plan out which group member will do what and by when to improve their time management. This also gives groups a document to refer back to if members are not participating equally

6. Rogers, C (2002) about groups (Teaching Adults OUP: 143)

Reflection

Reflection is an essential part of EBL, and, as demonstrated in the Process-Skills diagram, should ideally be incorporated into all stages of the process. Analysing the processes we go through helps us (students and facilitators alike) identify:

What we've learnt, **how** we learnt it and **how** we can improve

The reflection stage is useful because it helps to:

- Identify further gaps in content → new cycle of research
- Build confidence by acknowledging what went well
- Learn from mistakes
- Become aware of how we learn

Reasons to reflect

- All good EBL scenarios should allow students to embark on a research process and should require students to access knowledge from various sources, rather than just rely on their preconceptions. Reflection, about the scenario, about the group and about themselves, allows students to acknowledge this.
- It is important for students to understand that research is an ongoing process and that there is always more to find out. It encourages students to review what else they should/could do.
- Reflection encourages students to consider the legitimacy and variety of their references and resources, including relying on their own knowledge.
- Reflection encourages students to consider the approach they used and what they would do differently next time. It creates more independent and resourceful learners and encourages lifelong learning. It also improves retention of knowledge.

Ways to reflect

Formal - Learning journals or blogs can be used to encourage and assess reflection on an EBL activity. Other ideas for formal reflection include portfolios, reflective essays or including a small reflective element/section within a standard essay or report.

Informal – Giving over a small amount of time in class for groups to vocalise the processes they are going through can increase awareness of the skills they are learning and encourage students to value the learning process as well as content.

Practical tips on running small groups



Do be

- Positive and Constructive
- Willing to have a sense of humour
- Flexible
- Relaxed
- In touch with other facilitators
- Prepared to express ideas and give information when approached by students
- Aware of the physical layout of the room and leave time for adjustments

Don't be

- Negative or undermine students
- Indifferent
- Patronising
- Afraid of silences
- Don't buckle under pressure



Do

- Have clear ground rules that the whole group has agreed on
- Have a range of questions ready in case discussion dries up
- Involve all participants without pressuring them
- Prepare the students - inform them of your role, your approach and your expectations
- Have some ice-breakers ready in case the students don't know each other

Don't

- Intrude, instead follow the students' lead and only intervene in extreme circumstances
- Over-plan a facilitation session because it will stifle creativity and discussion
- Forget the importance of body language, facial expression and tone of voice
- Assume the students all have experience of group work



Icebreakers

If groups do not know each other, or have no previous experience of group work, it can be useful to consider using an icebreaker.

Plan your choice of icebreaker carefully – icebreakers that help group bonding are most effective when they are:

- Relevant (to the group members, the discipline or the enquiry they are about to take part in)
- Involve communication between group members
- Pitched at the right level (in terms of the age and interests of the participants and their existing expertise)
- Fun and relaxing
- Get you (the facilitator) involved too
- Encourage mixing between the whole group and not just individual members or cliques

For icebreaker ideas, do some online research – there are hundreds of different examples out there on the web for all levels of education and disciplines, so go and search some out.

A worked example of EBL: Eighteenth Century English Poetry⁷

Learning Objectives

To enable students to demonstrate:

- Knowledge of a range of descriptive poetry written in the eighteenth century
- Critical engagement with the nature and problems of a selection and the processes involved in producing an annotated selection
- Recognition and articulation of relevant cultural, critical and conceptual issues
- Awareness of potential readerships and implications for writing

Context: English and American Studies, School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, The University of Manchester.

Year 3 option groups; Semester 2, 2002-03.

Location: Tutor's room

Class Size: 12-15

Group size: four students

Timescale: four weeks

Assessment:

Production of written rationale and booklet examples.

Each took responsibility for one section: one wrote the rationale for the selection, and the three others wrote examples, with commentary and notes. These provided the materials for assessment. The group was given the option of (a) being awarded individual marks for the sections they had written; (b) being awarded a group mark for the entire submission. The assessment for this activity constituted 40% of the overall mark for the module, the other marks being awarded for an oral presentation based on an EBL task (20%) and an examination (40%).

The Problem: Publishing a booklet

The Trigger: Advertisement

'The English Tourist Board is initiating a campaign to attract people back into the countryside after an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. As part of this campaign, it is sponsoring an exhibition documenting and demonstrating the responses of writers and visitors to the English countryside through the ages. The exhibition is to be called, "The eye of the beholder: landscape description, 1700-2000".

The English Tourist Board is also sponsoring a booklet to accompany the exhibition. This booklet will complement the exhibition by providing representative examples of landscape description in poetry from the three centuries, together with explanatory commentary and notes. The booklet will be aimed at a wide public, but is intended to be scholarly and informed.

The English Tourist Board invites teams to apply for a contract to compile the booklet. Applicants should submit a rationale for the selection of passages from the eighteenth century and a specimen example / specimen examples (also from the eighteenth century) with commentary and notes.'

⁷ Hutchings, W and O'Rourke, K (2006) A Study of Enquiry-Based Learning in Action: an Example from a Literary Studies Third-Year Course, The University of Manchester: <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/ceeb/resources/essays/ceebessay001.pdf>

Worked example: the process from a student's perspective

1. What do/don't we know?

Week 1: General discussion about the key issues. What constitutes a successful selection? How will we find examples? What kind of commentary and notes will be needed? What would the target audience expect and enjoy? How should the booklet fit together?
Facilitator's Role: Substantial reference to facilitator as a resource.

2. Allocate Tasks and do research

End of week one: Division of tasks: 1 person finds and examines guides and other material produced by the English Tourist Board (or similar agencies, e.g. National Trust); 1 finds and examines existing selections of eighteenth-century poetry; 2 working together, look for examples of eighteenth-century landscape poetry. Exchange e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers to facilitate communication.
Facilitator's Role: Be available through email/office hour for consultation.

7. Final Presentation

Final meeting (week four): Final submission; gave informal presentation to other groups and to the facilitator, explaining why we had decided to produce the selections. Other groups did the same, leading to general discussion and argument!
Facilitator's Role: Feedback on presentation and encourage/provoke discussion after presentations.

3. Collate, apply and refine

Week two: Collate materials. Decide about the format and register of language of the booklet, length of examples, level and format of commentary. Search of examples of landscape poetry produced too much material, so we decided that all four would look at the list and come up with a selection, with some linking factor.
Facilitator's Role: Act as consultant and mediator if necessary.

6. Collate and identify gaps

Interim meeting (end of week three): Edited all sections with suggestions for improvements.
Facilitator's Role: Be available through email/office hour for consultation.

4. What have we found? Allocate new tasks

Interim meeting (end of week two): suggestions brought together. Selections: 1. Poems written about Lake District; 2. Poems written about rivers; 3. Poems by well-known writers; 4. Poems written in different forms. Decide to go with 2. on grounds that this would have widest appeal nationally. Allocation of writing roles: 1 writes rationale/introduction; 3 others divide up the agreed examples.
Facilitator's Role: Be available through email/office hour for consultation.

5. Collate and identify gaps/problems

Week three: Each of us brought the first draft of our section for the others to read. Realized that we needed time to ensure that the sections were coherent in format and style: interim meeting agreed after second drafts exchanged by e-mail.
Facilitator's Role: Ensure students are on track; make suggestions/comments where necessary.