

Grants Scheme 2015-16
A report on pilot
projects supporting the
international student
experience in the UK

**UK Council
for International
Student Affairs**

UKCISA

**UKCISA GRANTS SCHEME
FOR INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION**

Contents

Institution	Project title	Outline of project	Page
Student Experience Projects			
Sheffield Hallam University	International Student Sexual Health Project	Toolkit for running a successful sexual health campaign for international students in Higher and Further Education.	2
University of Bradford Students' Union	Culture in the Community	International students take cultural activities and performances into the local community.	6
Newcastle College	Global Society	Developing a model of an international society in Further Education.	7
University of Sussex	'Freshers of '15': student perspectives	Tracking international students' cultural adaptation to the UK through focus groups, blogs, vlogs and open forums.	10
University of Worcester	Student-Led Friendship Groups	UK and international students' group buddy scheme.	13
Transition to the UK Projects			
Heriot-Watt University	International Student Transfer and Transition Project	Developing a suite of resources to support moves from overseas campuses (in Dubai and Malaysia) to Heriot-Watt.	15
Keele University Students' Union	Creating a Rolling Induction Programme for International Students	UK and international students develop a programme for induction at any time.	18
Student Employability Project			
Midlands Universities	Developing your Global Career – a week of virtual employability events	A series of activities to prepare students for global employment.	21
Teaching and Learning Projects			
Keele University	The Skills4Keele Learning Resources: Online and face-to-face learning resources to aid transitional issues faced by international students	Developing online resources on socialisation, key facts and academic writing.	23
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	Enhancing Learning Experience for International Students: pre sessional tuition for online learning	Developing online support on basic IT skills.	26
University of Northampton	Team-based learning (TBL): improving results, engagement and experience for international students	Producing a framework for TBL for Masters international students.	29

Introduction

“This is a fantastic scheme that has already had a positive impact on how the experiences of international students can be enhanced.”

**James Blackmore-Wright, University of Northampton
(awarded project grant in 2015-16)**

One of UKCISA’s key aims is to support members in providing the highest quality institutional support for international students and ensure international students in the UK have the best possible experience. Our aim in funding these 11 pilot projects was to encourage innovation, and develop and disseminate examples of best practice in international student support.

This publication brings together reports written by members who ran the projects. Full details of the projects plus links to resources are on the UKCISA website at www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme2015-16.

UKCISA-funded research projects will be published separately.

We are delighted with the success of the projects and greatly impressed at the quality of work and level of commitment of staff working at member institutions to support international students in the UK. Many projects are sustainable and some have grown as staff link with other departments or institutions to develop the work further. The projects provide useful models to adapt and develop in your own institutions and we are certain that UKCISA members across the UK will find them interesting, informative and inspiring.

A second series of projects and research is now being funded in 2016-17: www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-scheme2016-17.

If you have any questions about the grants scheme please contact Julie Allen, Director of Policy and Services at dps@ukcisa.org.uk.

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UKCISA MEMBERS



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Student Experience Projects

International student sexual health Sheffield Hallam University

Winner: Paul Webley Award for Innovation in International Education

This award was created in 2016 in memory of the late Director of SOAS and Chair of our Board, Paul Webley and presented to Sheffield Hallam at the UKCISA Annual Conference at the University of Sheffield in June 2016. UKCISA was impressed with the detail and planning in the original submission and at how well the project then evolved; when Sheffield Hallam presented on their work in progress during the year there was a palpable buzz in the room. Sheffield Hallam University have tackled a difficult subject in an innovative and sensitive way. The project is ongoing and you can follow its progress on the blog listed at the end of their report below.

Why this project?

Sheffield Hallam University's medical centre noted an increase in the number of female international students, particularly from SE Asia and China, seeking medical advice due to unwanted pregnancies. Research (University of Nottingham 2011) indicates this issue is affecting international students studying in other institutions in the UK.

We have also had occasions when, in confidential interviews, international students have reported feeling under pressure to enter into sexual relationships whilst studying in the UK.

These two facts indicated that newly-arrived international students needed additional help to improve their knowledge about sexual health and sexual consent.

The issues we identified at Sheffield Hallam University have been noted in research in Australia (Poljski, Quiazon, Tran 2014 and Multi-Cultural Centre for Women's Health Report 2011) which shows that international students have insufficient sexual health education when they arrive for their studies abroad compared to local students, and that at the same time some international students may become more sexually active when studying outside of their home countries.

These reports identified the current themes concerning the international student population which we believe are also applicable in the UK:

- poor sexual health knowledge
- complex attitudes about premarital sex
- reluctance or embarrassment in accessing sexual health information
- poor understanding of the role of health and advice services
- concern about high rates of unplanned pregnancy and abortion
- a link between international students entering into sexual relationships they would never consider in their country of origin, in order to ease feelings of isolation

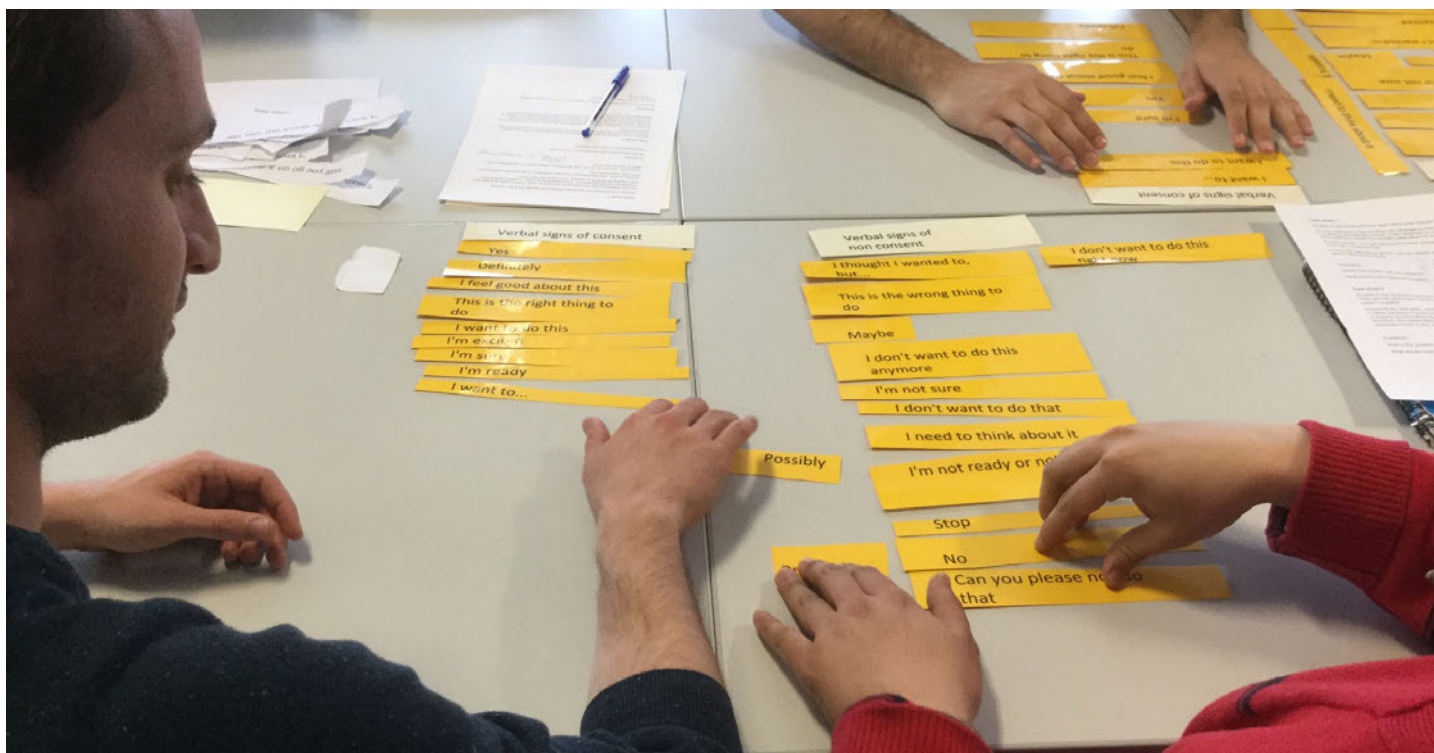


The Paul Webley Award presented to Sheffield Hallam University by Lord Bilimoria

and loneliness inherent in the immigration experience of international students. This in turn increases susceptibility to unplanned pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

The International Student (Sexual) Health Project was designed to:

- Improve international students' awareness of health services in the UK
- Increase their knowledge of sexual health and related issues
- Equip international students with the skills and confidence to navigate relationships in a different cultural context
- Increase international students' confidence in discussing sexual consent and contraception



Student workshop helping students to talk openly about sex

Outcomes

As part of the project implementation, we worked with a group of international student health facilitators to create:

- Information leaflets on health services in the UK including information about access to sexual health services in Sheffield. These are now distributed during International Student Orientation and the medical registration.
- 20-minute information sessions about access to healthcare and sexual health services in the UK delivered by International Student Health Facilitators during the Orientation programme. To date this has been delivered to approximately 300 students with positive feedback.
- A two-hour session focusing on healthy relationships and sexual health to be delivered by a staff member and a student health facilitator. To date this has been delivered to 30 students, in groups of 6-8 each with students of approximately 12 different nationalities.

- An online tutorial about sexual health and contraception which will be provided to all international students via a Blackboard organisational site.

A toolkit for other institutions in the UK

The project and its approaches have been documented in a toolkit for other universities and colleges to use if they wish to deliver similar services. This includes:

- preliminary student questionnaire (Translation in Mandarin also provided)
- job description and person specification for International Student Health Facilitator
- detailed training session for the international student health facilitators
- detailed session plan for a two-hour session on Healthy Relationships (which includes information and exercises focusing on personal communication skills, sexual consent and sexual health)
- session evaluation form

- print-ready information leaflet on Health Services in the UK (this will require minor editing to provide information about local sexual health services)
- Articulate Storyline online tutorial which can be edited and used by other HEIs

(See Further Information (page 5) to access resources on the Sheffield Hallam blog.)

How was the project set up, run and evaluated?

The project was initiated and run by the International Experience Team in the Directorate of Library and Student Support Services. The Healthy University Steering Group is the project's strategic sponsor in Sheffield Hallam University. Operationally, the project was implemented by **Helen Paskins**, International Experience Adviser, and **Krassimira Teneva**, Head of International Experience.

