Issue 9 | April 2012

InForm

A journal for international foundation programme professionals

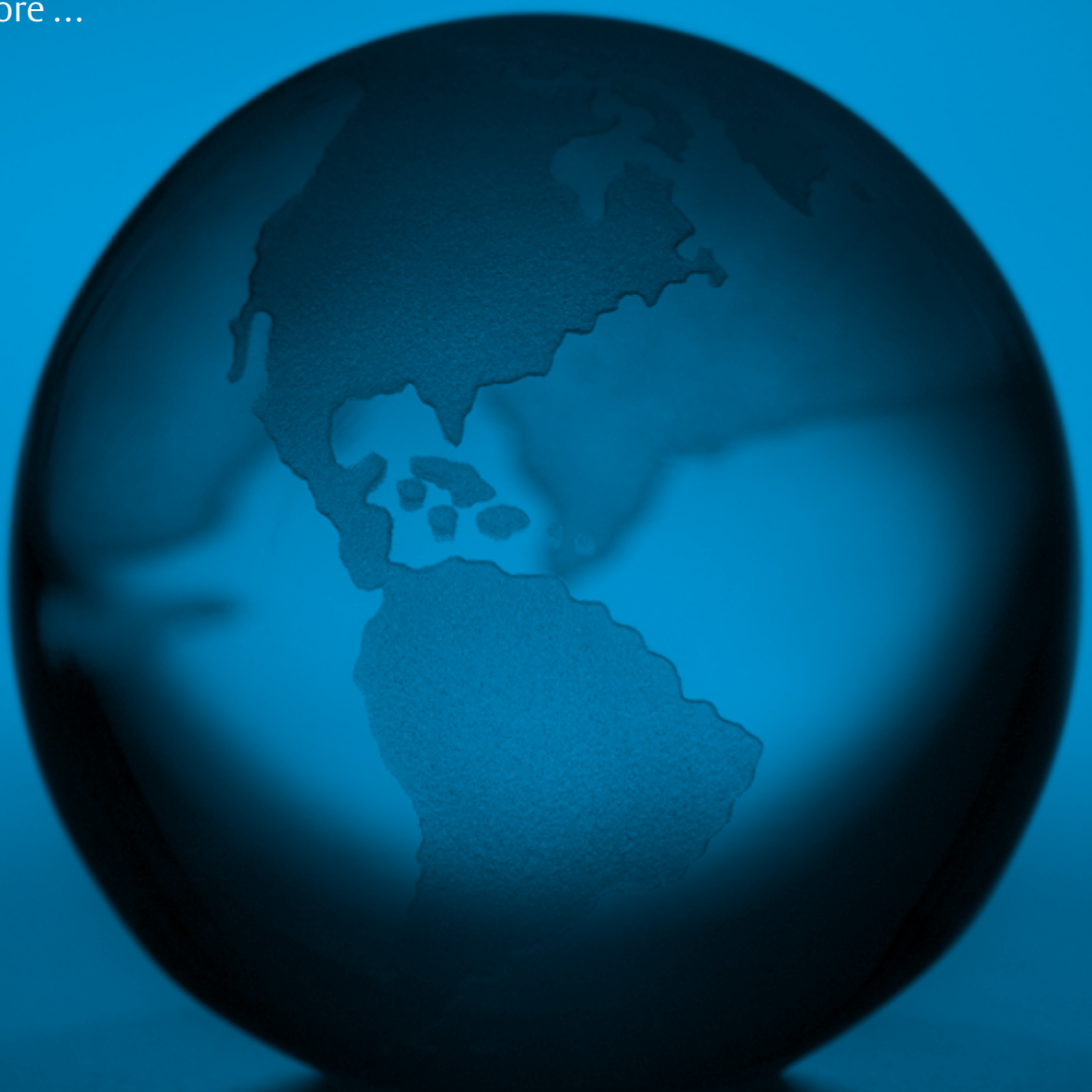
Enhancing the International Foundation Programme

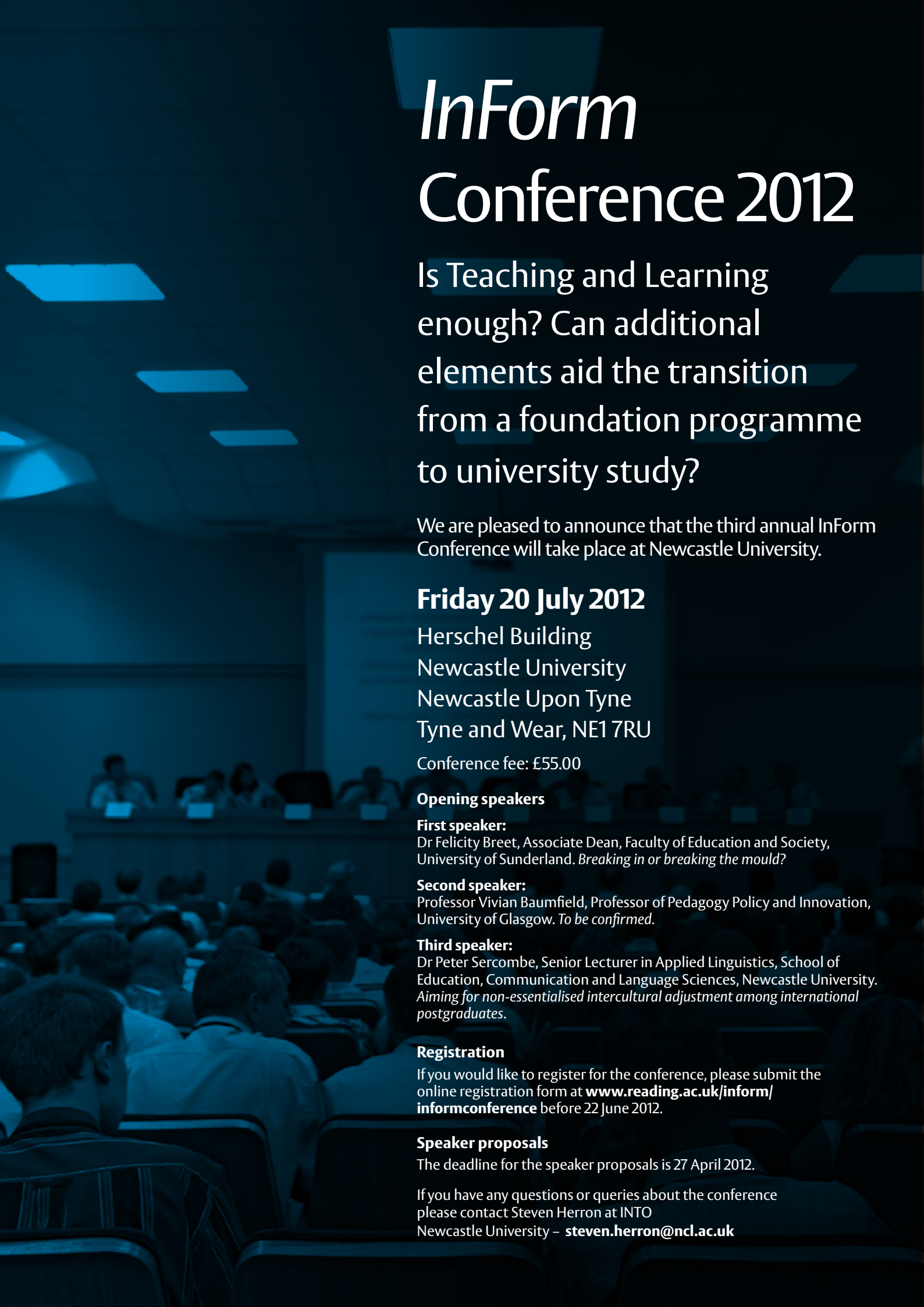
Approaches to the teaching of dyslexic students

Making the language of lectures accessible to international students

Critical thinking: whose responsibility is it?

And more ...





InForm Conference 2012

Is Teaching and Learning enough? Can additional elements aid the transition from a foundation programme to university study?

We are pleased to announce that the third annual InForm Conference will take place at Newcastle University.

Friday 20 July 2012

Herschel Building
Newcastle University
Newcastle Upon Tyne
Tyne and Wear, NE1 7RU

Conference fee: £55.00

Opening speakers

First speaker:
Dr Felicity Breet, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education and Society, University of Sunderland. *Breaking in or breaking the mould?*

Second speaker:
Professor Vivian Baumfield, Professor of Pedagogy Policy and Innovation, University of Glasgow. *To be confirmed.*

Third speaker:
Dr Peter Sercombe, Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics, School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, Newcastle University. *Aiming for non-essentialised intercultural adjustment among international postgraduates.*

Registration

If you would like to register for the conference, please submit the online registration form at **www.reading.ac.uk/inform/informconference** before 22 June 2012.

