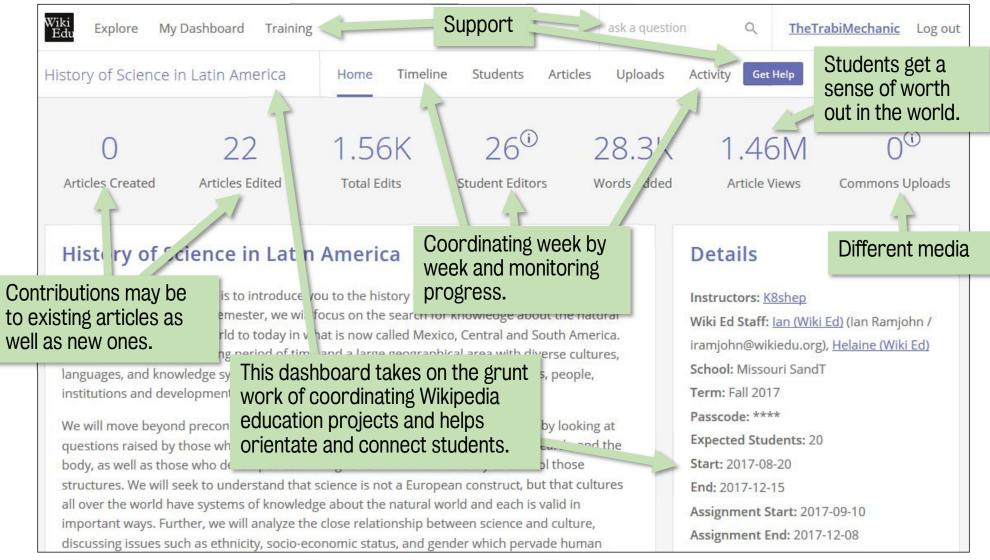# Editing Wikipedia

Democratisation of access to information is not the same thing as democratisation of information itself[1]. Since academia tends to regard Wikipedia as a spurious academic source, its educational potential as a site of authorship and analysis is sometimes overlooked. Yet Wikipedia - the prominent, multilingual, decentralised online encyclopaedia anyone can edit – has potential in a research-based education. In contrast to the algorithmic controls widespread in today's internet, Wikipedia shares founding principles of disinterestedness and verifiability with academic scholarship. Wikipedia is transparent: each article has a History page which records every edit over time and supports assessment deadlines; each article also has a Talk page where editors give rationales and generate consensus around "what is legitimate, notable, and of high quality"[2]. Analysing how debates are enacted brings students insights about authority[3]. For educators Wikipedia offers dedicated tools for managing their cohorts. Students are often galvanised by the 'real world' implications of their work[4], which sometimes brings constructive exchanges with an article's global community of interest. A growing number of UK universities have Wikipedia education projects[5].

Example of a Wikipedia educational project dashboard, available to educators, assessors and students[6].

Other benefits	Good to know
The prospect of a readership, and stats to show it, gives students' work a wider relevance and worth.	The Wiki Edu dashboard helps assessors identify and follow students' contributions.
High-quality contributions to a major open access information source is a public good.	Start small e.g. improving references; working on a single section;
By requiring rationales for edits and references for statements, Wikipedia emphasises transparency.	Students may need reassurance that by definition articles remain open, as works in progress.
There is support with assessment criteria that recognise what is distinctive to Wikipedia work.	Assessors anticipate how to recognise a contribution to a potentially multi-authored article.
Each editor has a sandbox for practice and drafts.	Start quietly: avoid the hotly contested articles at first.
Support, including training, is available – for editing, assessing[7], and specifically for translation[8].	All Wikipedia pages – articles, History, Talk, User Pages, Sandboxes and the dashboard - are public.
Wikipedia is multilingual; articles on the same topic in different languages show cultural contrasts.	There may be good reasons for students to be pseudonymous.

[1] Leitch, T., 2015. Wikipedia U. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

[2] boyd, d., 2014. It's complicated. The Social Lives of Networked Teens. Yale University Press, New Haven.

[3] Tkacz, N., 2015. Wikipedia and the politics of openness. University of Chicago Press, Chicago; London.

[4] Villeneuve, C., 2019. Professor receives award for having students write Wikipedia. https://wikiedu.org/blog/2019/02/04/professor-receives-teaching-award-for-having-students-write-wikipedia/

[5] https://wikimedia.org.uk/wiki/Universities

[6] Shepphard, K., 2017. Dashboard for the 'History of Science in Latin America' course at the University of Missouri. https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/courses/Missouri_SandT/History_of_Science_in_Latin_America_(Fall_2017)/home

[7] https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/training

[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:ContentTranslation