The project was (and will continue to be) evaluated by:

1. feedback from students using the

- materials and attending the sessions
2. feedback for other HEI/FE on the usability and usefulness of the toolkit

The impact of the project will be measured using data provided by the University medical centre (eg the drop in the number of international students with unplanned pregnancies) and in the team's own appointment records.

What was the timescale of the project?

The project ran from November 2015 to the end of July 2016.

The first stage of the project took longer than planned as it dealt with topics which are culturally sensitive. To ensure that the session was working as intended, we involved international students in the session design and we tested it extensively with different student groups.

The project will be embedded in the range of services delivered by the International Experience Team from September 2016. The 'Healthy Relationship' sessions and the related leaflets will become part of our standard offer for international students.

Learning points from student feedback

We gathered opinions and feedback from students during the project via:

- an online questionnaire
- informal group chats at the end of sessions
- confidential feedback sheets completed at the end of sessions

We also consulted with our Students' Union elected officers. Interestingly, there were areas of agreement but also some contradictions in student feedback.

Students consistently told us there is a need for information on healthy relationships and that they would like the information delivered face-to-face in small, same sex sessions. Feedback from students who attended the sessions was strong, with all students agreeing they had learned new things and found the sessions useful. They especially liked the information on different forms of contraception. We know therefore that we are meeting some of the aims of our project. The majority of students want the sessions to be delivered in the first month or so of enrolment at university.

When it came to the ideal delivery of session, the answers were mixed. The questionnaire results revealed that students would most like to have trained student facilitators to lead the sessions. However, the verbal feedback revealed that students preferred to have all staff, or one staff and one student facilitator to lead the sessions. Students reported feeling uncomfortable about the ability of a student to lead a session in the verbal feedback. Other students reported that they would feel comfortable with a trained student to lead the session.

We had not initially anticipated a staff member being involved in running the sessions, but based on student feedback we are reconsidering this. We will continue to gather feedback from students. We will be trialling sessions in the future run jointly by a member of staff and student health facilitator, and sessions run entirely by student health facilitators.

Learning points from staff feedback

Fortunately our project was well supported by wider teams in the University for several reasons. Firstly, there had already been a request for running sessions on healthy relationships, sexual consent and sexual health because our medical centre had reported increased



Information leaflet on health services in the UK

numbers of students seeking abortion due to unwanted and unplanned pregnancies.

This issue had already been identified and so there was already awareness, willingness and motivation to put efforts into tackling the issue. The project has fitted well into the aims of the "Healthy University" strategy at Sheffield Hallam, which involves promoting the welfare and wellbeing of staff and students. This has meant that the project has received greater exposure and support. The project is being worked into the routine work of our team, rather than being a one-off project.

We are taking a long-term view of the project, which has also helped with its planning. It means that we have kept an open mind and have been willing to learn from what works and what doesn't work, and to continually improve the project work.

Challenges getting staff commitment

It has not been an entirely easy journey to get support from all teams.

Some staff members, who we hoped to involve more greatly in the project delivery, have been unable to commit much time or resources. To overcome this issue we had to be flexible and be prepared to take on areas of the project more directly ourselves. There has also been some apprehension and fears expressed by some staff about the aims and content of the session. We have generally overcome these doubts by carefully explaining why we are running the project and have shared positive feedback from students who have participated in the sessions we run.

Involving the opinions and voices of the students is incredibly powerful, and we would recommend using that as a tool to get buy-in for a project. We have gathered lots of feedback and opinions from students about what they want, and how they want the information delivered. Knowing what your students want and need I think is crucial and should be considered during the stages of project planning where possible.

Challenges employing student health facilitators

We recruited four student health facilitators. It was a competitive application process, involving an application form and interview. We recruited one (British) male, and three (international) females. We recruited two facilitators who can speak Mandarin.

On reflection, our expectations of what the student health facilitators could achieve by themselves were initially too high. We expected that after we had trained the facilitators they would be capable of creating session content fairly quickly and easily, with us supporting rather than leading on the content. We also expected that the facilitators would be able to run the sessions by themselves more or less straight away. We were expecting to be equal collaborators with the

facilitators, rather than steering the session design.

This did not turn out to be the case, and in general the facilitators were more comfortable for us to take a stronger lead on the session content rather than designing it from scratch themselves. One student was frequently unable to attend training sessions because of study commitments, and therefore it was a mutual decision that the student would no longer work in that role.

To overcome these problems, we decided to design the session ourselves, and then invite opinions from the facilitators about our suggested material. We then led three sessions ourselves, and had the facilitators observe us and then discuss opinions and feedback from the session at the end. We feel that this extra support was necessary and we now feel confident that the facilitators have the skills to deliver the sessions themselves in the future. It is likely that we will run the sessions jointly with the facilitators to increase their confidence and experience before the facilitators run the sessions entirely by themselves.

Conclusions

The strength of this project is that there is a firm commitment to embedding it into our offer to students and that it is continuing to evolve. We are continuing to refine our materials and session content as we reflect on what has worked and not worked so well during the sessions. Good feedback from staff, students and our facilitators confirms that our project was needed and valued. The project has demonstrated that with limited resources we can still reach a large number of students. All students who have attended the healthy relationship sessions have confirmed they have learned something new. We believe that the project will continue to grow in the future and we look forward to

refining and developing the sessions further.

There is significant interest in modifying the materials (online tutorial and session) to suit UK as well as international students. This is something we could consider doing once the project is properly embedded in the standard service offer for international students.

References

Poljski C, Quiazon R, and Tran C. (2014). Ensuring Rights: Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for Female International Students in Australia. In: *Journal of International Students*, Vol 4 no 2 pp. 150-163

University of Nottingham (2011) *Investigation into the Mental Health Support needs of International Students with particular reference to Chinese and Malaysian students*, available from: <http://bit.ly/2cLSmZe>

Further information

As we continue working on the project, the blog is live and being updated. The blog includes links to useful websites and resources and the toolkit: <http://bit.ly/2cLWFE8>

This project was run by Helen Paskins, International Student Adviser and Krassimira Teneva, Head of International Experience.

Contact: International Experience Team, Student Services, Owen 530, Sheffield Hallam University S1 1WB. Tel. 0114 225 3813 or email internationalexperience@shu.ac.uk

Culture in the community

University of Bradford Students' Union

In this project, groups of international students developed a performance or activity relating to their culture which was then taken out into the local community – initially into local schools. This provided volunteering opportunities for international students, encouraged an international outlook among students and the community, and enhanced intercultural communication skills among student volunteers.

The project was timed to coincide with a performance night as part of Bradford Students' Union One World Week (OWW) at the end of February/early March. It then went 'on tour' to local schools.

Timeline

November 2015

Contacts were established within societies looking for potential performers but despite some interest, exams and essays prohibited practice. An International Student Officer was recruited to lead on One World Week.

January 2016

Increasing interest among students about the performance night. Costumes were bought.

February 2016

One World Week: hundreds of students attended the Gala Performance and other events such as the international fair, football tournament, cooking competition, and others.

April/May 2016

Gala Performance 'on tour'. Students



Bradford students at Hazelbeck Special School, Monday 16 May 2016

performed songs, dances and poetry from their countries, wore traditional clothes and talked about their country. The group visited several Bradford inner city schools with different groups; mostly primary schools, some special schools.

Challenges

- **Exam times.** One World Week started in March meaning the performers' list was finalised when students were facing essay deadlines, making them unavailable. Similarly many schools were preparing for tests of various kinds so were unable to offer dates for a performance.
- **Getting the message across.** The original idea was to visit care homes and the elderly, but many did not respond to communication or failed to understand the benefits of the proposed project.

Sustainability

The project has become a key part of the One World Week programme. Thanks to the UKCISA grant and project Bradford now has a bank of costumes available for students to wear for the performances, keeping future costs down.

Recommendations

- Contact community groups as early as possible and do this in person if possible.
- Recruit student performers as early as possible.
- Allocate a budget. Students' Union volunteering could be an option for funding. Funds are primarily needed for transportation.

This project was run by Michael Allhouse, UBU Student Engagement Manager. Contact:
m.l.allhouse@bradford.ac.uk.

Global Society Newcastle College

About Newcastle College

Newcastle College is a provider of both further and higher education courses as well as vocational and apprenticeship education and training. The current student body numbers approx. 18,000 with around 1,600 students coming from overseas. The total number of overseas students includes 'international fee payers' (Tier 4, Short Term Students etc.) and also non-UK home students e.g. EU/EEA nationals, settled status students etc.

The project was led by the International Office but as it was intended to 'internationalise' the institution we thought it important to involve other services within the College to ensure we were drawing on all possible resources. The aim of the Society was to promote the 'internationalisation' of Newcastle College through the mutual understanding, recognition and knowledge of the varying cultures within the student body. The idea was that both home and international learners would benefit from the group and the group would make a positive contribution to College life.

What we did

Step 1.

Our first task was to request that the Students' Union become involved by establishing the Society within the SU.

Step 2.

We contacted all of our international



students and a selection of home students who we thought might be interested in becoming involved with the group. We called a meeting with the students who responded positively to the email along with members of the International Office and the representatives of the Students' Union.

Step 3.

We established weekly meetings which were recorded with actions to document the project and ensure deadlines were met.

Step 4.

We elected a President and Vice-President. The group was lucky enough to elect a BA Hons Events

Management student as their President (Filipa Conceicao) and a Foundation Degree Music student as their Vice President (Andressa Monteiro). This meant the skills and experience of the students could be employed within the project and the resources of their respective Schools could be utilised to support the project.

Step 5.

At the first few meetings the aims and objectives of the Society were established. The group decided to rebrand from "International Society" to "Global Society" to make it more appealing to non-international learners and to encourage home students to join. The group decided to hold celebratory events to mark certain

points of the year where non-Global Society members could socialise with members and therefore better the chances of wider involvement in the group.

Timeline of Events

The project ran from Sept 2015 – June 2016.

The three events organised by the group were:

- Christmas Celebration in conjunction with Vamos Social www.vamosocial.co.uk
- Olympic themed event to celebrate Brazilian culture staged at Newcastle College's Chefs Academy
- International Fair showcasing local and international artists along with a range of craft and food stalls

The benefits and challenges of the group are best summed up by Global Society President, Filipa Conceicao: *“Being Global Society’s President was very challenging but extremely rewarding too. This role was very demanding due to being the first time Newcastle College was starting a student society and none of us knew how things were supposed to happen. As a final year events management student, being the president of the committee it was great to have gained the experience, meet new people and make new friends.”*

Sustainability

The team created a logo for the Global Society to increase awareness of the group and used some of the budget to buy hoodies which will be sold to supplement the delivery of projects and activities in 2016-17. The Society also raised money to be invested in 2016/17 by selling tickets for events, setting up raffles/competitions and looking to the local business community for sponsorship.