Speaker proposals

The deadline for the speaker proposals is 27 April 2012.

If you have any questions or queries about the conference please contact Steven Herron at INTO Newcastle University – **steven.herron@ncl.ac.uk**

Inside *InForm* ...

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Design
Designed in-house by the Design & Print Studio

InForm is published by the International Study and Language Centre, University of Reading.

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From the Editorial Board ...

It is a pleasure to see that *InForm* continues to be an interactive forum where IFP professionals share theory and practice and where readers respond to ideas raised in previous issues. We encourage any of our colleagues to contribute to this discussion or suggest new topics for debate.

Issue 9 begins with a response to Bevis' article on teaching business on an IFP (*InForm 7*), suggesting that business should perhaps be taught in a more critical and reflective way. We would be interested to hear the reactions of other readers to this idea.

The articles in this issue reflect the general concern with designing and delivering IFP programmes and modules that can meet the varied and changing needs of international students. Two articles have chosen to look closely at particular groups of students. One focuses on dyslexic students, looking at indicators for identifying dyslexia and suggesting teaching strategies that could be implemented. The other looks at the behaviour of Chinese students in the classroom, reporting on a study that draws primarily on their point of view.

The remaining articles highlight some different approaches to and strategies for teaching. The topics include: how to make the languages of subject lectures more accessible to international students; who should be responsible for teaching critical thinking; using Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as a teaching strategy for content modules; and combining EAP techniques with Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) on an IFP.

Plans are well underway for the third *InForm* conference on Friday 20 July 2012. We are very pleased to announce that this year it will take place at Newcastle University. This year's theme is: 'Is Teaching and Learning Enough?'. It promises to be a stimulating and interesting event. More details are available on the *InForm* website and we look forward to seeing many of you as we move north for the first time.

As always, we welcome contributions and suggestions for future editions. If you would like to write an article, comment on issues raised or make a suggestion, please contact us on: **inform@reading.ac.uk**. We also encourage you to join our JISC mailing list through the link on our website: **www.reading.ac.uk/inform**

Elisabeth Wilding
Chairperson *InForm* Editorial Board

'Dear *InForm*'

Dear InForm,

In his article in issue 7: p18–19, Terry Bevis shared with us an overview of how he uses resources to enhance the student's learning experience and set out six points as a guide to teach business effectively on the IFP. There are some obvious teaching resources discussed in his piece, such as use of digital media (i.e. the BBC website) and the very nature and experience of international elements brought into class by students, and I too think these should be commonly and widely used creatively by IFP business tutors. However, I would like to urge that business also be taught in a more reflective way. This is something only too topical, given the current economic, business and regulatory controversies that are regularly in the headlines.

The other missing aspect to be reflected upon is related to content and orientation. In my view the challenges and crises that capitalist societies are facing require careful and considered coverage. Britain is the country which has given birth to so many innovations over the past 200 hundred years or so and they have led the way to the world order prevailing in the twenty-first century, including the development of capitalism. There are significant challenges in terms of regulation and climate change to name but two and a more critical approach to studying business which incorporates both of these is needed. British academia continues a fine tradition of critical and constructive critique and this should be maintained in IFP offers. It is important that students are aware not only of the need for and role of business, but also of the issues and problems caused by global business activities and how businesses have been run and regulated, especially over the last three decades. And as many commentators have argued, the world cannot sustain itself in the long term if we use resources as we have done. Therefore alternative models should also be discussed in the light of the climate change agenda and given a likely need to innovate, with new materials and technologies and possibly new ways of doing business coming to the fore.

To be adept in changing times students have to be equipped with a critical and reflective approach to studying business activities. Studying business in UK universities can provide excellent business history insights and actual cases which challenge existing and recent business practice, with healthy commentaries on moral responsibilities, ethics and values. Business tutors have a crucial responsibility in guiding such reflection, to ensure that future business people understand their wider responsibilities. Many of our students will be leading businesses in the future so we need to play our part in this. In my view corporate governance and business ethics should be one of the key themes to be promoted using the types of teaching resources that Terry Bevis has outlined. Now we should consider how and what exactly to incorporate in our modules using such innovations, partners and willing students and in the light of widespread concern for current business culture into the future.

Meiko Murayama
IFP Tutor
University of Reading

Dear InForm,

There can be few more satisfying moments in academia than knowing that someone has not only read your article but also given an opportunity for lively discourse about it. For that I have to sincerely thank Dr Murayama for making such valid and reflective points on the piece.

Due to space limitations I will concentrate on the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs of her letter. But first the further thoughts requested in paragraph 1. Helpfully, the points in my article on content and language and on communications can be linked in that English language development and business management teaching meet at the fault line of current student communication techniques. Text speak, blogging, tweeting etc., mean that subject module lecturers are even more reliant on EAP colleagues to work their magic in training students to express themselves in a competent, coherent way to contextualise their ideas.

My points on the student experience and on the future can also be considered together as the operative word is, perhaps, holistic. As each module relates to its pathway, and that in turn relates to the undergraduate programme, then the fit within the university is important. The unique advantage for the IFP is not just the university interface with the local business and social community, but also the fit within the international community. A drop of innovative knowledge in the sea of university teaching in the UK can wash up on faraway shores!

I completely agree with the sentiments in Dr. Murayama's second paragraph. The twin concerns of regulation and climate change should be an integral part of our module thinking, particularly in business. The latter has, perhaps, the greatest potential for good and evil in any activity likely to be studied in universities, although science and politics may give it a good run for its money. Proper regulation might have averted the banking crisis which has crippled banks and economies in the UK, Europe, the US and elsewhere, and the blame for climate change can be laid squarely at the door of consumerism. One could argue that all but the most mean spirited would celebrate the arrival of the sporting, cultural and artistic Olympiad, but then one wonders at the impact of the extra tourism journeys on the ozone layer. I would reinforce Dr Murayama's claim that alternative models should to be discussed. This is a must, as we search for energy reserves in an increasingly hostile environment, not only geographically but politically.

On moral responsibilities, ethics and values, Dr Murayama touches upon the psychological and social core of our problems. In a recent lecture I gave on fairness, equality and diversity, I was able to illustrate, thanks to up to date research by the Institute of Leadership and Management, that the banking workforce in the UK was 55% female and yet the management positions were filled by 70% male workers. I can't help feeling that there is link between this fact and one or two of the problems highlighted above.

Now where shall we put that third runway, or did I mean third airport?

Terry Bevis
Lecturer
University of Kent

Enhancing the International Foundation Programme student experience: staying ahead of the game

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The changing nature of the international student body, aligned with the shifting global context in which Higher Education is couched, means that UK institutions need to regularly review their support for international students to ensure they continue to have a positive experience during their studies in the UK.

Introduction

The experience of an international student on a pathway programme (IFP) in today's competitive climate places increased emphasis on the metaphorical 'journey' that the student travels on, from the moment they select their chosen IFP, to the point they begin their undergraduate and possibly postgraduate degree studies. Increasingly, institutions need to ensure this journey through each stage in the 'international students' lifecycle' (see HEA, 2012) leads to an overall positive student experience.

This paper explores the notion of the 'International Student Lifecycle' through three key themes: Pre-Arrival and Induction, Pastoral Support, and Portfolio and Syllabus. By continually focusing on, revising and improving these three core areas, the student experience will be and will remain positive.

Pre-arrival and induction

Even before the student steps in to an IFP classroom, there is much that can be done to prepare an individual for their arrival to ensure that their transition into the UK HEI system is as smooth as possible. The growing use of social media to devise 'buddying' schemes which encourage interaction with others who have experienced a similar transition, perhaps the year before, work successfully to instil confidence in those embarking on studies overseas, particularly for the first time. Likewise, arming students with adequate interactive pre- arrival information, in the form of online pre-arrival guides which focus on the course they are coming to study without overloading them with extraneous detail, can also assist this transition. Students may often have made their decision to study at a particular institution, and indeed met the conditions of their academic offer, a number of months before they are due to begin their studies. If clear, simply-written information is given about the modules, both core and optional, and the UK academic environment more generally is well described, students can begin to build a picture of their forthcoming academic experience in their minds before they actually set foot in the institution.

