

From: Nigel Collins
Date: 15 March 2006 08:02
To: spu@topica.com
Subject: [SPU] SPU outside school timetable
Reply-To: spu@topica.com

Dear Colleagues,

We have been running small SPU groups with mixed Y12/13s for two years now, with 4 hours a week within the sixth form option block system, split equally between a biologist for Unit 1 and a chemist for unit 2. One of us handles assessment of critical reading, the other takes care of the topical issue. I would love to hear from anyone out there running SPU outside the 'normal' school day of, say, 8.45 - 3.30.

We are looking at next year and are considering offering it in a 2 1/2 hour slot from 4 - 6.45, to our students and those of other nearby schools, with ours at least offered the possibility of time in lieu out of the general studies slot in the day time. The main reason for this is to pull it out of our option slots, as a number of students have expressed interest but cannot access it within the timetable. We have also recognised that Unit 1 is a great system of support for anyone heading for medicine, in the light of changing entry requirements; in the early evening slot we might conceivably have takers for just Unit 1.

We reckon it might work, with the possibility of having a 50/50 split of units most evenings but having the chance of a full slot of a single unit some weeks. The obvious concern is about time.

Of course, another possibility is to push later into the evening, for the public as well. We have been running GCSE Astronomy for the public (including our and other Year 9s from local schools with the adult members of the group) for two years, very successfully in terms of uptake and outcome.

I'd welcome response on or off list.

Nigel Collins

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From: Robert W. Smith
Date: 15 March 2006 10:42
To: spu@topica.com
Subject: Re: [SPU] SPU outside school timetable
Reply-To: spu@topica.com

Dear Nigel

I have been running an evening classes for ADULTS 7 - 9 pm (for 25 weeks only) for the past 3 years. They need to do a LOT of extra work under their own steam, reading chapters ahead of class.

The actual "lessons" tend to be more on discussing the issues within the texts. Motivation is a big issue for younger students!!

Limiting the time means not much time can be giving to detail within the course, more a case of continued guidance towards good coursework and general understanding of what the examiners are looking for!

Virtually all the adults pass but with middle grades of around a "C/D".

Bob Smith

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From: Peter Upton
Date: 15 March 2006 11:51
To: spu@topica.com
Subject: RE: [SPU] SPU outside school timetable
Reply-To: spu@topica.com

I have been involved in running SPU outside of normal times for about 4 years.

We have a programme at the college called motivating gifted pupils – pupils nominated by the feeder schools come to the college between 4.00 and 6.00pm on a Wed. They do one hour on the life sciences and one on the physical sciences. They are given the option of sitting the exams — almost all do — and of either completing the coursework in their own time by end of Easter or of completing coursework after GCSE exams have finished with the work being moderated the following May. (It is explained to the pupils that their GCSEs are the most important thing at this point and there is no rush to get the AS qualification certificated.) Results have been very good (I think 100% pass rate of the completers) – with most in the A-C range.

Motivation is an important factor. I believe the process of travelling to the college, having two hours of lessons and then travelling back (some considerable distance – it is a rural area) acts as an effective filter that removes those lacking the commitment.

For my own lessons, they are very largely a quick review of the science (these students haven't finished their GCSE courses in Science) and mostly discussion. I feel these are different types of lessons from those that I would deliver to full time students attending the college during the day. I frequently worry that the lack of apparent work / writing of notes etc will result in poor grades but experience seems to show that this approach can work with these particular pupils.

Final point – the programme is called motivating gifted pupils. They do not all fall in to the group that one might expect – (3/4 straight As at A level) but they are all competent, willing and seem to enjoy the course. (Obviously some do drop out for a variety of reasons).

The coursework is handled by the teacher according to subject matter of each piece of work rather than by reading/ topical issue. The division does not always work out fairly but the cohort is fairly small (say about 10 finish the year).

Peter Upton

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From: Owen Quantick
Date: 15 March 2006 18:20
To: spu@topica.com
Subject: RE: [SPU] SPU outside school timetable
Reply-To: spu@topica.com

I teach it after school in Kent

I do 3 x 1 1/2 hour sessions a week. Absolutely dead by 5.30.

Sometimes, in the middle of winter I set a study session at home to do coursework.

Sessions are very much debating, with a few key notes.

I do not have a problem motivating, I have a problem controlling the discussion. It gets quite lively.

I teach unit 1 one week and unit 2 the following week, as I find that some of the issues role into the next lesson, and continuity works in small doses.