Marketing and use of college services

As part of our marketing campaign we purchased a Global Society banner stand. We utilised our marketing team to create the design for the banner and ordered the banner through our Reprographics department. Using college services kept the cost down and meant that more parts of the institution could contribute to the project. The banner stand was used at the Olympic themed event, the International Fair and it now has a permanent place in the International Office which gets the message out to new students as they arrive to enrol at the office.

To develop the ‘internationalisation’ aspect of the project, efforts were made to get news of the group out to the wider College community of both staff and students. An article was created for the Newcastle College staff blog Insight which included information about forthcoming events and a request to staff to make their students aware of the project. We arranged for the blog to be sent out via an all-staff email and included a version of the article on the student intranet.

The group also utilised social media and set up Facebook and Instagram accounts to ensure pictures could be

posted, messages circulated and new members invited. Links to these accounts can be found on the opposite page.

Another way of utilising College resources was to request the expertise and services of current students. The School of Creative Industries at Newcastle College includes courses on photography, film making and design as well as a large music and performing arts section. Students were happy to provide support and services to the project as they could use this work within their assignments and dissertations. We borrowed sound equipment from the music section and acquired the services of a sound engineer to assist with the live musical performances at our Olympic themed event. This event was also filmed and photographed by a group of five students on various Creative courses. Again, this assisted in making the group more inclusive and meant that more home students were being exposed to the work of the group.

Recommendations for other institutions

- Start as early as possible in the academic year by engaging students right from the beginning and set up a structured timetable of meetings.

- Once an individual or team has been appointed to lead the group allow the students to take ownership of the direction of the Society. Finding the right person/ persons to lead the group is crucial to the successful delivery of the project. Leaders of the group will have to manage to balance their many academic demands with the demands of the project.
- Draw on the resources of the institution – staff, students, equipment, services, marketing etc. and look to involve the whole institution by drawing on services and departments that are used by both home and international students (i.e. Students' Union).
- Spread the word about your project by using blogs, all staff emails and social media
- Where possible bring senior management into the project delivery as they will assist in making the project visible at Director/ Governor/Principal level.
- Ensure you collect student feedback following events, especially from non-members as they will give members a steer on what can be improved and what they can do to attract students in the future.

Resources

Global Society Olympic Event

Video: <http://bit.ly/2cZ7i49>

Global Society Facebook:

<http://bit.ly/2e3tDgl>

Facebook Search:

@Global_Society_Ncl_Coll

<http://bit.ly/2e820Xt>

Global Society Instagram:

http://instagram.com/globalsociety_nclcoll

<http://bit.ly/2deYXds>

Instagram Search:

@globalsociety_nclcoll

Newcastle College International

Facebook: www.facebook.com/newcastlecollegeinternational

<http://bit.ly/2ejrWhP>

Facebook Search:

@newcastlecollegeinternational

VAMOS! Social Newcastle:

www.vamossocial.co.uk

This project was run by Daniel Rose-Troup, Manager International Admissions and Student Support.

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Freshers of '15': student perspectives – tracking the international student journey

University of Sussex

Why this project?

Sussex currently has students from over 120 different countries, and we recognise that the cultures which students leave in order to come here vary enormously, and that there is no 'one size fits all' as to how best to support these students. We wanted to offer our students a platform to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences about their life and studying in the UK as they progress through their degree at Sussex. We wanted to track their journey in a methodical and meaningful way, and to use the findings to directly shape the services we offer. The aim was to ensure that University services are responding at appropriate times to the challenges being faced.

Outcomes of the project

The project has provided detailed insight about the international student experience at Sussex. Some findings have not been surprising, but instead reconfirm their continued position as key concerns being faced. What was gained, however, was an increased awareness of the extent to which certain issues were fundamental to these students' experiences, as well as a better understanding of the cultures students had left behind. A bank of feedback, focus group discussions, and social media content has been produced to be used in future service planning and as a resource for other new international students preparing for life at Sussex.



What did we do?

The project was set up and run by two International Student Support Officers at Sussex. An initial timeline for the year was identified, with key milestones scheduled for appropriate moments in the academic calendar. In order to chart a student's journey, a pre-arrival task was first required and a focus group to meet the students soon after they arrived was also key. So as not to be too intrusive about the student's academic and social commitments, we decided to have just one other in-person focus group in the spring term, but that all other tasks were to be completed online to provide flexibility to the participants.

At various intervals throughout the year, participants were asked to respond to four statements by telling us how strongly they agreed or disagreed with them on a scale of 1-10. They were then asked three

more times throughout the year to do the same thing with the same four statements, in order to measure variation and changes in attitude over time. The statements were:

1. How homesick do you feel?
2. How do you feel about your study workload?
3. How do you feel about your home life outside of your studies?
4. Overall, how are you feeling about your life at Sussex?

Focus group questions were related to the time of year that the groups took place but many of the same questions appeared in both so that we could chart changes over time.

For other tasks, we would request short answers to various questions which gave us an insight into daily experiences. Where possible, participants provided accompanying images to be used for social media posts.

In January, we hired a Social Media Intern to set up designated online platforms and to post the content provided by our participants so that experiences and feedback was shared publicly with the university community.

In order to keep participants engaged and involved in the project for the duration, we identified a number of incentives including two social events, free hoodies, the opportunity to contribute to the University's high profile One World Week through involvement in a mini-project, and the opportunity to undertake paid work as a One World Week Ambassador.

Timescale

The project was scheduled to take place between August 2015 and June 2016 in order to capture results from a full academic year.

Challenges

- We were not able to provide branded 'University of Sussex' and 'Freshers of '15' hoodies to the group at the beginning of the year as planned, as the University was undertaking its own rebranding process which prevented us from using the existing university logo. We were able to use the previously authorised One World Week logo to print alternative hoodies for participants, but these were provided later into the project.
- We were late in hiring our Social Media Intern due to autumn term welcome activities being busier than ever before, so it wasn't until the spring term that we finally got the content of the autumn term activities posted, by which point in the year it was a challenge to build 'likes' and therefore have much engagement with the material. Our intern was then taken ill for an extended period, we were not in a position to re-advertise the role and the responsibility was incorporated



Joanna Tsui

Hong Kong

"I was very worried and excited before coming here. I think there has been a few things about culture shock after arriving at Sussex. The first is when getting off the bus people will say 'thank you' to the bus driver but in Hong Kong we never say 'thank you' to the bus driver. I think the second is most local students like clubbing after school. That's when I really felt very shocked because I don't really drink alcohol and I don't know how to react and interact and communicate with the local students. Although the students in Hong Kong will go clubbing not many of them go every night and they also have another activity such as going to karaoke and they will sing together and sometimes they will drink alcohol. The third is any time they would say 'how are you' to you. I think this is very curious because I don't know why British always say 'How are you?' I checked this online and know that in this culture that greeting is showing you are very polite so I've started getting used to it."

"I think here it is too relaxed because my life tempo becomes very slow here. It is very different to Hong Kong. Hong Kong is a very busy city people on the streets are walking very fast and sometimes you will feel very pressured but I am here, I am very relaxed, and I am so happy that I am here because I have met a lot of people from different countries. In Hong Kong I don't have the opportunities to talk to many different people from other countries."

"When you meet really good people and good friends you will feel you are settled here. I made friends and we celebrate festivals such as the Chinese Lunar New Year together. It don't feel homesick and so I think that I am getting used to being here."

"Here I am very relaxed and I am so happy that I am here because I have met a lot of people from different countries."

into the day-to-day workload of an officer who was leading on the project, but who did not have the capacity to develop this side of the project to its full potential.

- We had planned a second social gathering for the end of the year, but many students left Sussex and the UK as soon as their assessments were finished, so we didn't have enough participants to make a second social event viable.

Sustainability

Many of the participants were studying at Sussex for one year or less, and have left and regrettably, the number of continuing students is too small to continue with the project into a second year.

However, since beginning the 'Freshers of '15' project we have been approached by academic colleagues in the School of Psychology at Sussex who wish to undertake research into a similar area by conducting a

longitudinal study to gain insight into international students' experiences over a period of time. They are specifically interested to explore potential links between the cultural integration of international students over time and their final degree results. The project overlaps with many areas of 'Freshers of '15'. As such, we will be collaborating with these academic colleagues – and be able to draw upon their vast knowledge and experience of data collection and analysis – in this project for the academic year 2016-17.

Key learning points

A range of feedback came out of the project but below we have identified some recurring issues which have in turn provided us with a number of learning points:

- A key factor in ensuring the wellbeing and general sense of integration and belonging for our students seems to be flatmate allocation. Those who reported having strong friendships with those they lived with at the beginning of the year seemed to have a more positive experience overall, as close relationships from the offset provided the confidence to actively engage with everything Sussex had to offer. Those who reported these

strong friendships with flatmates had been allocated rooms in diverse groups which included a mix of home and international students. This feedback has been passed on to our Housing Services team.

- The main ongoing concern for most participants was their studies. Most were concerned about study expectations and a lack of clarity around assessment criteria, but these worries reduced during the second term focus groups, implying that an academic induction early in the year would be useful. This is currently under discussion at Sussex.
- Despite largely positive feedback about arrival experiences, participants reported receiving too much pre-arrival information from across the University. A communications review is underway to identify all of the information which new students receive. The plan is to then streamline it.
- The small number of postgraduate participants who took part helped us to identify a need for providing postgraduate-only events, particularly during the welcome and induction period.

Recommendations for other institutions

The number of participants

It is imperative to recruit as large a number of participants as possible at the beginning of the year, as this number will inevitably dwindle. Once students had arrived other priorities (particularly the increasing demands on their time from studies) inevitably got in the way, and many dropped out. In order to be conclusive about patterns in emotional peaks and troughs, a large group of students is needed. Having certain incentives for sticking with the scheme throughout the year certainly helped us (socials, opportunities for paid work, free gifts etc.).

The type of participants

Whilst any feedback is useful, students who are visiting or on exchange for just one term are less likely to fully demonstrate such varying attitudes and experiences over time, so it is worth restricting the opportunity to only those students who will be at your institution long enough to provide more in-depth results. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students are needed as the experiences and challenges facing both groups varied quite significantly.