At this first stage of the journey, personalised contact through a variety of social media including Twitter, Facebook, SMS and e-mail from the Director of the IFP and their communications team can make all the difference to initial student impressions and establishes a culture of interest and care for the individual student which is welcomed by the students and their parents.

Induction week

The attention paid to enhancing the personalised contact during the pre-arrival period should be continued through to the information and activities organised during

'The attention paid to enhancing the personalised contact during the pre-arrival period should be continued.'

the IFP induction week. It is important that centres which offer pathway programmes work together with central institutional provision (often delivered through entities such as the International Office) to ensure a joined-up and harmonious approach which connects the IFP students with the wider academic world of the university from the moment they set foot on campus.

The induction programme delivered locally for the pathway students should ensure that all aspects of the arrival at the institution, including registration onto the programme and selection of modules (if non-prescribed) remains as smooth as possible. Information such as the 'induction schedule' can usefully be provided to students as part of their pre-arrival information. Social media and 'buddying' schemes can continue to be used during this induction week to reinforce welcome messages and further assist new students to settle in and ensure a positive student experience is created from the very start.

Many of the students joining the IFP are often joined during this induction week by their parents. Whilst it can be perfectly natural for parents to want to remain close to their daughter or son and accompany them to every induction event, institutions need to work with the parents to encourage them to embrace their child's transition in to UK education by leaving them to sit in welcome talks, for example, on their own. Arranging parent-specific events during the induction programme is one way to encourage this and is very much welcomed by the parents.

Pastoral support

When students begin the IFP they are likely to need varying degrees of support. Institutions that offer pathway programmes need to work continually with students to raise awareness of their pastoral support provision. Frequent reminders about the range of support available need to be sent at regular intervals throughout the duration of the programme.

The pastoral support system established for a pathway programme should be tailored appropriately throughout the year. The system should cater for both academic and personal needs and whilst it may, in the initial stage, be there to deal with difficulties related to the transition to the UK HEI system, it needs to be appropriately flexible as students move through the IFP, to ensure it caters for the shift students will shortly be making as they join their academic school and embark on their new undergraduate degree programme.

Clear and concise information, simply expressed either visually or in other diagrammatic form will help students understand where they can go to for support at different times and for different needs during their studies. Inviting colleagues from a range of support departments such as the Library/Learning Resources Centre, Student Union, Student Counselling and Financial Services into IFP classes at different times during the year to explain their services helps the international students to understand and feel confident in approaching these services by themselves.

Students themselves can provide an excellent support 'peer' network for one another during an IFP. Staff-directed peer support groups such as student-staff liaison meetings and elected course representatives are often most successful. However, if a less formal peer support system also develops it can be very successful, although an inevitable question may arise: should institutions be encouraging, or actively discouraging same-nationality support groups to be established if students find their support needs are best met in this manner?

Portfolio

It belongs to the centre providing a pathway programme to develop a portfolio of modules and pathways that caters to the students' interests but also to the institution's needs. If your IFP, for example, offers Business, Economics and Maths modules but no Biology or Psychology ones it is understandable that a student wishing to progress to a degree in Clinical Psychology may not be as motivated as a student progressing to Business Management since they are unable to take relevant modules on the IFP. Although this could lead to an over-diversification of the IFP offerings with obvious financial outcomes (e.g. increased number of teachers, increased administrative support and increased use of facilities), it is important for the IFP team to carefully select key subjects and modules based on the most popular and strategic progression routes. A stronger portfolio of offerings that meet the students' desires and the institution's needs will only help develop the popularity of a pathway programme.

As explained above, the institution's needs are also crucial here and being willing to create new modules will play its part in convincing colleagues within the university of the usefulness and appropriacy of the programme. An example may be the creation of various Maths modules with distinct syllabi; one for students requiring mostly quantitative methods, basic algebra and calculus for Economics, Business or Psychology, and one for Sciences with geometry, trigonometry and further algebra and calculus. This will satisfy colleagues in both Social Sciences and Sciences that the students progressing to their degree programmes have been adequately prepared.

Offering a wide variety of modules to students on an IFP may result in concerns over which modules they should select for a particular degree programme. It is sometimes the case that students are not set on a particular pathway when they join the IFP; however, by limiting their choice of modules we may effectively be limiting their choice of pathways. In partnership with receiving departments, it is important to identify which modules a student must take and which mod-

ules it is suggested they take. A student limited to taking both Law and Politics modules, for example, might be restricted to a degree in Law or Politics. However, a student taking both Business and Law modules might progress to Business, Law or Politics. The university is therefore more likely to retain the student as there is a greater variety of degrees available to them at the end of the course. Pathway flexibility should therefore increase student satisfaction and conversion rates from IFP to Stage 1.

Syllabus

A constant review of and improvement of existing module syllabi is also necessary to provide the best possible student experience and preparation for their undergraduate studies. Aligning these syllabi to the overall content of Stage 1 modules clearly provides students with an advantage going into their degree programme. Liaising with key stakeholders, i.e. the receiving schools, is essential, and this may be done in a variety of ways. Organising periodic meetings between Stage 1 lecturers or coordinators and IFP teachers to discuss assessment, marking and syllabus in particular will facilitate the smooth progression of IFP students to first year. Inviting input from external examiners for each pathway will again help develop a stronger IFP portfolio that aligns itself with other IFPs across the sector.

'Cross-pollination between modules should also be encouraged.'

Having a diverse range of modules can increase student satisfaction but the delivery of said modules is what counts. The classroom experience, the materials used and the correlation between modules are all as, if not more, important. The nature of classroom dynamics will undoubtedly affect a student's appreciation of a particular module. A traditional lecture format will first of all fail to adequately prepare students for undergraduate studies but will also fail to encourage students to fully engage with the content they are being exposed to. Although traditional lectures have their place on pathway programmes, it is often group work and seminars students find the most challenging and by fully preparing students for these in skills classes and allowing them to practise their skills in a HE environment on a daily basis, students will find the transition to Stage 1 much smoother. Assessment forms may also take account of this and group tasks conducted in preparation for individual assessment, for example, will encourage peer support but allow for students to be assessed as individuals.

The use of technology in and out of the classroom, with a conscious effort to avoid gimmicks, will also enhance the student experience. Short relevant videos, online discussions, recordings of lectures, use of social media in lectures can all effectively be incorporated to modules. A History lecture may, for example, be brought to life by any of the above along with the use of a Virtual Learning Environment to link to or embed films or documentaries relevant to the topic being discussed. Materials, whether printed or online, should also reflect the most current thinking on topics covered and continuous updating of these is necessary to cater for changes in the programme pathways and student cohorts and to ensure teachers are not using 'outdated' theories and content. This is especially important with EAP materials, which should reflect the students' needs and adapt to any changes in the wider IFP portfolio. This does raise the question of EAP vs ESAP but we will leave that for another day (much has been written on the topic but a good starting point may be the Proceedings of the 2009 BALEAP Conference, 2012).

Cross-pollination between modules should also be encouraged. This can either be between subject modules or between EAP & Skills modules and subject modules. Aligning modules to one another in terms of syllabus and general topics for a term can be hugely beneficial in showing students the relevance of one module to another. A simple example might be that of Law and Philosophy modules where the theory behind topics covered on the Law module will probably relate to what has been or is to be covered on the Philosophy one. By ensuring these follow the same sequence, students can better understand the Law content if they have understood the philosophical background to the issues. In the same way, it is beneficial to tie in EAP & Skills areas to what is covered in the subject modules, for example looking at essay titles and structures before the first assignments are due, eliciting techniques for dealing with examinations before the first set of tests, or maybe more specifically covering questionnaire and report writing as they create questionnaires for their marketing seminars.

We would argue that a pathway programme portfolio is not simply about the credit-bearing modules students take. Personal Development Planning sessions, offered on days where students do not have their usual lectures and seminars, or extra support classes for either language or subject content are just two of the ways an IFP portfolio may be further enhanced to provide students with a range of activities and opportunities to further develop their skills, their knowledge and their integration into the wider student body. PDP sessions focusing on transferable skills will help students be better prepared for their IFP and undergraduate studies but also life after university.

Conclusion

Overall, the enhancement of a pathway programme cannot be conducted through a single medium, and a combined approach should be encouraged in order to deliver the best possible student experience. Communication with students from their point of application, a strong pastoral support system and an enhanced portfolio of well-designed modules all contribute together

to maintaining and perfecting the programme. We suggest here that these should always be completed with both the students' and the institution's interests in mind and, to that effect, feedback and tracking are both essential in gaining a better understanding of what students' needs and desires are. Discussion of said feedback and tracking, however, is for another paper. Students should feel part of the wider university before they arrive but having students identify closely with their IFP year because of a flawless student experience will aid further the programme in every possible way.

