

Student Selected Components: Marrying employability with research-led teaching.

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Introduction

Learning has been widely proven to be driven by assessment¹ and in many instances across higher education assessment is still heavily weighted towards written examinations. However written examinations are a rare event in the daily working lives of most individuals and therefore do not always build skills which will be beneficial in the workplace. Many of the employment opportunities graduates adopt require reports to be written using data fully accessible to the individual as they write, an activity quite distinct from closed book written examinations typical of standard educational systems. The initiative described below aims to create learning opportunities that more closely resemble situations with which graduates will encounter in future careers thus supporting the transition from student to professional. It will simultaneously support: RESEARCH-LED TEACHING, a key criterion of the University of Aberdeen's Strategic Plan, STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING and EMPLOYABILITY

Design of Student Selected Component

Learning by inquiry is widely purported as the gold standard in education but evidence suggests that inquiry based learning requires sound foundations built on more traditional and directed methods of teaching to be most effective² and that Student-Centred approaches to learning benefit from Teacher-Centred elements⁶. With this in mind, the Student Selected Component will retain some tutor directed input, primarily pre-selected papers which will be chosen for their accessibility to level 3 students who have limited previous exposure to scholarly academic articles. These papers will be identified by tutors in order to:

- avoid students losing time trying to read articles beyond their scope of understanding at that point in time,
- ensure the tutor is familiar with the content of the articles thus enabling more accurate assessment of the exercise and;
- reduce the chance of plagiarism or collusion going undetected.

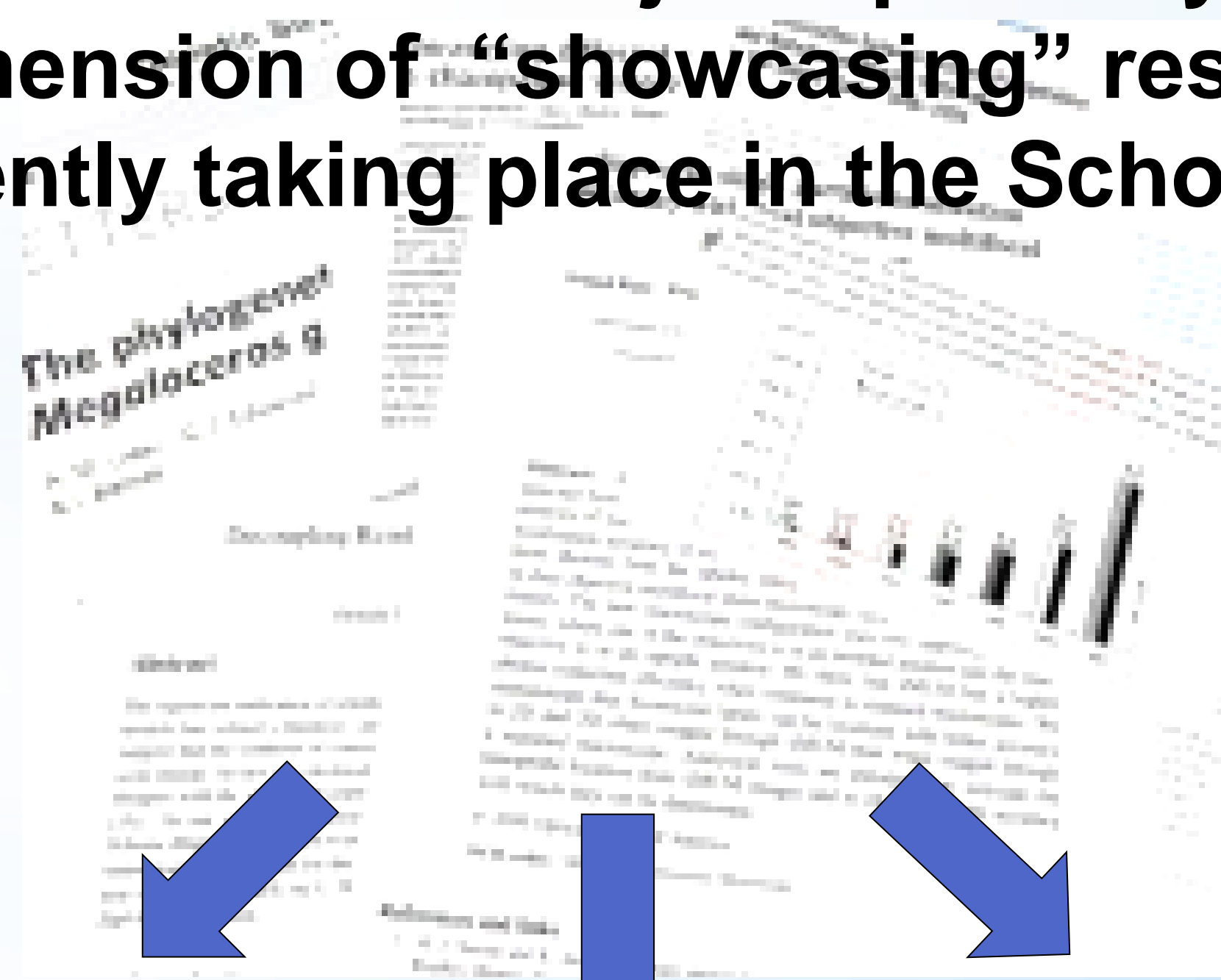
Students will be free to supplement the chosen articles with further reading of their own choosing.