The most important point is having a strategy for recruiting those traditionally hard-to-reach students who, for various reasons, tend not to engage with UK and university life beyond simply attending classes. These reasons might be English language difficulties, problems with making friends, particularly outside of their own cultural groups, or adjusting to UK academic challenges. We soon realised that those who had readily volunteered their time and their experiences to get involved in a project of this nature were usually those students who were naturally more outgoing, confident, had strong English language skills, and were generally more committed to engaging with everything which the University and UK life had to offer. The insight that we got into these students' experiences was therefore overwhelmingly positive. This knowledge is helpful but only to a certain extent, as the main aim of the project was to identify the issues and problems.

Further information

Freshers at Sussex University:
<http://bit.ly/2dDNJ2O>

freshersof15 on Facebook:
<http://bit.ly/2df5wwu>

This project was run by International Student Support Officers, Helen Quin and Sarah Cook. Contact:
issofficers@sussex.ac.uk



Student-led Friendship Groups University of Worcester

Why this project?

At the University of Worcester, we have been aware for some years that students who are in tight monocultural groups are not taking up opportunities to participate fully in university life and consequently may not be fulfilling their potential academically and socially.

In particular, we noticed that many Chinese students who attend our 10 and six week pre-session courses were struggling to integrate once they started their degree courses. Most of them do not know each other before they arrive at the University, but because they spend 10 or six weeks studying together as a monocultural group they soon form a close network and will spend a lot of their spare time together outside of classes talking in Chinese. Many then choose to live together in accommodation outside of the University. This means they tend to spend time together speaking Chinese and they can become isolated as a group. They may be reluctant to speak in English as they are afraid of making mistakes and often a more confident English speaker will become the spokesperson. We are also aware that many students are under family and peer pressure to do well in their year at Worcester and many plan to continue to study for a Master's degree.

We were aware of research on international students in the US highlighting the impact non-integration may have: Gareis, Merkin and Goldman (2011) state that



“intercultural friendships with host nationals...have a significant positive effect on students’ general sojourn satisfaction, academic success, and intercultural as well as foreign language growth”.

We were interested that their research showed students who integrated performed better academically, and consequently, we have looked at the results of this year’s pre-session students.

Gareis, Merkin and Goldman (2011) also state that “more than one third of the respondents had no close American friends and would have liked more meaningful interaction with host nationals. Although personal factors on the part of the sojourners and hosts play a role, some accountability for international student satisfaction lies with the host institution”. This statement prompted us to try, as an

institution, to create situations where Chinese and home students have an opportunity to develop relationships.

Project overview

We developed an innovative approach to student-led friendship groups. We encouraged Chinese students to form friendships outside their national group by giving them responsibility for choosing their own social activities. Student Ambassadors were trained as leaders for small friendship groups and decided together with the group what activities they would undertake outside class time. The Student Ambassadors developed leadership and negotiating skills while the target group developed language skills and were motivated to participate in a range of unusual activities and to engage with the community at Worcester and in the region.

Initial challenges

We intended to start friendship groups in July 2015 with our Chinese pre-sessional students. We recruited Student Ambassadors to work with us during inductions and run small groups for us but most of them went home during the summer leaving too few ambassadors to run the programme effectively. The ambassadors ran large group events with limited success.

Students had a busy programme and when not in class wanted to study. In fact, some of the students who failed the pre-sessional did not engage in any social activities, as they did not see the benefits of speaking English socially.

Next steps

In October we re-launched with new ambassadors who were trained to lead and to train others. With four ambassadors in place we decided to focus on the small number of students who initially had failed the pre-sessional course and who had to take further intensive English classes before being allowed to enter the degree programme.

Few students attended initial meetings as they were very busy but also as they didn't see the value of the social activities.

Project achievements

We established four groups but one ambassador became ill and we were unable to replace them.

Two ambassadors met with their students, but less often than we had anticipated as the group found it difficult to find a time when they could all meet together. However when they did meet, the group reported having a good time and enjoyed the experience.

The final ambassador met her group on a regular basis. They met at least once a month for the whole day and sometimes twice a month. Her group took part in different activities together: they went to the Malvern Hills, they watched films, did craft activities and they cooked together.

Social impact

Both the ambassador and students benefited. The ambassador reported that it helped her make friends at the University, as she lived at home and travelled to Worcester. The students were on an international-only nursing course and one chose to sit with the non-Chinese students in her class and to work with them.

Academic impact

Unfortunately there was insufficient evidence to show that the project had made an impact on the nursing group's academic results and a few students failed the course. The student who attended the group the least had the worst results and that may indicate a lower level of engagement with the course. Of the Business School students who took part, the friendship group students performed better, gaining second-class degrees.

This may suggest that friendship groups can improve results. We also noted students who did not take part in the friendship groups failed one or more modules. Further research on this is needed to draw any firm conclusions.

The future

The University will support the project for at least one more year.

Learning points

- We accept that what we are trying to create is artificial; we are trying to create friendships between small groups of Chinese students and paid home or EU students. This depends on the willingness of both groups of students to mix together.
- We now expect our ambassadors to write short reports on the activities that they organise.
- We have stopped using Facebook as a means of communication and will use WeChat instead.
- We have asked the Language Centre to build friendship groups into the timetable in order to make it an accepted part of the course.
- We will work with university and Students' Union groups to recruit UK and EU students to work as ambassadors. The benefits to them include increased cultural awareness and employability skills.
- We will carry out further research in partnership with an academic colleague to attempt to identify a clear link between Friendship Groups and improved academic success.

References

Gareis E, Merkin R and Goldman J *Intercultural Friendship: Linking Communication Variables and Friendship Success*. In: Journal of Intercultural Communications Research vol. 40, No 2, July 2011, pp. 153-171.

This project was run by Deb Graddon, International Student Advisor.

Contact: d.graddon@worc.ac.uk

Student Transition to the UK Projects

International student transfer and transition project Heriot-Watt University

Background to Heriot-Watt

Heriot-Watt University is often referred to as Scotland's international university, with a third of on-campus students in Edinburgh coming from beyond the UK. It has campuses in both Dubai and Malaysia, and the University's international strategy is an integral part of its overall strategy and vision. 2016 saw the expansion of the Go Global project, aimed at encouraging enrolled students to take advantage of its international hubs to gain cultural exchange experiences, broaden their horizons and enhance their career prospects. The transfer programme is directed at students going into their second or third year of study who wish to spend an academic year in another Heriot-Watt campus (students are then expected to complete, as usual, after four years). The International Student Transfer and Transition Project has focused on the support elements which underpin the successful student experience.

Why this project?

There is a recognition that students participating in the inter-campus transfer programme are familiar with the institution of Heriot-Watt University. Unlike new students, they are already studying in an HWU academic programme and are established in a HWU campus. However, the transfer

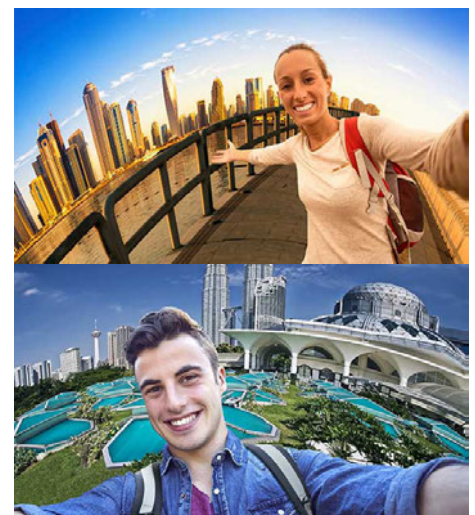
opportunity brings a different social and cultural setting and, despite the common programme outcomes, a different academic environment. Transfer students therefore face issues of transition to, and integration with, a new institutional setup, with similarities with, but often significant differences from, students who are completely new to Heriot-Watt. There is a need, therefore, to provide preparatory and introductory resources to those students transferring between campuses, to provide them with essential information about aspects of academic and cultural life, and the avenues of student support available to them in order to facilitate their successful transfer and transition.

Why now?

The Senior Counsellor in the Student Support team was prompted to apply for the UKCISA grant in response to a concern raised by a number of transfer students attending the counselling service.

Aims of the project

- To identify the main barriers to successful integration
- To generate a suite of resources to underpin the transition and transfer process between the global Heriot-Watt campuses



- To enhance the transfer experience and provide examples of good practice in this growing area of the sector

Summary of outcomes

Questionnaires, surveys and focus groups were used to gather information regarding the needs of transfer students, and to learn more about the resources that they would find beneficial. Using this information, a variety of resources have been created:

- A centralised list of transfer students, allowing more efficient email communication
- A variety of resources with information specific to transfer students, including:
 - Posters



Heriot-Watt University Malaysia Campus

- Leaflets
- A specific web page on the university site with links to appropriate information
- Workshop programmes for pre-departure and post-arrival

The above resources are currently for students arriving in Edinburgh, but are being developed for those travelling to Dubai and Malaysia campuses.

Who were involved in the project?

The project worker was appointed from within the Student Support team to manage the running of the project. Contact was established with relevant staff members, from Student Support, the Chaplaincy, and the Student Union. This helped to generate initial ideas, and a list of students to contact. Over the course of the next few weeks, students were invited to focus groups to discuss their experiences. Those who could not attend were asked to complete a qualitative questionnaire detailing their experiences as transfer students. In all, three focus groups were held and over fifty questionnaires sent out to students. There was also an opportunity to liaise with staff members in Malaysia and Dubai.

The data generated through this research was collated and analysed. Through this period, there was regular contact between the project worker

and the Senior Counsellor to discuss progress. There was also ongoing communication with colleagues within the Student Support Services to support the planning for workshop delivery and the creation of web links and resources.

Timescale

Work was begun on the project at the start of the academic year in September 2015. The first semester was focused on accumulating data on student experiences, existing information and staff knowledge. The second semester was focused on collating this data to produce new informational material including workshops and internet and paper-based resources.

Challenges

There are six schools at Heriot-Watt: Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society, Engineering and Physical Sciences, Management and Languages, Mathematical and Computer Sciences, Textiles and Design, and Life Sciences. Initial communication with students proved difficult as there was no centralised list of students who had transferred to the Edinburgh campus. This meant that each school had to be contacted directly to collect student details. Once contacted, there was a slow response from students, as by then it

was nearing the second half of the semester and students were focusing on preparing for exams. This meant that repeated efforts were made to arrange different meeting times for students to attend, and an additional electronic questionnaire was sent out to enable students unable to attend a focus group to participate.

Evaluation

A questionnaire was sent to students who engaged with the transfer programme, but the project is currently still being evaluated, a process that will not be complete until the beginning of the next academic year when students will have access to the new resources. However, the Go Global team valued the workshop resources as well as the student support advisors in our Dubai and Malaysia campuses who will be using the resources in September. Later in the academic year feedback will be gathered and any further modifications or additions can be made.