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Approaches to teaching dyslexic students

About the author

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'Neuro-diversity is no respecter of national boundaries.'

The article provides a definition of dyslexia and a description of a range of symptoms which IFP tutors will be able to notice. This is followed by three mini case studies of dyslexic students from Foundation courses. Suggestions are given for developing an inclusive policy and for teaching and assessment methods which will compensate for the difficulties of such students.

Introduction

Readers may have experienced students who speak well but are reluctant to write. This may not simply be because English is a foreign language for them or has a different script from their first language. There is a good possibility that they may be dyslexic. After providing a definition of dyslexia, this article gives some indicators for identifying dyslexic students, followed by three case studies. Finally some features of good policy and practice which can be applied on International Foundation Programmes are suggested.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is the commonest, most well-known form of neuro-diversity which affects approximately 10% of the population in Britain. (Other types include dyspraxia, ADHD and conditions on the autistic spectrum). Neuro-diversity is no respecter of national boundaries, so there is likely to be a proportion of students with dyslexia and other neuro-diverse conditions on International Foundation Courses. 'Dyslexia' is not a label for a uniform condition. What is certain is that dyslexia is 'neuro-biological in origin, and lasts throughout life' (British Dyslexia Association, 2008). On the plus side, dyslexic individuals often excel in strategic planning and sometimes at art or engineering subjects. Under the 2010 Equality Act, educational institutions have a duty to offer 'reasonable adjustments' to allow such students to perform at the same level as their peers.

Symptoms

Dyslexia manifests itself in clusters of effects, which can be troublesome to student study. Most dyslexic students are thought to

have a phonological deficit (difficulty in breaking down words into sounds) and for them subject-related words and people's names take more time than average to be absorbed; they will tend to use polysyllabic words sparingly in their written work (Sterling, Farmer, Riddick, Morgan & Matthews,1998). Some students have problems with 'working memory' (problems holding an item in their head while doing another mental activity). They find it difficult to either remember their assignment title or focus on spelling and vocabulary, at the same time as researching and writing; these students sometimes write essays irrelevant to a set title; for them mental computation in mathematics could also be difficult. Another possible symptom is a slow 'processing speed' (thinking speed), making students feel really uncomfortable about working in groups; such students also have a slower reading rate than average (135 wpm. dyslexic undergraduates; non-dyslexic undergraduates 250 wpm.), so often less reading is done (McLoughlin, Leather, & Stringer, 2002).

Some dyslexic students also have light sensitivity. They suffer eye strain when looking at white paper or working under fluorescent lights, which is usually relieved by colour changes of paper and screen. Finally, other dyslexic students may also be 'dyspraxic', a term for those who have motor skills problems leading to disorganisation such as lateness getting to university, and frequently to poor handwriting and typing skills.

Students with phonologically related dyslexic tendencies who have previously used an ideographic writing system may not have been spotted until they reach us. Sadly, some students may even have been classed as 'lazy' or 'slow', labels which have led to low self image.

Cases of dyslexia among foundation students

The following three case studies illustrate clusters of symptoms in individual students.

'There are many effective approaches and techniques available.'

1 'A', a student from Cyprus, showed a lack of expected progress, especially in grammatical aspects of written work, contrasting with excellent work as a class group and course committee member. Because I circulated round groups, I noticed that 'A' held his wrist in an uncomfortable position while writing. His writing was sloping and uneven, suggesting dyspraxia. During discussion he admitted knowledge of this, but protested, 'I passed my IELTS'. He had not till that point sought an assessment/screening which would have led to an extra time allowance in examinations. We were able to refer him to the Disabilities Unit for this.

2 'B', a well-educated Nigerian student, had difficulty in pronouncing long words when reading aloud. When we talked discreetly about dyslexia, it transpired that during her education in Nigeria she had been told she 'had something wrong with her eyes'. She had had examination papers read out to her at the beginning of each examination. Unlike other students, she had had to read her textbooks in advance of each class. Now with tinted glasses, she claimed (wrongly, in my opinion) that she no longer had any problems. It seemed that she had dyslexia and light-sensitivity problems.

3 'C' was another well-educated, diligent Nigerian student. I noticed that she relied on predictive text in her permanently open laptop. If a long word did not appear on screen she was 'lost'. A further issue was time-keeping. She came late to almost every English lesson. Her assessed written work was short and punctuation inadequate. She knew about dyslexia but she was reluctant to be assessed: 'In Nigeria you have to be as bright as a button; it wouldn't do to have a label.' She had obtained a low grade in a Chemistry module because of the quality of her 'writing up'. In applying for undergraduate courses in the UK a label of dyslexia would help admissions' tutors to view her in a more positive light.

Assisting dyslexic students

Assistance can feature at many levels of an organisation.

Departmental level: Policy Provisions

Perhaps the best guide here is Pavey, Meehan and Waugh (2011). Some features to agree on would be:

- Training for all staff to recognise dyslexia;
- Format of module handbooks and handouts: in sans serif font, minimum size 11; to contain diagrams and pictures, not just words; some to be printed on cream/buff paper;
- Information about dyslexia to be transmitted to students.

Teaching

There are many effective approaches and techniques available. Some teachers on International Foundation courses will already have taught EFL/ESP and many of the teaching techniques which are good for dyslexic students are similar. These include:

- Using students' preferred learning style: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or multi-style (cf. *Inform*, Issue 7) and their learning approach: synthetic or analytic;
- Issuing diagrammatic lecture notes before lectures, allowing students to have a picture of the information as a whole, and economising on the amount they will have to write (Hargreaves, 2007);
- Recording lectures so that students with phonological weakness can listen to them again;
- Facilitating the learning of module-specific vocabulary via a glossary. For visually inclined learners, the use of vocabulary topic mind maps as an alternative; explanations containing outlandish stories and connections to help those with phonological deficit remember items;

- Using 'frames' to make clear the structure of common types of text such as textbook chapter, science report;
- Encouraging use of various mind mapping software packages such as *Inspiration* or *MindManager* 12 (Mindjet Corp, 2011) for planning essays;
- Unpacking essay or report-type assignments, showing possible sub-divisions in boxed sections. Books such as *Study Writing* (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 2006) already provide this for EAP students.

Internal assessment

Howell has already written about good practice in assessing English on Foundation courses (Inform 7). I would add that multiple choice items are taxing on both the working memory and on eye-tracking. Ideally, assessments should be varied, e.g. audio recorded portfolio of reflections as an alternative to written ones. Obviously those screened as dyslexic will receive extra time in examinations.

The above approaches and techniques may lead to more confident students producing better-structured and fewer 'off-title' assignments. There will be greater clarity of expectations and procedures, which hopefully will lead to an increase in confidence among all students, not only those who are dyslexic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we should adapt to the idea that dyslexia is present amongst our student population and that not all the results are negative. Our government's legislation on 'disability' has had the advantage that students who receive the 'label' of dyslexic are entitled to appropriate compensatory adjustments within their education. Undoubtedly, the linguistic signs of dyslexia such as poorer vocabulary in written work are often difficult to detect in Foundation students, as most are second language speakers, and can be expected to have a relatively small vocabulary. Fortunately, however, the screening procedures for dyslexia and dyspraxia do involve some assessments that are non-linguistic. We need to keep an eye open for students presenting dyslexia, and to accommodate their needs with suitable policies, pedagogy, and assessment.

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Making the language of lectures accessible to international students: the case of chemistry

This article highlights the challenges facing international students in a chemistry lecture in terms of the different 'languages' they face : the formal written language of the chemistry textbook, the more informal spoken language of most lecturers, the written and spoken languages of chemical symbols and the language of mathematics. It also looks at what lecturers, students and EAP tutors can do to help.

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In my role as coordinator of an IFP with Chemistry, I attended approximately 90 hours of lectures given by nine different lecturers to a mixture of British and international students. My expectation was to learn technical vocabulary and chemistry concepts, but I was surprised at the number of 'languages' the students had to deal with. Much has been written on the structure, content and understandability of lectures and there are several good pointers on the Teaching International Students project website (Higher Education Academy, 2012). The aim of this article, however, is to raise awareness of the potential confusion caused by the mixture of different 'Englishes' used in many lectures and to suggest some possible solutions.

> *'So we've got the product of the products over the product of the reactants.*
> *We just need to plug in the values and cancel out the electrons...'*

'I was surprised at the number of 'languages' the students had to deal with.'