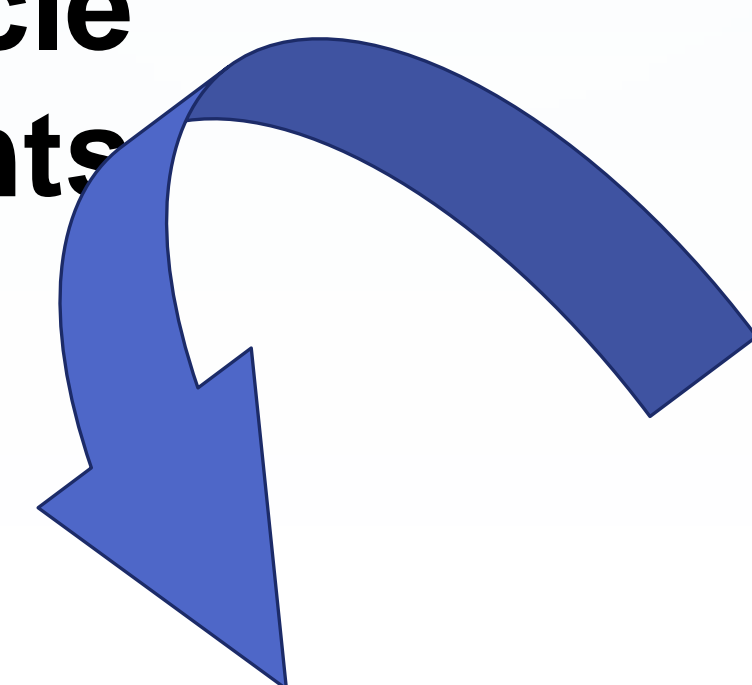
Identify ten research active staff members who will act as tutors.



Tutors select three easily accessible journal articles on their subject speciality. This adds a dimension of "showcasing" research currently taking place in the School.



Students assimilate the material in selected papers into a 1500 word review type article by week 11. Tutors may support students during this process.



Review articles assessed by tutors with grade contributing to overall course assessment



10 themes along with chosen papers will be available to students from start of term. Informed selection of one theme can then be made by students in week three.

Summary

This novel exercise aims to increase the profile of research-led teaching in the third year Medical Sciences curriculum, and develop skills applicable to the workplace environment, in an innovative manner using a student-centred approach. Knowing it is the exercises students engage with that have the greatest influence on long-term retention and transfer of knowledge⁵, not what the teacher delivers, it is anticipated that the processes outlined above will result in deeper, more consolidated learning in the students. The engagement in activities that more closely resemble those common to the workplace will concurrently enhance the employability of those students and support their transition from student to professional.

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