A sustainable project

The project grant has supported the project worker's fee and allowed for the creation of paper-based resources, currently in development. This process has been shared with colleagues in the other global campuses, to facilitate the creation of resources specific to Dubai and Malaysia. Discussion is

underway with the Go Global team to ensure that the learning from this project is incorporated into the information available to prospective transfer students.

Reflections on the project – students have different identities and different needs

It has been clear through the course of this project that students have reacted very positively to the experience of transferring. They have commented on their expectations of the benefits of the scheme being fulfilled, in terms of cultural exchange, broadening their experience of different academic environments and creating a sense of adventure which has been very welcome as part of their student experience.

Perhaps of central importance in this project has been the renewed awareness of the complexities around how students identify themselves. Students talked of their desire to integrate into the wider student body, and not remain within their groups of fellow students from their home campus. The success of their integration appeared to depend on a number of factors, including personal resources, language ability and access to information.

While the information given to new and international students in Welcome Week is clearly of relevance to the majority of transfer students who are arriving in this campus and country for the first time, they may not identify it as such and therefore will miss out on beneficial workshops. This was evident in the greater levels of campus knowledge that students who had attended induction workshops had, and the confidence that this generated.

On the other hand, some students arriving from campuses abroad originate from the UK as ex-patriates, or come from other European

countries where the cultural difference is not as great. These students felt less need for an induction workshop as they were confident in their own pre-existing knowledge and ability to ask their peers for practical guidance. It is logical then to suppose that transfer students will require different levels of practical and social or emotional support, depending on their background.

However, it feels highly appropriate to create a workshop in Welcome Week which speaks directly to transfer students (particularly those with little prior knowledge of the country and culture) and which will incorporate some of the issues covered in other inductions. It also feels important to start this preparation before students leave their home campus, in order for their arrival to be better supported in those early days.

The new list of transfer students will ensure that all students receive the same level of information, regardless of the campus they arrive from or the school they are in. Therefore there is a greater homogeneity of the dissemination of information and students are free to use the resources as they please.

Learning points for other UK institutions

There is evidence of a real demand amongst students to participate in a more international academic experience. Students described wanting to integrate into the main student body, mix with people from other countries and cultures, and participate in a different academic environment. Where this happened, students felt their student experience was greatly enhanced and were very eager to recommend the scheme to others.

There should also be recognition then, that this integration requires both thought and consideration on the part

of the institution, and a level of personal responsibility on the part of the student to be successful, given that students are joining an already established peer group. There is a balance to be struck, therefore, between identifying this group of students as a separate entity in order to provide them with relevant and appropriate information to ease their transition, whilst encouraging them to become part of the wider student body.

Further information

Heriot-Watt Go Global Project:

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/go-global.htm>

Go Global Transfer Students:

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/goglobal/inter-campus-transfer.htm>

Heriot-Watt Student Support pages:

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/student-life/campus-life/student-support.htm>

This project was run by Carol Murray, Senior Counsellor.

Contact: C.J.Murray@hw.ac.uk

Creating a rolling induction programme for international students

Keele University Students' Union

About Keele and Keele Students' Union

Keele has around 10,000 students, 17% of which are international. Around 3,000 are accommodated on campus. International students have dedicated support from International Student Support which is part of Student Support and Development Services.

Advice & Support at Keele (ASK) is an advice service provided by KeeleSU. ASK delivers free, independent, confidential advice, information and representation to Keele students and delivers immigration advice to Tier 4 students studying in the UK. We host an annual training conference for club and society committees. Emphasis is on 'hard to reach' students. In 2015-16 we focused particularly on international students.

At KeeleSU we are lucky to have a number of active international student societies: 20 country specific societies and one large International Students Society. 17% of International Students are in clubs and societies which is lower than the Keele average of 35% engagement. We assume many students engage in the activities of these international societies without being members.

Why this project?

KeeleSU set up a project with the Learning and Professional Development Centre (LPDC) and



Santander to research the experiences of international students whilst at Keele University and the 'Keele University Students' Union International Student Experience Study' was produced in August 2015.

The principal aim of the research was to suggest measures which would increase international student involvement with the services of KeeleSU. The report identified a gap in the welcome that was given to international students during the different stages of the academic year. There were many events for students arriving during 'Welcome Week' but students arriving outside of this time had a very different experience.

This project planned to implement some of the recommendations of the plan by developing a welcome support package for international students arriving in the UK at any point in the year.

The welcome package ran alongside events during the academic year which were available to both existing home and international students. These events celebrated the different cultures of the students that are present at the university.

What did we do?

The project ran from August 2015 – July 2016.

Step 1.

Identified key members of staff to be involved in the project.

Step 2.

Email to all prospective students asking if they would like to meet up with us shortly after they had arrived at the university. This was sent centrally by the University who had a strategic plan to target communications with international students.

Step 3.

Commissioned artwork to advertise the service.

Step 4.

Wrote a job description and recruited a specific member of student staff.

Step 5.

Employed five students who were either international or who had studied abroad to compile information about the local area to support a newly arrived international student who had missed the main welcome event.



Step 6.

Employed a copyeditor to distill and format all information and commissioned professional graphic designers to enhance the visual appeal of material.

We used events such as the World Festival launch party in February attended by approximately 250 students to talk to students about what services they needed to know about during induction.

Outcomes

- We created a service for international students arriving throughout the year to request a personal meeting with a student staff member on arrival at the University.
- Cultural events were hosted to celebrate the cultures of the different students that are present at the university.
- Legacy materials for newly arrived international students, including: what you need to know before and when you arrive, food, shopping, travel, local information, sources of help. Existing students were recruited to create local information

for other international students to help the induction process. Materials were peer reviewed by international students. In addition resources were displayed at a barbeque and comments were then used to further develop the materials.

Positive unintended consequences

- After meeting one student who arrived on a Saturday morning with two dependents and no accommodation organised, we discovered this is not uncommon. This led to a change in process and the University is now asking for confirmation of accommodation arrangements prior to arrival.
- Previous research highlighted the fact that campus maps weren't adequate as they didn't include accommodation block letters. This has been fed back and will be changed for the start of the new academic year.

Challenges

- The project was not the responsibility of a single member of staff and it was challenging to fit the work in around daily demands of existing roles. It really needed further time dedicated to it at a time when many other demands were being made.
- Identifying who was due to arrive in the UK, and when, and getting in touch with them. Take up was low and we did not have the resources to investigate why. However factors could have been information overload and a possible communication barrier.
- Employing a student staff member. The work was erratic and we could not guarantee hours.
- Funds – we had failed to factor in money for gifts/'freebies' for students arriving late and funds had to be found from a different project.

Sustainability

The information pack has been created and can be re-used. It could be supported by a volunteer role with training from SU advice staff or staff

could support a future project on a rota.

Recommendations for other institutions

- Carefully consider your method of dissemination of information to reach as many students in need as possible. We used memory sticks with information loaded on to them for the target students as they are research students.
- Create a mechanism to test the usefulness of the information that you send out to your international students before and during arrival. This may include asking questions of international students such as:
 - Does information come at the right time and in the right format(s)?
 - Is there too much or too little information?
 - Is the information understandable/digestible?
 - Should there be different information for students that come from different home countries?
- Ensure you have the right people involved in the project – you need buy in from the institution
- Make sure you can dedicate the time – it doesn't have to be a lot but it can make a big difference, get a team!
- Get existing students involved, including students who have experienced arriving after the main events and those who have studied abroad
- Think about what materials and freebies you can give to students
- What's good for international students is (generally – excluding visa info) good for home students, so once you have done the work, roll it out to all students

Further information

Support for international students at Keele: <https://www.keele.ac.uk/studentsservices/internationalstudents>

'Keele University Students' Union International Student Experience Study' was produced in August 2015.

Published materials available from www.keelesu.com/advice

This project was led by Fay Harris, Head of Student Voice & Advocacy.
Contact: keelesu.com/ask

Employability Project

Developing your Global Career: evaluating the project outcomes Midlands International Career Group

Overview of project

This project delivered an online event running from 7-11 March 2016. It consisted of 13 webinars targeted at international university students, enabling them to make the best use of their UK experience and prepare for global employment opportunities. The project involved 16 Midlands universities working in partnership to run individual and collaborative activities, connecting electronically in real time with all events recorded and available for wider use.

Project rationale and aim

As opportunities for international students to work in the UK after their course become increasingly restrictive, the importance of developing global thinking and pursuing global employment grows. International students need to increasingly focus on getting relevant work experience while studying, or before their student visa expires. At the same time they need to explore global job opportunities and actively plan their career for return to their home country. This project used the experience of careers professionals working with international students to address these trends in a positive way, providing opportunities for information-sharing, student employability development, employer and alumni engagement, reflection/action planning, and networking within the international student community in the Midlands.

UKISA GRANTS SCHEME FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CPA AUSTRALIA

ARE YOU LOOKING TO BECOME A GLOBAL GRADUATE?

DEVELOP YOUR GLOBAL CAREER VIRTUAL FAIR 7th - 11th March 2016

JOIN US FOR A SERIES OF WEBINAR PRESENTATIONS TO HELP YOU TO DEVELOP YOUR GLOBAL CAREER.

The webinar programme covers the following themes:

- o Making the most of your time in the UK
- o Working Globally
- o Returning Home
- o Working in the UK/EU
- o You as a global professional

This is a fantastic opportunity for you to find out more from a wide range of organisations and skilled professionals to further develop your global mind set and also attend online workshops on up to date visa information.