The above quotation from a chemistry lecture gives an indication of the huge linguistic challenge involved. What makes this utterance difficult to decode is not the inclusion of technical chemistry terms (reactants, products, and electrons), which have been the focus of previous lectures, but the assumed knowledge of mathematical terms (product, cancel out, values) and the use of the informal alternative to 'substitute' (plug in). Even the word 'over' is a source of confusion initially as Chinese students would say **'y under x'** rather than **'x over y'** and so are faced with additional cognitive processing. What follows represents some reflections on the main areas of difficulty.

Technical vocabulary

The question of what constitutes a technical word for a novice is a difficult one for experts. I recall one slide when the lecturer chose to define the word **effervescence** for us – but not the term **electrolyte**, which is the one I was unsure about. Then there are the general words that take on a new meaning in this context, such as **base** (the opposite of an acid) and words like **product**, as in the example above, which has one different meaning in chemistry and another in mathematics. In some cases knowledge of the general meaning helps, as with the **shells** that contain clouds of electron density and the **promotion** of electrons (to higher energy levels). However, in other cases general meanings can be misleading, as with a **degenerate set**, which merely has the same energy level and no negative connotation at all. As a linguist, I was also interested to learn that **conjugation** in chemistry was about gaining or losing a proton rather than a third person 's'.

It is often unclear if one expression used by a lecturer is an equivalent to another or a new concept. For example, when talking about hydrocarbons, does **dissociate** mean the same as **cleave**? And are **break** and **crack** informal synonyms, too? As well as the formal lexical verb (e.g. emit) students have to recognise the informal equivalent (**give off /out/up** – de-

pending on the lecturer). They need to know that the energy a lecturer **zaps** or **sticks in** is the same as that **provided** or **introduced** in the text.

'Erring on the side of formality would be more inclusive.'

Erring on the side of formality would be more inclusive as this would not only be easier to decode and but also facilitate follow-up reading where more formal language is used (Arden-Close, 1993). While exposure to both informal and formal technical language is not a bad thing, it would be helpful to have the corresponding terms highlighted – perhaps through lecturers' annotations to one of the formal glossaries provided in many textbooks.

Academic vocabulary

Of a total of six lecturers in a 24-week course, the lecturer that the international students found easiest to follow (arguably, because he spoke more formally) was the only one who had to deal with a vocabulary query from a British student, who, in week 14, raised his hand to ask the meaning of 'analogous' (pronounced by him as ana**log**ous). The word had been used frequently by other lecturers, but here appeared for the first time on a slide. The lecturer's response was that it means 'like' – hopefully, the student understood this as the preposition not the verb.

Often referred to as the hidden vocabulary, knowledge of the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) would be useful to all students as these general academic words are in frequent use and their knowledge is often assumed rather than taught. Students can be guided to many useful sites online that allow them to familiarise themselves with these words and there are tools such as the AWL highlighter (Haywood, n.d.) that might raise awareness of the existence of these words in lecturers' texts.

Idiomatic vocabulary

The range of accents – including Scottish, North American, Australian, German and Indian on the course in question – caused less of a problem than the different idiolects, with one lecturer who would **crack on** while another would **press on**. It was vital for international students to understand some everyday phrasal verbs so that they knew when the lecturer was **going over** things that might **crop up** on the exam and be alerted to those things students often **fall down on**. Students on general English courses spend a lot of time studying phrasal verbs but these tend to feature less in EAP courses due to the focus on formal language. However, it was clear that certain phrasal verbs are quite common in lectures. I was also concerned that students might miss some key information because some macro organisers used by lecturers to **flag something up** or **hammer something home** might be missed as they were often idiomatic. Again, the use of the more formal lexical verbs and fewer idiomatic expressions would make the job of decoding the language easier.

General vocabulary

Even general English could cause problems as was shown in a conversation between an Emirati student and his lab supervisor. When told to use tap water the student asked where he could get it from – having studied American English.

How can students help themselves?

It is particularly useful for international students to have access to slides before a lecture so they can look up new vocabulary and make links to existing knowledge. Keeping a vocabulary log in excel containing technical, academic, and idiomatic tabs has proved useful for students. Some have also taken advantage of the recordings of lectures to replay tricky sections.

How can EAP tutors help?

For technical language, it is useful to raise awareness of different registers through jigsaw reading activities and matching tasks using A level revision guides (e.g., Falkner, et al, 2008) written in very informal language compared to the prescribed text book written in more formal language. This often leads into work on paraphrasing (sometimes using recordings to written text, from notes to oral, or spot the difference). Also useful is a focus on word parts e.g. **philic, phobic, homo, hetero** so that students are able to guess some of the meaning of a range of new technical words. Collocations of technical words should also be highlighted to aid active use e.g. **reach an equilibrium**.

The more general academic language can be addressed through work on typical functions, such as comparison and contrast, definition, cause and effect. This can lead to work on 'slot-filler' lexical phrases that are typically used as macro-organisers (De Carrico et al, 1988). Finally, the typical language of exam questions (e.g. express, rationalise) should not be forgotten.

In this article, it is hoped that attention has been drawn to some possible sources of confusion for international students in lectures that together, lecturers, students and EAP teachers can help to address.

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Critical thinking: whose responsibility is it?

About the author

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Critical thinking is a key skill of any discipline at university, but to what extent can we expect IFP students to display critical thinking skills? A student's cultural, educational and personal background can often impact on the extent to which they both demonstrate critical thinking and feel comfortable doing so. In a multidisciplined environment, whose responsibility is it to teach critical thinking skills – the EAP teacher, the Academic Skills teacher or the content teacher? This article will look at the extent to which critical thinking can be taught and whose responsibility it is to teach it.

Introduction

Like all subjects, EAP is squeezed by a range of demands, and teachers have to make decisions as to what should be focused on and how much class time they should devote to one particular area. The responsibility for language and skills development clearly falls on the shoulders of the EAP teacher. Research and referencing are arguably both a content teacher and language teacher's responsibility. Is the responsibility for teaching critical thinking also a shared responsibility, and if so in what ways can it most effectively be shared?

Can critical thinking be taught?

Critical thinking has been central to many educational settings for centuries. Today it is possible to take entire modules or an A level in the subject, and a book such as *Critical thinking for Students* (van den Brink-Budgen, 2010) is now in its fourth edition. Some though, such as Morgan (2009), raise the question of whether or not critical thinking skills can be taught. Are they an innate skill or a product of our family and community, or are they something that can be taught and developed? I would argue that they can be taught and developed not in a direct way such as the development of knowledge, but in a way that the skill emerges in stages. The idea of developing a learner to become more critically reflective and questioning in general clearly has to straddle both EAP and content IFP classes. If an EAP class were not to encourage such a skill it would arguably be just a General English class rather than an Academic English class. However, are there elements of the teaching of critical thinking that best lend themselves to EAP rather than other IFP content modules?

'an innate skill or a product of our family and community?'

The role of the content teacher

Assuming that critical thinking can be taught, there are two main approaches to teaching these skills. Much like the teaching of a common IFP module, academic skills, there are those that argue for the integration of the skill into the subject area and those that believe that these are transferable skills to any discipline. Beaufort (2007) argues that each subject or discipline area has its own methods of argument, selection and use of evidence and approaches to referring to research. For example, it could be argued that IFP sciences predominantly require students to analyse data that has been collected, describe the methods of collection, and present the interpretation of this data set. However, in an IFP Law course, critical thinking might be applied in using your knowledge of the legal system and applying it critically to the given facts of a case. That is not to say these are the only ways in which critical thinking skills are used in these subjects, but that these are two approaches at IFP level that are very discipline-specific and therefore perhaps do not fall within the realms of an IFP EAP module.

