First Year Student Experience of a Learning Skills Module: 
*Information to drive Improvements*

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Learning-to-Learn at Third Level Module

Background:

- **Drivers for change:**
  - Learning skills deficit impacting students throughout their college years
  - First Year Retention Issues

- Introduced as a module for all the first year students in ITT in September 2012

- Developed by an in-house multidisciplinary team

- Based on Irish & international examples of learning skills modules
Module Aims:

- To help students adapt to a third level educational environment
- To encourage students to become reflective, independent learners
How?

Theory & practice of:

- Active learning strategies
- Study skills
- Group work
- Communication skills
- Self-management & Personal Development
- Information Skills
- Academic writing
Assessment of the Module

- Group Project
- In-class writing skills exam
- Learning Journal - Reflective entries and in-class use
Context of this Study

- Finding out if content & delivery were fit-for-purpose

Why?

- To improve delivery in 2013 & beyond
Students surveyed

First year Science students
12% mature students
104 students out of a possible group of 150

Pharmaceutical Science (Level 7 & 8)
DNA & Forensics (Level 7 & 8)
Sports Science (Level 7 & 8)
Bio-analysis (Level 6 & 7)
Methodology

1. Survey of students (anonymous)

2. Additional information from reflective journal entries
Student Perception of the need for the module

Statement: “I do not need L2L classes because I already know how to study”
Why did over the half the students surveyed think they did not need such a module?
Understanding the Difference between 2\textsuperscript{nd} & 3\textsuperscript{rd} Level

Statement: “L2L classes helped me understand the difference between learning at 2\textsuperscript{nd} & 3\textsuperscript{rd} level”
### Comments on what was useful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Positive Comment (%)</th>
<th>Negative Comment (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Work</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Plans &amp; Time Management</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Actions:
Changes to Module Content & Delivery
Contextualisation:

- Connection between ability to reflect and
  1. Performance in assessments
  2. Performance at job interview

- In-class exercises on reading skills:
  - Use of notes from theory modules
  - Use of discipline-specific articles of interest
Implemented Winter Semester 2013

Change in timing:

- Group project Week 7 instead of Week 4 i.e. once information sourcing and referencing has been fully covered
- Assessment information covered earlier in term:
  - GPA calculation exercise
  - How to structure a lab report
Is the Learning-to-Learn module delivering what students need?