To register visit: <http://midlandsinternationalgroup.eventbrite.com>

Any questions? please email: midlandsinternationalgroup@gmail.com

Project objectives

- To enable international students to:
- Confidently seek UK opportunities for skill development, work experience and employment as students and graduates
 - Develop and implement a practical strategy for pursuing postgraduate opportunities globally and in their home country

The benefits to international students and graduates

Intended benefits defined in project plan	How the project delivered the benefit
Utilising and maximising the knowledge, experience and resources from 16 Midlands universities, working in partnership, to create an event of size and scope not achievable by a single HE institution	To our knowledge this was the first online project of this kind involving a large number of universities. It brought together a range of expertise, knowledge and contacts which we were able to share with students across institutions
Increased opportunities to access information about work opportunities in students' home countries, globally and in the UK	Webinars covered a wide range of topics from global mindset, developing your global brand and making the most of UK study, to China-specific and employer-led sector-specific webinars
Receiving up-to-date visa information from a leading immigration solicitor	Covered in webinar on visa law delivered by Freeth solicitors and webinars on Tier 5 and Tier 1 visa applications
Learning from alumni who have established and developed their careers globally	Delivered through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur session involving Loughborough international student alumnus who presented on his experience in running his own business in the UK – Nottingham University alumnus presenting on her experience on careers in China
Networking with other international students within their own institution to widen knowledge and opportunity awareness	Webinar webchat gave students and graduates the chance to meet online, share their own knowledge and experience

The benefits to participating universities

Intended benefits defined in project plan	How the project delivered the benefit
Sharing good practice in work with international students	Planning and running the webinars enabled participating staff to learn from each other, and develop confidence in delivering online sessions
Enhancing awareness of global opportunities through sharing connections	Sharing knowledge and contacts enabled us to reach a wider range of students beyond our individual institutions
Creating a sustainable format of session delivery to a diverse institutional members	This format for delivery is being shared with careers professionals nationally and can be replicated in other UK regions

Evaluating project outcomes

Web hits/viewing figures

There were 1,089 registrations for the webinar series in total, made by 450 individual students and graduates from across the 16 Midlands universities. 440 webinar attendances were recorded, with an average of 40 per webinar.

Quantitative data

All students registering for the webinar series were emailed a SurveyMonkey questionnaire asking them to rate their experience on a scale of 0 to 10 (where 10 is very helpful). The following data is based on the 29 student responses.

Question	Rating average
Quality of the information received in the session(s)	7.60
Opportunity for questions/interaction in the session(s)	7.70
Webinar materials in the session(s)	6.30
Overall satisfaction with the webinars	6.90

All respondents would recommend the event to a friend or course-mate.

Link to resources

The recordings can be accessed via https://issuu.com/midlandsinternationalgroup/docs/dygc_march_2016_brochure

A Midlands International Group website is currently being created to host the webinar series, our blogs and other resources relevant to international students.

<http://midlandsinternationalgroup.org.uk>

This project was led by Iwan Griffiths, MSc Business Careers Adviser, Aston University. Contact: i.griffiths@aston.ac.uk Tel. 0121 204 4754

academic disciplines. In focusing solely on international students we would be able to better generalise our findings specifically to international students and colleagues who work with them specifically.

Live audit lecture

This lecture uses the student response software Mentimeter to facilitate an anonymous reflective quiz. This software works in a similar way to clicker devices but allows students to use their phones to input their answers in a variety of forms knowing that their names will not be displayed. This provides learners with an anonymous space to air any transitional concerns they may have. In addition students are re-assured when they are able to share concerns and aspirations.

You can view the quiz questions and responses from our induction lectures at:

Summer: <http://tinyurl.com/s4kresults1>

January: <http://tinyurl.com/s4kresults2>

This activity was supported with an online learning package containing useful facts about Keele, sources of support, drop in times, library opening hours, etc. This lecture took place in September 2015. See links on page 25.

Online resources

We felt further targeted support around common assessment periods would be beneficial so designed online learning packages around the areas of academic writing and revision techniques. Combined with the above, these resources comprise our four resources which make up Skills4Keele. The online resources were created using Google Forms to allow us to gather data whilst providing learning content with a longer term aim of being able to feed the data back into academic programmes. In addition to this, the forms used video content to demonstrate points; these videos were

screencasts (created using Screencastomatic) and informative videos produced using PowToon.

The initial plan had been to stagger the release of the three online resources, with one released shortly after the September induction lecture and the other two released just before the University assessment period. However, a significant increase in the day-to-day duties of the project team made this unachievable. Therefore, the resources were released in one email to all of our September cohort students in mid-November. This release was followed up with several emails to students in January, February, March and April to encourage use.

The numbers

In total we gathered transitional data from both cohorts as follows:

	September responses	January responses
Induction audit lecture	132	79
Academic writing resource	5	1
Revision techniques resource	8	1
Facts about Keele resource	5	2

This obviously is a low response rate from our initial sample gathered at the induction lectures with just 14% of the September cohort utilising the online resources, and 4% of the January cohort.

How did we evaluate Skills4Keele?

Evaluation of this project is difficult with students having such transitory and varying experiences at university. For both cohorts, an end of year survey was released which mirrored the questions asked in the live audit so we could view 'distance travelled'. The survey asked about experiences of UK study and how prepared they may feel for the next stage in their studies.

The survey received a low response rate of eight students (response rate of 4%) of the 199 we saw in the induction lectures across the two cohorts. General findings were that most students accessed academic support in the form of individual tuition services and workshops signposted in the induction audit lectures. Of the six students who used the online resources, the following qualitative feedback, while from an extremely small sample, offer some positive evaluation of the resources:

- *Presentation ideas were useful and some of the essay writing resources*
- *I think it can be useful*

We conducted some immediate evaluation of the January audit lecture, a step we felt important following the first cohorts lecture. Evaluative data gathered from 66/79 students (84% cohort) indicated a hugely positive experience for our learners. 100% of learners felt this would have a positive impact on their studies and 94% indicated they intended to use the Skills4Keele online resources; however, this did not translate into comparable usage of the online resources.

The limited responses to the end of year survey, and the evaluation of the January live audit indicate that these resources have evaluated well. The plans for the 2016-17 cycle of this project include immediate evaluation at the end of each live audit and a greater focus on data tracking of the online resources, as anecdotal evidence indicates a much wider use of the resources than the 22 recorded uses.

Sustainability

The resources created by this project are entirely sustainable. The online resources will continue to be offered to our international students each year. Furthermore, the live audit lecture has been firmly cemented as part of our welcome to international students. This means that this project will gather

data beyond this academic year, potentially leading to an even more significant piece of work tracking the longer-term transitional issues faced by international students at Keele.

Timescale: a model for a similar project

Development of audit resources and initial design of online resources – July/August 2015.

September cohort

1. Live audit lecture: September 2015
2. Release of online resources: November 2015
3. 4 x emails encouraging use of online materials: January–April 2016
4. Release of end of year evaluation survey: April 2016
5. Close evaluation survey: 31 May 2016

January cohort

1. Live audit lecture and lecture evaluation: January 2016
2. Release of online resources: January 2016
3. 3 x emails encouraging use of online materials: February–April 2016
4. Release of end of year evaluation survey: April 2016
5. Close evaluation survey: 31 May 2016

Challenges to the project: staff resource and technology

This project was a new undertaking for both the Student Learning and International Student Support Teams. Whilst elements of the resources did exist, the overall package of content needed to be developed and refined before it was ready for delivery. The project launch coincided with the busiest time of the year for the support services involved and consequently, this development was time-consuming and had to take place alongside intensive planning and preparation for the start of the academic year.

The project sought to re-purpose Google Forms, a survey software, for teaching and learning purposes but has highlighted the limitations of this use. In order to capture the data from each use of the resources, students must press submit at the end of the resource. Anecdotal evidence indicates a much higher use of the resources than the 22 recorded. Therefore, we can hypothesize that more than 22 students used the resources but perhaps failed to press submit. Investigations are underway for the 2016-17 cycle to work on developing more complex learner analytics to inform the next stage of the project.

Key findings

Key findings gathered at the induction lectures from 199 students are:

- Students are most excited at the prospect of meeting new people, not studying in a new culture.
- Students are least excited by the prospect of exams and assessments.
- In addition to essays and exams, students in both cohorts were particularly worried about class presentations and managing their own stress.
- There was a significant disparity in how challenging the two cohorts felt the transition to UK HE would be. Our January cohort felt much more confident in this respect.

These findings place a renewed importance upon social inductions to university, as well as a new focus on academic conventions and assessments. Future inductions will keep an academic focus through the Skills4Keele programme which will gather academic-focused transitional issues for academic programmes.

Recommendations for other institutions

This project suggests that proactive interventions aimed at academic

attainment remains a fruitful area for future research and that tackling academic anxieties represents a productive use of staff time in any international welcome or induction process. The resources created here correlate with separate research undertaken with cohorts of first-year students across our institution with regards to academic transitions into higher education. This suggests that these resources have significant potential to benefit all students, not just international students.

Dissemination

Following the presentation of the project at the UKCISA Annual conference in 2016, initial discussions are underway with a number of colleagues at different institutions to consider rolling out Skills4 projects at their universities. Fellow practitioners wishing to help the team at Keele to continue their work, gain a detailed report of the project findings and gain extra resources to use with their teams and students, can take the Keele staff survey at www.tinyurl.com/s4keele

Further information

The online resources can be viewed at the following web links:

- Academic writing resource – www.tinyurl.com/keelewriting
- Revision techniques resource – www.tinyurl.com/keelerevision
- Key facts about Keele resource – www.tinyurl.com/keelefacts

You can also view the presentation of the project on the UKCISA 2016 conference page (session F6) at www.ukcisa.org.uk/F6

These resources can be shared with colleagues in fellow institutions but the project team would encourage you to contact us before use. Please **contact** the project lead, **Dr Chris Little** on: c.w.r.little@keele.ac.uk Tel. 01782 734347, @drlittle26 on Twitter.

Enhancing learning experience for international students: pre-sessional tuition for online learning

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

About Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM)

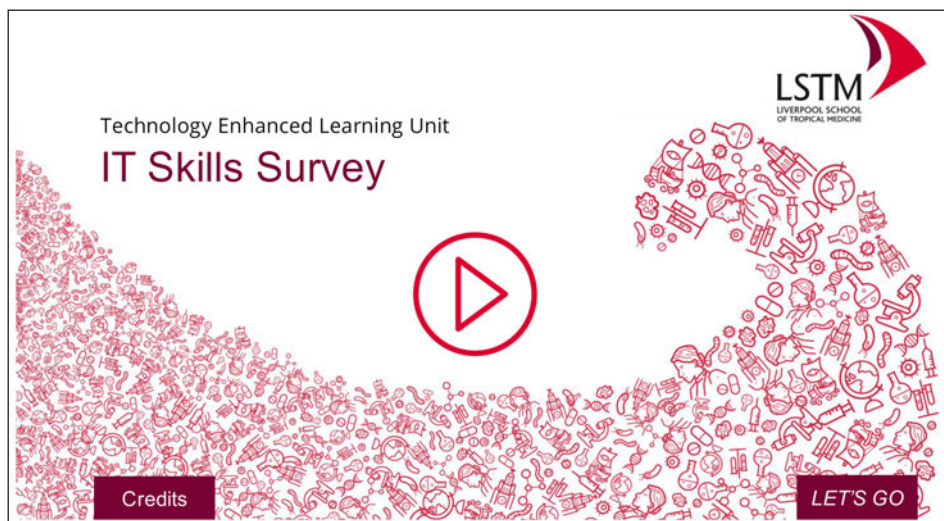
LSTM's educational programme consists of four core MSc programmes in International Public Health, Humanitarian Studies, Tropical Disease Biology and Clinical Sciences. In addition we teach Professional Diplomas and Certificate Courses in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Tropical Nursing, Reproductive Health, Humanitarian Assistance, International Health Consultancy and Supporting Learning.