The role of the EAP teacher

If EAP is to play a role in the development of these skills then critical thinking must be seen as a transferable skill across a range of IFP modules. If this is the case, what are the most transferable skills that naturally fall within the realms of an IFP EAP module? Whilst critical thought can occur in a number of IFP situations it is within writing that IFP students are most likely to have their ability assessed. Bean (2011) describes academic writing as 'a product that communicates the results of critical thinking'. If this is the case then there are number of

ways an EAP teacher can help an IFP student. Firstly, academic reading texts can be used as models to show how and where evaluation and analysis occur. These can be drawn from the students' academic IFP modules and students' attention drawn specifically to the critical features. Teachers can work together to pick out the language that is considered to demonstrate critical thinking, for example cause and effect language, hedging, and comparative structures. Thus, the EAP teacher can deal with these features whilst the content tutors approach the same text from a content perspective. I find this can be particularly useful when teaching students from cultures where the same emphasis is not placed on critical thinking in educational settings. Secondly, IFP students can be taught a number of basic principles as to the structure of an argument such as identifying premises, conclusions, implicit arguments and underlying assumptions. Academic writing classes can deal with not only the structure of paragraphs and essays, but also that of an argument. Genuine examples can be used from students' modules as this specificity is likely to enhance their motivation and engagement. I also believe it should be highlighted to students that critical thinking does not only mean finding the weaknesses, such as bias, neutrality and sample size, but that it is also about finding the strengths. Unfortunately, the word **critical** seems to have taken on a predominantly negative meaning in much the same way as the word **subjective**. In courses where such close collaboration is challenging on an ongoing basis, themes and topics that have a multidisciplinary nature could be selected to drive the development of the EAP materials.

Conclusion

Light (2001) found that a number of undergraduates highlighted learning how to use evidence in their own discipline to resolve arguments as a breakthrough in their academic development. If such a step is quite a revolutionary moment for undergraduates, no matter what their discipline or cultural background, it is hardly surprising that many IFP students find critical thought a challenging process. So whilst it is important that critical thinking is gaining prominence in EAP and certain aspects of language and structure can be taught, it is also important to recognise that the application and process of critical thinking can vary greatly between disciplines. Therefore it is the responsibility of **both** EAP teachers and content teachers to encourage students to develop their critical thinking skills, but perhaps with a differing focus.

'the application and process of critical thinking can vary greatly between disciplines.'

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Using Gardner's MI to teach psychology for international and home Foundation students

About the author

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Long-established within the field of English language teaching, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is less often employed as a teaching strategy for content-based modules at Foundation level. This paper argues that MI is an excellent methodology for teaching Foundation-level Psychology, particularly where home and international students are taught in mixed cohorts, and presents examples of MI in practice as a case study.

Introduction

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI) is well-known and used within the field of EFL and EAP, but under-employed in the teaching of subject-based disciplines. Like many other content modules taught at Foundation level, teaching Psychology to Foundation students presents a number of specific challenges, particularly when students are in mixed cohorts of home and international classes. Bearing this particular context in mind, this paper will examine Gardner's MI theory, with a view towards adequately addressing and supporting the diverse needs of students within Foundations of Psychology. The paper will begin with an overview of the teaching context, followed by a short discussion of MI. The advantages and relevance to this particular student cohort, and this particular module will then be discussed. Examples of the way in which it has been applied within the context described below will then be presented. The paper will conclude with an evaluation of this application.

Context

Foundations of Psychology is studied by all Foundation students intending to progress onto degrees in the social sciences at Durham University, including Business, Sport, Applied Psychology, Law, or Criminology. Broadly speaking, the students taking this module fall into two camps. Firstly, mature, local students from non-traditional backgrounds, bring a wealth of experience which is not necessarily academic. Often these students are lacking in confidence, and some have previously studied Psychology, or at least will be familiar with some terms through popular culture, which is itself a challenge, as discussed below. International students also come from a range of abilities and cultural contexts, but in general, few have ever studied Psychology or come into contact with the terms, concepts and theories that are part of many home student's cultural frame of reference.

Thus, there is a particular challenge in Psychology: getting students to recognise where their preconceived ideas that derive from pop culture need to be re-aligned through careful study and attention, while at the same time making the subject accessible to those students who are approaching the topic for the first time and struggle with very unfamiliar concepts as well as vocabulary.

'Gardner takes issue with the established view that intelligence is a single entity.'

Multiple intelligences theory

First introduced by psychologist Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind* as a challenge to both the methods of assessing as well as traditional analysis of intelligence, Gardner's theory of MI provides many advantages to teaching complex student cohorts and is a well-established teaching methodology, but is less-often used in content-based modules. In essence, Gardner takes issue with the established view that intelligence is a single entity, both quantifiable and measurable (e.g.

Task type & learning outcomes	Activity	Intelligence(s)
1. Homework and presentation: To identify and explain the key concepts of their perspective. To apply their knowledge of their chosen approach and relate it to other members of the group	Students work independently to research one of the six approaches to Psychology studied in the module. In groups, students discuss and then use play dough clay to make a model which represents their chosen approach. They then use their models to explain their chosen approach to the class.	Intrapersonal Interpersonal Visual/ Spatial Body/ Kinaesthetic Linguistic/ Verbal
2. Case studies: To reflect on individual cases; To explain possible causes for behaviour by applying their knowledge of their approach	Students are given case studies and asked to role play 'analysis' according to their chosen approach to Psychology. This feeds into an open group discussion.	Linguistic/ Verbal Interpersonal Naturalistic Body/ Kinaesthetic
3. In-class activity: To create a visual learning aid which demonstrates key concepts	Students listen to music which represents Freud's concepts of id, ego and superego; as they listen, they make some sort of graphic representation of the concept, using colour, line, symbol, or caricature.	Musical / Rhythmic Visual / Spatial Intrapersonal
4. Homework and presentation: To summarise and explain the important points of the study	Students choose one of six studies within the field of Behavioural Psychology to research. In class, they are given props (e.g. a bell, food-dish, water bottle, and a cuddly dog for Pavlov) to use for role playing the study for the rest of the group.	Body / Kinaesthetic Naturalistic Interpersonal Linguistic / Verbal
5. Formative assessment To summarise research, suggest alternatives and evaluate the consequences in a written account	An essay evaluating ethics in an established study in the field of Social Psychology. Students are expected to evaluate ethical considerations and make suggestions of strategies the researchers could have employed, as well as any unintended consequences such strategies might have had on the final results .	Intrapersonal Interpersonal Naturalistic Linguistic / Verbal Existential
6. Game and video – social psychology To revise concepts; To predict content of the video; To identify and make a written record of key points discussed in the video; To analyse and critique attitudes in social situations; To develop students' own theory of human nature	To illustrate the concepts of obedience and conformity, students are told to stand up and perform an increasingly ridiculous series of tasks. Before watching the video, students play a game to revise relevant psychological vocabulary, which involves group work and moving around the room. Students are then given a questionnaire which asks about their own attitudes in social situations – discussion of the questionnaire is reserved until after the video, so students can change their views if necessary. Students are then asked to predict the content of the video, *5 Steps to Tyranny*, which involves discussion of morality and genocide; they are encouraged to make notes on the Psychological studies (who, when, results) while watching. Finally, students can revise the answers on their questionnaire, taking what they have seen and discussed into consideration, before a final debate about human nature takes place.	Interpersonal Body / Kinaesthetic Visual / Spatial Naturalistic Linguistic / Verbal Existential

by short-answer tests). Instead, after a thorough examination of intelligence and cognition, Gardner describes 'the existence of a number of different intellectual strengths, or competencies, each of which may have its own developmental history' (1993, 59).

Thus, intelligence is seen as a spectrum of innate possibility, rather than pre-determined or even static, let alone quantifiable. Gardner defines 'an intelligence' then, as 'the ability to solve problems, or create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings – a definition that says nothing about either the sources of these abilities or the proper means of 'testing' them' (1993, xiv).

> Owing to heredity, early training, or in all probability, a constant interaction between these factors, some individuals will develop certain intelligences far more than others; but every normal individual should develop each intelligence to some extent, given but a modest opportunity to do so (*ibid* 279).

It is precisely this emphasis on potential which is so well-suited to the work conducted at the Foundation level. To date, Gardner has identified seven areas of capability, which he later amended to eight, with a possible ninth to be explored. These include but are not limited to the two intelligences most often accessed (and assessed) in traditional education, Logical/ Mathematical and Verbal/ Linguistic, as well as other competencies: Body/ Kinaesthetic, Musical/ Rhythmic, Visual/ Spatial, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, (Gardner, 1993; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards, & Rodgers, 2001), Naturalistic (Gardner, 1993b), and Existential (under review, Gardner, 2008).

MI in practice

Using MI theory within the classroom is accessible to students ranging in age and ability, and with diverse class, ethnic, cultural and academic backgrounds. Furthermore, applying MI challenges the teacher to create lessons that are packed with a range of different activities to target different intelligences. However, neither Gardner nor other MI proponents suggest that each lesson need become a circus of events, with teacher and student flitting between activities designed simply for the sake of incorporating more of the intelligences. Rather, what is needed is an awareness of the approaches and an attempt to use activities that might stimulate them **where appropriate**. Moreover, in any given lesson, some of the intelligences are likely to be exploited more fully than others.