Students come from around the world. In 2014-15 LSTM welcomed 561 international students including on-campus, short course and research students. Nigeria is the largest cohort, followed by Germany then Malaysia, Norway and Saudi Arabia.

Why this project?

As an institution that has recently gained HEI status (2013), LSTM has implemented new IT and learning technologies to improve teaching and learning at the school. Although systems and technologies have been selected and designed to fit the needs of a diverse student population, of which international students make up approximately 50%, for many students learning online with mediation through computers is a new concept.

Many of our Masters and Diploma students join us from low resource



settings where access to online learning is minimal. Whilst there is a great deal of support for these individuals from staff this does not address the unique challenges faced by the sector. When students arrive on campus, refreshing or further developing IT skills becomes an additional burden whilst trying to adapt to academic culture and being able to concentrate on the course itself. Students faced with these challenges have expressed concern about the impact their lack of IT skills may have on their performance. As many individuals are sponsored to attend courses by their communities, employers or family, there is often a great deal of pressure to achieve the best grades possible, and cultural differences often mean that these same students are uneasy about asking for help for fear of being identified as a failing student.

To address these issues we implemented a project to provide

pre-sessional IT support and resources for students.

What did we do?


The school Student Experience Officer worked with the Enhanced Learning unit to identify the feasibility of producing a resource to help better support those students with additional IT support needs. As many of our IT systems (newly implemented since our HEI status awarded in 2013) have been designed with the international market in mind, we brought together ideas that leveraged on our ability to provide pre-arrival access to systems.

The project centres on the development of an **IT capabilities assessment tool** that provides students with a personalised selection of remedial resources with options to sign-up to face-to-face training. This tool has now been used with approximately 200 students across

our diploma programmes, providing opportunities for additional support, and collecting data that will help us to better understand the needs of our students.

The project ran from August 2015 to September 2016 with full roll out for all MSc and Diploma students. The assessment tool was created using Articulate Storyline. Supplementary learning resources were developed on a Google Document and this was embedded within Virtual Learning Environment. This was then tested with students and amended and refined.

So this is how you scored: 4 points



Scoring 3 - 5

From the answers you've given it's obvious that you are already confident in many areas of IT. **That's great!** You might want to brush up on your weaker areas by using our range of **'self-paced resources'** through the button below. You could also sign up to our IT skills training sessions that we will be running on your arrival at LSTM. Doing this now will help you get the most out of your studies.

Click on **'Sign-up for training'** below to sign up for training

[Sign-up for training](#)

[Self-paced resources](#)

[Home](#)

Project Evaluation

- Analysis of responses given by students to the IT Skills capabilities assessment. This has provided a valuable granular measurement of our students' level of confidence in three areas of IT usage (general IT skills, Communication & Information, Office Tools).
- Investigation of completion rate, time taken, and time of response. This has helped us to refine the 'gameplay' of the resource (the flow of the resource which in some ways is representative of a game). By doing this we have been able to better ensure that students are guided through the resource, and leads to higher completion rates.
- Analysis of student utilization of support resources and training, helping us to plan a programme of face-to-face workshops.
- Further interviewing and surveying to explore:
 - Student prior expectation of use of technology in teaching, and areas of difficulty that we had not envisaged and factored into the assessment and support tool. This has helped provide a feedback loop through which we are able to reality check our measurements of IT skill capability and further refine the

selection of self-study resources and training workshops.

- Access to IT within student's home country and prior access to IT training. This has helped us to evaluate the tool for use in-country, with a view to recommending that students undertake the assessment prior to travel to the UK. For example, will our self-study resources be usable over the IT infrastructure to which our students commonly have access?

Challenges

The main risk to the project was around finding and utilizing the chosen platform for delivery.

We considered using our Virtual Learning Environment's (**Brightspace** by **D2L**) built-in quiz tool but this was not able to provide the personalised feedback and resource recommendations in the way that we would have liked. We selected Articulate Storyline which has proved to be a popular platform for interactive learning resources at other institutions. However, this required learning new software to do quite complex things which had inherent risk and could have either required external support or delayed delivery of the project.

Evolution of the project

During our early stage assessment of skill needs against our abilities to deliver on these it became apparent that we were in a better position to be able to refer students to already existent Open Educational Resources rather than to develop those resources initially ourselves. As such the focus of this project initially has been the creation of an assessment and referral tool rather than specific learning resources. However, going forward through use of this tool with real cohorts we hope to be able to produce streamlined reusable training resources tailored to the needs of our students.

In our face-to-face delivery of training we have already had experience of delivering workshops and so with the evidence provided by the assessment tool we were able to devise workshops that pulled together different activities from past workshops. We have also been prompted to devise completely new content for some aspects, for example, around the use of collaborative Office 365 documents.

As we are a small institution we can evaluate based upon the numbers of people who were recommended for

face-to-face training against those who undertook the training. From our pilot group the number of these was very small.

Sustainability

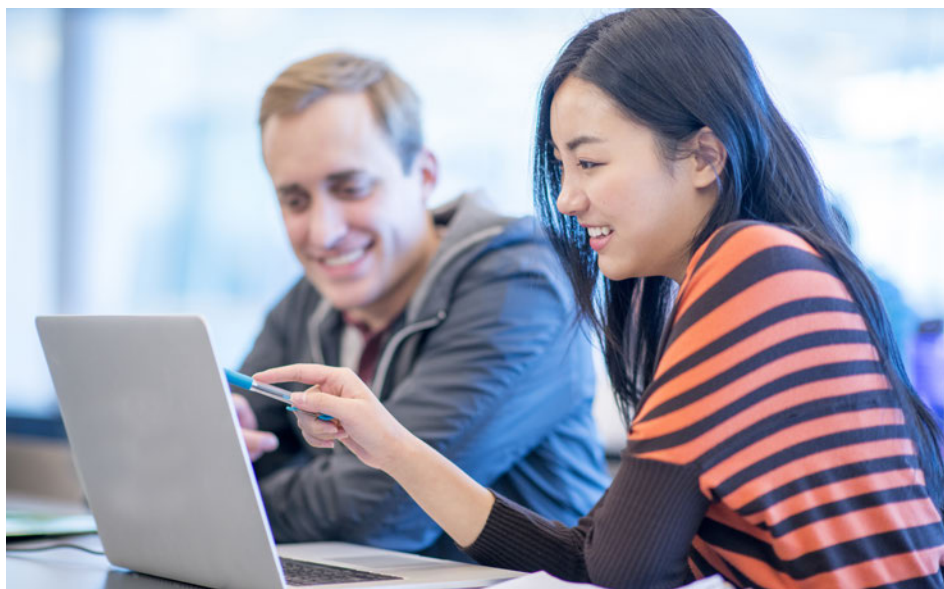
By 'front-loading' our work in the development of this reusable tool, sustainability has been designed into the resource as it is able to support a large number of students with personalised feedback, but in a sustainable way. The tool will continue to be refined, however, the assessment element of the tool can be used in its current format for a number of years. Questions will need to be updated in time in line with the types of learning activities used at the school and so need to be reviewed at a later date.

As new and improved learning resources become available that are relevant for the needs of our students we can update the list of supplementary learning resources on the Google Document. Because this is stored outside of the Storyline assessment tool, updates are easy to apply. After our initial refinement due prior to the 2016-17 academic year, there is unlikely to be a need for update until the following academic year.

Key learning points at LSTM

By undertaking the project we have been able to develop our understanding in a number of key areas:

- A clearer understanding of expectations of baseline IT skill capabilities placed on our arriving students aligned to the learning outcomes and activities of our programmes, and a more accurate assessment of the skills that our students arrive with.



- An accurate understanding of the IT infrastructure that our international students have in home countries.
- A more complete picture of how we can better support students pre-arrival, or a more developed view of our courses as moving away from traditional on-campus towards a blended approach.

Learning points for other institutions

- In our small institution, the Student Experience Officer had good links to the Technology Enhanced Learning unit which were capitalised upon to bring the project to fruition. In bigger organisations those links may not be apparent to the support teams who are in direct contact with students, so we recommend staff reach out to teams that hold a similar support role to their own.
- When designing new systems or in scoping projects, reconsider the student journey and if possible try to remove limits imposed by the 'traditional' approaches to course management. This enables students to gain early access to resources so that this period of preparation can be fully utilised, particularly by international students.
- Think about what 'welcome' activities can be employed to facilitate the student's adjustment

into academic life and lay the foundations for successful achievement of learning outcomes.

Link to resource

View a draft version of the resource: <https://brightspace.lstmed.ac.uk/shared/ukcisa/story.html>

This project was led by Dan Robinson, Manager, Technology Enhanced Learning Unit and Will Moindrot, Educational Technologist. Contact details at www.lstmliverpool.ac.uk

Team-Based Learning: improving results, engagement and experience for international students

University of Northampton

Why this project?

Northampton Business School (NBS) has a large international student body studying in Northampton. NBS has always prided itself on having excellent teaching practices. Its core aims have been to develop students to think and work independently, teaching them how to research and construct arguments based on evidence.

Above all, NBS ensures that students learn to apply their knowledge and solve problems in the real world. Advancing teaching practices is vital for NBS and the HE sector as a whole.

Prior to the launch of the pilot project a number of critical observations had been made about international students studying in Northampton:

- Engagement levels were lower with international marketing students than with any other student base.
- Performance levels had not matched pre-admission expectations.
- The main distinction between the NBS offering and the 'domestic' option for a student had become 'location'.

Summary of the project

The pilot project investigated how a shift in learning and teaching methodologies could improve results and engagement levels.

This study explores a new, dynamic approach with international marketing students. In order to prepare these students for their careers, it is imperative that they develop the appropriate social skills to succeed. Our research examines the pedagogical and practical considerations of evolving a traditional course towards a Team-Based learning model. This approach is seen to enhance the student's appreciation of decision-making through collaboration.

As a result of this intervention, we have identified strategies that can be repurposed across a number of courses in order to increase international students' contributions to seminar discussions.