'Applying MI challenges the teacher to create lessons that are packed with a range of different activities to target different intelligences.'

Similarly, some might feel that not all of the activities are necessarily suitable for all classrooms (the size of the group being one issue), material, or even the HE context at all. Certainly, there is a risk of being perceived as 'gimmicky' or wasting class time, and adult learners expect to be taught in certain ways, especially in the HE environment (regardless of level). It is important to avoid patronising these students, at the same time as stimulating their desire to learn while activating the intelligence(s) necessary for them to do so. For all of these reasons, it becomes essential to bear in mind the intended learning outcomes, not only whilst designing the activity, but also stressing these to the student before, during, or after the activity is undertaken, at the same time as ensuring that these are constructively aligned with assessments (Biggs, 2007).

Examples of MI in practice

Within the overall course syllabus, which does in general adopt a traditional framework of lectures, seminars and reading, opportunities to exploit MI within the classroom have been explored where possible. On the previous page is a table listing a selection of examples of MI in use, with the learning outcome(s) for the activity, the activity used, and the types of intelligence accessed. Except where specified, students are given the choice of working alone, in pairs, or in small groups to complete activities.

Evaluation

Teaching methodology which takes MI into consideration is open to multiple forms of evaluation. For example, at the end of several sessions students were encouraged to give their feedback in non-traditional ways, including focus groups: during an in-class activity toward the end of term, students had large posters, and in groups were asked to list three of the most successful elements of the module, and three areas which needed to be improved. With the teacher out of the room and a volunteer acting as facilitator, groups then voted on the most important points to be addressed. These were written on the board anonymously and collected later (areas for improvement included increased availability of textbooks, which were subsequently ordered, and improved room lay-out; while positives included teaching and activities).

In addition, the end of module questionnaires administered to students on completion received favourable quantitative and qualitative feedback. On a scale of one (very poor) to five (very good), students rated the module on average 4.5 (mode = 5) and the quality of teaching at 4.81 (mode = 5). In answer to the question, 'Has this module helped you make progress in your understanding of the subject?' the mean answer was 4.5 (mode = 5, 'very much').

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TEACH strategically: An EAP and CLIL approach to subject teaching on International Foundation Programmes

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This article will examine how subject teaching on International Foundation Programmes might be enhanced by a consideration of EAP techniques and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodologies. It will suggest practical examples pertaining to teaching experiences on two modules: British Institutions and Culture, and Sociology. It will also offer strategies to enhance student motivation and comprehension, through reconsidering how to deliver materials, demonstrate empathy towards students, and how to adopt more evaluative, thematic, and kinesthetic approaches to subject teaching. Finally, it will reflect upon the possible repercussions of this for cross-curricular collaboration within educational institutions.

Introduction

Having taught on other Pathway programmes, preparatory courses for these, and currently the IFP, and having a cross-curricular perspective as both an EAP and an academic subject tutor, the author is aware of the potential obstacles to interdisciplinary collaboration (Manning, 2009). However, this article will suggest how the cross-fertilisation of EAP techniques and a CLIL approach to subject teaching, might inform International Foundation programmes. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): 'involves teaching a particular subject through the medium of a language other than that normally used […] The key issue is that the learner is gaining new knowledge about the 'non-language' subject while encountering, using and learning the foreign language' (European Commission for Multilingualism, 2008). This article will provide practical examples pertaining to two modules: British Institutions and Culture, and Sociology. The acronym TEACH will address the following: Tailoring teaching to students' needs, Engaging learners, Authenticity, and personal approaches to teaching, Content, and how to best deliver it, and a 'Hands on' approach to teaching and learning.

T Tailoring teaching
E Engaging learners
A Authenticity
C Content
H Hands-on

Tailored tasks and 'teacher talk'

To employ teacher-talk effectively is cited by Hillyard (2011) as one of the 'First Steps In CLIL', with regard to teacher competencies. On moving from classroom-based language-learning environments to seminar and lecture-style subject classes, the writer perceived differences in teaching styles. Specifically, in the latter context, the prolific use of PowerPoint to disseminate information appeared to foster a rather teacher- driven approach. This seemed diametrically opposed to English language teaching advocates of student-centred methodologies and raised the issue of whether tendencies towards teacher-led exposition might

encourage student complacency. As both a subject and EAP teacher, the author attempted to modify this trend. One means was through using the voices of others. During a lecture on British Culture a video of the Queen's Christmas message (2011) was played, while students analysed what it revealed about British culture. Simultaneously, a structured listening task required students to note information under category headings and to actively organise English vocabulary. Another method to curtail teacher exposition was to allow groups to discuss stimulating images, such as, in a Sociology seminar, the Great Chain of Being, to elicit the idea of layers and organisation and gradually introduce more challenging vocabulary and concepts, such as hierarchy and social stratification respectively, whilst enabling communicative language work with peers.

Elicit and engage

Visual aids to stimulate and elicit ideas are often exploited by EAP teachers as a 'lead in' to a lesson or a 'prediction exercise' before issuing a text. These need not be elaborate – in academic subject lessons grouped, related words, work well as a catalyst for discussion. For instance, in a British Culture seminar, names of prominent historical North-eastern figures were placed on a slide, including Sir Charles Grey and William Armstrong. The students were then asked if any names were familiar. They quickly drew connections with Earl Grey tea and the Armstrong building on Newcastle University campus. These initial hints about the lesson aroused curiosity and connection with the subject. It also encouraged students to use productive language skills, as they discussed in pairs before sharing in a plenary context. Such clue-giving is a prerequisite in EAP. For example, when inferring meaning from a text, students are encouraged to use deduction, consider parts of speech and activate preexisting vocabulary knowledge (Mikulecky & Jeffries; 2003).

Audience and authenticity

Personalisation of issues is viewed as important in EAP, especially to motivate speaking and writing. Equally it is an asset in subject teaching, where some students may have minimal interest in a subsidiary, yet compulsory element of a Foundation course. Moreover, some Foundation students may have little interaction with local British people and a sense of connection with their teacher and the culture they are studying in may have a crucial impact upon learner motivation (Lightbown & Spada, 2003 p.56). An example of personalising a lesson was using a brief teacher presentation of a family expedition to Housesteads Roman fort, Northumberland, during a British Culture module. This incorporated recent pictures of the teacher's family members in a natural, holiday context. It not only served to capture students' interest in Hadrian's Wall and a subsequent visit to an exhibition on the Romans, at the Great North Museum, but also enhanced student–teacher rapport and afforded students ample opportunity to practice speaking skills in the target language, since the personal materials very naturally triggered questions and interaction with the teacher.

Content integrated versus content-driven teaching

In EAP it is almost intuitive for the teacher to strive for clarity to be fully understood, but for content -rich subjects, such as history, it is a challenge not to overwhelm students with information. One possible solution is creating more accessible, themed lectures, offering a narrower focus and clearer evaluation and such a specific thematic approach is favoured here. For example, a lecture introducing the UK was refined by limiting it to the lecturer's lifetime and themed –Britain: Evolution or Continuity (1974–2012)'. The lecture focused on six topics using an acronym CHANGE which represented: Cosmopolitan, yet conservative Britain; Human relationships (changing notions of family); Assimilation of different people and cultures; Negotiation – between government and people; 'Girl power' (the changing status of women in Britain); and Ethnic diversity. All these factors were evaluated in turn and conclusions presented in an accessible manner, using slogans to sum up Britain in 2012 – 'Evolution; not Revolution'; Stability; not Volatility'; Tolerance; not Intolerance. All these features were suggested as belonging to a mature democracy, where, despite significant changes, sources of continuity serve to unite the British people.

Hands-on learning!

Perhaps more traditionally associated with EFL teaching, realia (real objects) and manipulatives – 'objects that can be touched or moved by students to reinforce a concept' (Corrales; 2008) can enhance subject teaching to IFP students. As Corrales observes, this group have the dual challenge of mastering content and language. Hence realia and manipulatives may be a tangible tool for heightening comprehension. The author has also exploited this technique by inviting students of British culture to thoroughly excavate the notion of culture, through diamond ranking activities. This entailed working in small groups choosing what they consider to be nine important aspects of culture, writing the criteria they produce onto cards and, as a group, prioritising these, by physically ranking them in the shape of a diamond, with the most fundamental aspect of culture at the top. Such an activity promoted a profound exploration of culture with much discussion in the target language (English), and equipped students well to tackle a subsequent cultural journal assignment, recording impressions of British culture and drawing cross-cultural comparisons.

Conclusion

Effective teacher-talk, adopting active, 'hands-on' approaches, as well as delivering materials in a themed, evaluative and personal manner which exploits EAP techniques, may help increase student motivation and nurture autonomous learning styles.

Considering the different aspects of CLIL in relation to IFPs may also give teachers useful insights into how to teach international students, contributing to positive learning outcomes and enhancing international learners' experiences. Reflection upon the value of CLIL- informed teaching might also provide teaching organisations with a more holistic view of teaching, which could lead to more favourable perceptions of cross-curricular collaboration and improve unity within educational institutions.

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Breaking the silence in the classroom

About the author

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A perception shared by many Western educators is that Chinese students, who often may not join in class discussions, are very shy. This is perceived as a major problem by lecturers who expect students to interact in class. It is generally understood that, culturally, the Chinese students' rules for communication pose problems for many Western lecturers. Many lecturers are also aware that some contextual factors such as learning using another language and new learning environments have made it even more difficult for Chinese students to join verbal discussion. How large is this barrier for Chinese students? This paper reports the results of a study which has investigated this problem from the student point of view and recommends some strategies which may help break down these barriers.

Introduction

Often Chinese students are perceived by Western educators as being very shy in class because they tend not to join whole class discussions. This is considered a significant problem by Western lecturers who aim to develop student-centred deep learning and expect spontaneous interaction in class (Haggis, 2003). Holmes (2004) claims that culturally the Chinese students' rules for communication – face negotiation, and maintaining roles, harmony and relationships – are not compatible with Western rules. However, research shows that many contextual factors have been overlooked, such as learning another language and learning in a new environment (Zhou, et al. 2005; Bond & Scudamore, 2011). The aim of this study was to investigate Chinese students' behaviours in the classroom from their points of view and offer some recommendations to break down perceived barriers.

Method

A study over the course of one academic year, 2010–11, involved nine Chinese Foundation students: eight studying on a business programme and one on a science programme. They were part of a Foundation student cohort of which 30% were international students. The study involved a focus group and nine individual interviews.

The students' voices

The study found many reasons why the students participating did not join in verbally:

a) Language inefficiency in speaking English

All students felt that the lack of good English makes them feel less confident. They constantly compare their English skills with others and are concerned that others may not understand them.

'I felt if I talked about my idea in Chinese it was easy, but very difficult in English.'

As a result they took longer to construct an answer.

'In one class I just prepared an answer but those foreigners (home students) have already answered the question.'

b) Past classroom experience

Students commented that they had little experience of verbal interaction in classes in China because the class size was bigger and the teaching pace was faster.

'In my school, teaching pace is very fast. The teacher has no time to answer any questions in class so we ask after class. I am used to ask questions at the end of session.'

Moreover, even if a question is prompted by a teacher, Chinese students may wait for others to answer it first. In Chinese culture offering others the opportunity first is a sign of respect for others' views and an indication of their own modesty (Bond & Scudamore, 2011).

'I am used to be quiet in class, in China we never voluntarily answer question. It is a showing off.
How can you expect us to change the habit in such a short time? Now I start to get to use to it but it takes time.'

Another student talked about her perceived bad experience in China:

'In my class if you are picked to answer a question and you can't answer it, you can't sit down until someone else gives a correct answer.'

c) Lack of the necessary background knowledge and a locally biased curriculum (Wang, 2010)

'Many students in the study said that they are disadvantaged when the subject material is British-centred.'

Many students in the study said that they are disadvantaged when the subject material is British-centred because they do not understand where the material comes from, they felt it is very difficult for them to show any interest as they have no connection with Western history. This certainly blocks international students further from actively participating in class discussion.

'It is all about English history, we would understand it better if Chinese history is mentioned.'

These students' voices reinforce the views of Western educationalists about the necessity for an internationalisation of the curriculum for all students. This is recognised to the extent that it was the focus of the TIS (Teaching International Students) International Conference in 2011.

d) Avoidance of losing face

The fact that Chinese people are more concerned about 'losing face' than Western counterparts has been explored extensively (Oetzel, et al. 2001; Holmes, 2004; Wang, 2010). Some students are concerned about losing face in front of others but it could be overstated as many students try hard to leave their comfort zone and overcome this psychological barrier.

'I know that some students worry about the answer is wrong, so other people would laugh at you, and so you lose face, but if you never want to break this barrier you will never have a chance (to speak). I feel if you lose face a few times it does not matter anymore.'

e) Lack of a supportive environment in class

It is quite understandable that as a result of not getting any response from Chinese students, teachers tend to interact more with home students. In this case Chinese students may feel they are being left out, which makes them even quieter in class.

'Most of time answered by home students, teacher is nicer to them, feel we are left out.'

'Home students sit together and international students together.'

Suggested strategies

The following strategies make it easier for students to join in discussions:

1. Use induction sessions to prepare students for different teaching styles. Induction has been used as a powerful way to teach, rather than just tell, students about how undergraduate education works and what is expected of them (Bond & Scudamore, 2011). Use induction to compare Eastern and Western ways of teaching, promote advantages of talk, or use induction to discuss students' worries over the loss of face.
2. Set the classroom up to promote culturally mixed working groups and offer students opportunities to get to know each other in those mixed groups.
3. Reduce language-related misunderstanding and set a slower teaching pace in the first few sessions so students have time to adjust to a teaching style and a teacher's accent.
4. Make time for students to generate written questions in groups before asking for contributions (Bond & Scudamore, 2011).
5. Set up small group work or group discussions to encourage students' interaction. When the curriculum allows, set up mixed group projects to encourage social interaction and collaboration between home and international students.
6. Build good rapport with students and give more encouragement to students who attempt to speak. Due to the hierarchy relationship between teachers and students in China, Chinese students greatly value a lecturer's opinion; hence encouraging Chinese students' effort in speaking is very effective.
7. Internationalise the curriculum to promote culturally inclusive learning for both home and international students.

Conclusions

Students in this study voiced their anxieties about not joining in during class discussions. Stereotyping Chinese students as irrevocably 'shy' should be avoided. This study shows that Chinese students face various challenges which hinder their participation in discussion. It is important to understand that not participating in a discussion does not necessarily mean that these students are less engaged, because they may be 'using every ounce of their energies in trying to keep up with

what is happening' (Carol, 2005). Once students become familiar with the new teaching style, they enjoy speaking out. This study also highlights that action should be taken for curriculum designers to internationalise the curriculum for all students. It is a great intellectual challenge which needs to be addressed by disciplinary specialists, but doing so will benefit both home and international students by developing international and intercultural perspectives (Leask, 2011).

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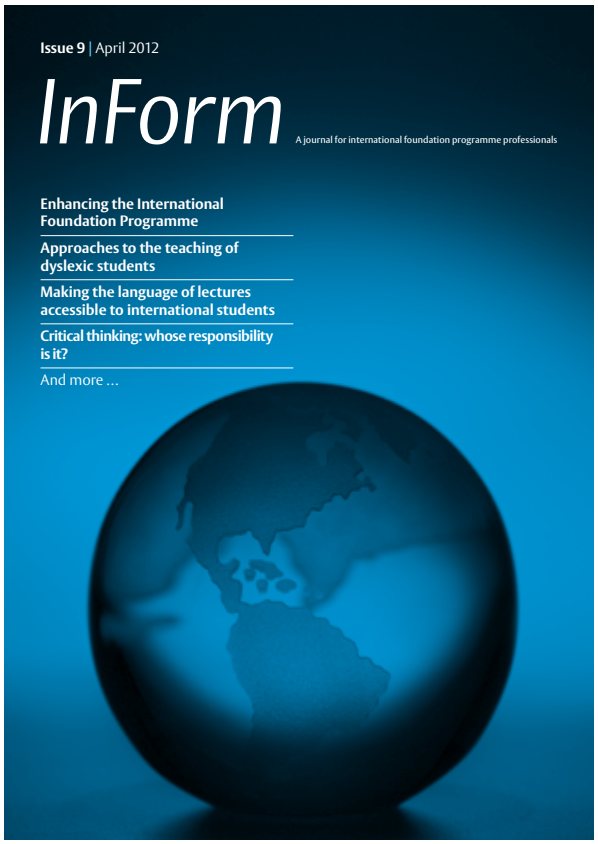

InForm
Issue 9 | April 2012

Editor Dr Elisabeth Wilding

Editorial Board
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Design
Designed in-house by the Design & Print Studio

InForm is published by the International Study and Language Centre, University of Reading.

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