Rationale for piloting Team Based Learning with an international cohort

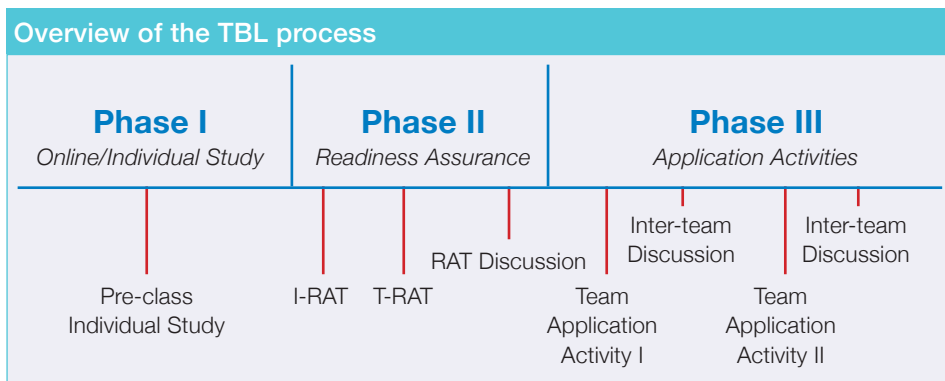
A key motivation for piloting Team Based learning (TBL) with international students was to move the teaching experience away from students 'absorbing' material in lectures, to applying concepts and tools in a team format. Initial discussions with students revealed that they wanted something 'more', something 'different' from their experience in the UK. Feedback from employers also highlighted a requirement for incoming graduates to possess first-class problem solving skills.

How Team Based Learning works

In a TBL environment, contact time occurs in teams of six students. It is critical that each team contains a diverse set of students.

The second part of the module (the first part was delivered in a traditional format for comparison) covered essential topics for completing the assessed work. Key concepts were introduced prior to the TBL workshop. Completing pre-work is essential in a TBL environment. If pre-work is not completed, the tests will be more difficult and students will find it difficult to justify and articulate their answers.

In the pilot study, pre-work consisted of a series of presentations, data sets and interviews with a Marketing





Director of a global research organisation. Pre-work was supported by a series of online lectures and webinars (along with English language support sessions).

iRAT/tRAT

During the first workshop session of a TBL unit, all students take an **individual readiness assessment test (iRAT)** that covers the assigned material. Straight after this test, students retake the exact same test as a team, **team readiness assessment test (tRAT)**, and immediately find out how they scored in both the individual and team test. In the pilot project, the scores did not contribute directly to the final grades but had a direct effect on the learning process. Team scores were kept visible throughout the workshops to foster healthy competition.

Individual tests hold students accountable for learning material prior to a workshop and team tests provide an exciting opportunity for students to learn from each other while working together on the test.

Pilot Project Phases

Phase 1:

- Students took responsibility for studying assigned materials independently. The students were

provided with a series of interactive sessions where they examined a live business case.

- Tools and key concepts were introduced in webinars and online lectures, making contact time more 'applied'.

Phase 2:

- The iRAT examines the readiness to apply the knowledge gained in phase 1. Taking the tRAT removes the impact of 'strong personalities' in teamwork. A challenge when working with international cohorts is that some cultures will be more comfortable with challenging other people's views.
- The students were tested on what the correct course of action should be for the company in the live business case.
- An **Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique Sheet (IF-AT)** was used. This was a scratch card. An IF-AT requires the team to discuss and justify each answer. Scratching off the correct answer straight away scores maximum marks (4); scratching off a wrong answer reduces the mark available by 1. Strong personalities can sometimes 'take over' team environments. Using the IF-AT encouraged students to discuss with their peers and think about why they reached their decision.

Example of IF-AT sheet:

IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE (IF-AT®)					
Name				Test #	
Subject				Total	
SCRATCH OFF COVERING TO EXPOSE ANSWER					
	A	B	C	D	Score
1.	★				
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					

During the TBL workshops students worked on solving business problems. They applied specialist techniques (**Inc. Six Sigma**), the knowledge acquired through the pre-work and received immediate feedback on their ideas.

How the pilot project was set up

The pilot was introduced into the curriculum of the MSc International Marketing programme at Northampton University in 2015. Prior to their inclusion, the delivery of course content consisted of a series of didactic lectures and seminar sessions. 32 students completed the pilot study, evaluating the impact on performance and engagement.

The module is traditionally run over 12 weeks and is assessed in two parts, both equally weighted. To enable a meaningful comparison, the modified module was divided into two distinct types of teaching delivery. The first half

of the module (P1) comprised 6 didactic lectures, supported by case study material and recommended texts. The second half of the module (P2) consisted of TBL workshops and 'hands on' application of decision-making tools and techniques. Both assessments required the students to analyse information and produce an individual business report.

P2 followed the core elements of TBL, although the nature of the pilot study did not allow for an in-depth use of all available tools and techniques. An experienced faculty member with expert knowledge of decision-making techniques facilitated the workshops. To ensure comparisons between the two approaches were meaningful, the same faculty member delivered the didactic lectures and workshops.

Evaluation

An evaluation of the new methodology considered the following measurements and methods:

- Level of pre-lecture / seminar preparation: Observations of P1 & P2
- Engagement with cohort members: Observations of P1 & P2
- Attendance: Analysis of attendance records
- Satisfaction: Focus group feedback of P1 & P2
- Performance: Analysis of assessment performance, P1 versus P2

Timescale

The pilot project ran from September 2015 to May 2016. This allowed for an assessment of pre-programme expectations, the effects of TBL on P2 and post-module evaluations.

Challenges

No challenges were encountered in respect of time and budget. The

nature of the pilot project meant that some discoveries merit further investigation; the sustainable nature of the project has meant that these can be developed in the future.

A sustainable project

The professional decision-making tools and techniques that have been introduced can be utilised by future cohorts. The enhancements to engagement and performance levels can be used within different modules and programmes outside of the Business School.

The researcher will build on the insights of the pilot study and develop a more extensive research project.

Reflections on the project

There has been a significant impact on engagement and performance, albeit in unexpected areas.

Observations of the first module, P1 and the second module, P2 show that 95% of students carried out pre-work in P2 vs. 15% who completed pre-work in P1. Having students complete the appropriate level of preparation activity has always been a challenge. The knowledge that preparation work will help students to solve problems and make decisions more effectively was the main motivating factor here.

Excluding absences due to sickness or emergencies, attendance levels for P2 were 100%, vs. 75% for P1. There is a recognised link between attendance and performance and this is significant here.

During P1, students were given the opportunity to engage with lecture material by way of group discussions in seminar sessions. This was difficult to achieve and only a small proportion of the cohort (less than 20%) actively participated. This level of engagement was typical of previous cohorts and

has historically been attributed to cultural differences in communication. P2 saw a significant change. Engagement levels were considerably increased. All students participated in the workshop sessions, although it was not a 'natural' process for some.

A key question of the pilot project was 'can increased levels of engagement deliver better performance and student retention?'

- Satisfaction: Focus group feedback of P1 & P2
- Performance: Analysis of assessment performance, P1 versus P2

Student performance was assessed using the results of the two set assignments. Both assessments involved students examining the same marketing research issue, but from different perspectives. The topics covered in both the didactic lectures and workshop sessions included research philosophies, quantitative and qualitative methodologies, scenario planning, process improvement and neuro-linguistic programming.

P1 Grade Analysis

Grade	Number
A+	1
A	2
A-	3
B+	10
B	5
B-	2
C+	4
C	2
C-	1
F+	2
F	0
F-	0

P2 Grade Analysis

Grade	Number
A+	1
A	2
A-	3
B+	10
B	11
B-	3
C+	1
C	0
C-	0
F+	0
F	0
F-	0

It is noticeable that top grade marks were unaffected by the inclusion of TBL, however there was a noticeable shift towards B grades from C grades in P2. High-grade marks were achieved by the same students in P1 and P2, indicating a strong level of existing knowledge. Further analysis of the top grade students showed stronger English language skills and more professional work experience.

It is important to note that the students who moved from C grades to B grades in P2 were more engaged with the teaching, better prepared and attended more. In addition to this 'bumping of the middle', there were no failures in P2.

The Business School recognises the significance of performance levels in the first module. Students who have low engagement levels and poor results in the first module are at high risk of withdrawing from the programme.

Student feedback on TBL: learning points for Northampton

The majority of the cohort voiced their high satisfaction with the inclusion of TBL and the use of structured decision-making methodologies.

The more involved structure of a TBL workshop environment meant that



The School of Science and Technology, Newton Building, University of Northampton

engaging with material and 'the problem' was more enjoyable and 'part of the process', rather than a 'bolt on' to the didactic P1. Students also viewed the experience of the TBL workshop environment to be more 'suited to a business' course than a traditional lecture and seminar structure.

The most illuminating feedback was that students were more compelled to learn as a team, knowing that 'personality' had been removed from debates. Team members cannot dominate discussions. The key learning points for the institution have been that TBL can increase both performance levels and engagement levels when combined with practical problem solving and decision-making tools.

There is evidence that the inclusion of TBL and practical techniques can increase engagement and have a positive impact on the performance of 'middle grade' students. The techniques that have been used to increase performance levels have not had a detrimental effect on how satisfied the 'top' students are with their programme.

The University of Northampton is currently reviewing the delivery methods of selected Marketing programmes.

Learning points for other institutions

TBL provides an opportunity for staff to be more flexible, enables a more 'flipped' approach and makes better use of time and technology.

The workshop approach provides a number of benefits, especially where a more 'traditional' delivery is not always possible due to logistical constraints.

Further information

A full review of the pilot project is available to any interested institution. Contact project lead, James Blackmore-Wright at James.blackmore-wright@northampton.ac.uk

Research projects completed in 2015-16

Research reports will be published in 2016

Institution	Project title
Research projects	
Bournemouth University	Employment for international students whilst studying in the UK.
University of Brighton	Exploring first year international undergraduates' experiences in 4 disciplines: influences of university and international partner college pedagogy and support practices.
Plymouth University	Reaching out to enhance the wellbeing of international students. Are university counselling and wellbeing services accessible and inclusive.*
University of York	Evaluating Intercultural Competency Strategies Within College Communities.

* Highly commended in the Paul Webley Award for Innovation in International Education

Special thanks to our colleagues and Board members for their support during the assessment of research projects and the Paul Webley Award: Kate Dodd, James Kennedy, Nigel Healey, Ian MacLellan, Paul Rossi, Suzanne Alexander, Alan MacKay, Mostafa Rajaai and John Mountford.

The UK Council for International Student Affairs is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

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