

Issue 12 | October 2013

# *InForm*

A journal for international foundation programme professionals

**What should we teach on Foundation Programmes? an analogy from Matryoshka dolls**

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**IFP and the transition to UK academic culture: Bridge, ferry or ford?**

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**One size doesn't fit all**

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**Getting the balance right: A case of cooperation on the Diploma in Business**

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And more ...



# InForm Conference 2014

## Assessment as a tool for learning on the IFP

We are pleased to announce the fifth annual *InForm* Conference will take place at the University of Kent.

The event will include presentations and workshops on themes related to international foundation and pathway programmes and provide an opportunity for interaction and sharing of practice with colleagues from the IFP community.

**Saturday 19 July 2014**

University of Kent  
Keynes College  
Canterbury

Conference fee: £55.00

### Registration

Please check our website for details:  
[www.reading.ac.uk/inform/informconference](http://www.reading.ac.uk/inform/informconference)  
or email: [inform@reading.ac.uk](mailto:inform@reading.ac.uk).

### Speaker proposals

Speaker proposals are invited from professionals involved in the delivery of international foundation and pathway programmes. As usual, the focus should be on issues associated with teaching and learning in this sector and address the conference theme. Sessions need to appeal to tutors and course managers across the curriculum.

**The deadline for speaker proposals is 30 April 2014.**

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### *InForm*

Issue 12 | October 2013

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## From the Editorial Board ...

This issue of *InForm* presents highlights of the fourth annual *InForm* conference, which was held in July at the University of Reading and explored the theme: What do IFP students need? Balancing linguistic and content teaching: how much and when?

This year's theme addressed the subtle complexities of balancing the diverse needs of international foundation students in a way that optimises development of language proficiency, skills competence and subject knowledge – a theme that generated a stimulating programme of presentations.

To open the conference and also this issue of *InForm*, Dave Burnapp reports on his engaging keynote address that developed an analogy based on Matryoshka dolls to explore the different forms of knowledge and learning outcomes fostered in International Foundation Programmes. Our second keynote speaker, Elspeth Jones uses a different analogy as she reflects on how we might best support such a diverse range of students in their transition to university study – whether by bridge, ferry or ford.

Following this, Anthony Manning shares an innovative programme structure used on the University of Kent IFP, which takes into account the differing levels of language proficiency among students; Steve Herron then discusses a 'story of change' that successfully transformed one of INTO's Diploma programmes at Newcastle University. Next, Michael Groves considers the challenges of setting up a Malaysia-based IFP to suit local needs and Alison Leslie illustrates how content can be integrated with academic language and skills teaching in a way which critically engages students. The *InFormal* section concludes this issue, in which Andy Hoodith discusses the implications of a shift towards science content in EAP Foundation courses and Chris Walklett, an unusual idea for an end-of-year IFP event at the University of Essex.

We would like to thank the speakers and delegates who made the conference such a success again this year.

We are also grateful to the speakers for writing up their presentations for inclusion in *InForm* 12, and for sharing their ideas, research and initiatives with the IFP community.

Next year, the *InForm* conference will leave Reading once again, this time heading south to be hosted by the University of Kent. We look forward to this next opportunity for members of the IFP academic community to meet to discuss the challenges inherent in our programmes and to share practice with colleagues from across the sector.

We welcome your comments, letters and contributions. To submit an article or a letter for the next issue of *InForm* please email it to [inform@reading.ac.uk](mailto:inform@reading.ac.uk).

**Amanda Fava-Verde**

Chairperson *InForm* Editorial Board



# What should we teach on Foundation Programmes? an analogy from Matryoshka dolls

About the author



**Dave Burnapp**  
Associate Lecturer, University of Northampton; National Teaching Fellow (HEA)

*This paper summarises a keynote presentation made at the InForm conference 2013, which developed an analogy based on Matryoshka dolls to explore the different forms of knowledge and the intended learning outcomes which International Foundation Programmes might try to engender. As such it should be considered an opinion piece rather than a research article and so does not contain academic references.*

Many topics covered in this paper apply equally to all international students moving into the UK Higher Education system, not just Foundation students. This *international transition* will be the focus of the first part of the paper. Some topics will apply equally to all students who are moving from secondary schools to Higher Education, not just to international students. This *transition between levels* will be the focus of the briefer second part.

The overall intention is to show that these transitions, relating both to international movement and to movement between levels of education, go beyond filling in knowledge gaps. This relates to concepts such as acculturation, wherein our task is to aid students' transitions into situations with new values and beliefs as well as new behaviours; it is simply not enough to think in terms of deficits that must be remedied.

**Adaptation of international students – English as a Foreign Language (EFL) the starting point.**

The structure of this part of the paper will reflect understandings of the necessary contents of preparation courses for international students which have been developed over the last forty years, and it should be seen that each change in focus recorded here follows emerging recognition of additional needs. Previous understandings of what were the requirements were not replaced but were added to: hence the suitability of the analogy of Matryoshka dolls.

The initial assumption that teachers seeking to assist international students held was that students' needs could be covered by teaching them English. All other aspects of university study, it was believed, would become clear to students as soon as any linguistic deficit was overcome. It was assumed that language was an autonomous system of generating meanings, and here 'autonomous' is used to reflect the assumption that exchanging meanings is achieved solely by language and is independent of familiarity with social settings and users. It followed that the main

focus of teaching should be around presenting students with a hierarchy of grammar, usually following courses beginning with the Present Simple leading up to the Third Conditional, with tag questions and other items added in as necessary. Usually the exercises in such courses were based around rather anodyne texts which, crucially, were written specifically to illustrate certain grammatical topics. These texts were hence not 'authentic' as they contained none of the messiness of texts taken from social settings. In the early 1970s, therefore, work with international students coming to study at UK universities was largely restricted to preparation for general examinations to assess language levels such as the Cambridge First Certificate, or Cambridge Proficiency. This gives the outer shell of the nestling dolls analogy.

**The next stage – English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**

The next stage came with a growing recognition that language is not an autonomous system, people actually draw meanings from knowledge of settings and situations in addition to the vocabulary and the grammar of the texts they exchange, and so rely on implicit and assumed practices as much as the things which are explicitly stated in words. Drawing on the emerging field of sociolinguistics, it became recognised that language use varies according to situation, and that different domains use different lexis. Universities, it followed, could be conceived of as settings for a specific academic register of language. Work with international students in the mid 1970s saw the development of the first English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes teaching materials. Even these, though, relied on teacher-produced texts and examples, and really focused mainly on a restricted view of the vocabulary of a domain. Often the materials consisted only of adapting the existing hierarchy of grammar mindset, giving a raised importance to the passive voice, and substituting daily vocabulary with technical lexis, such as in: *'This syringe has been sterilised, hasn't it?'*

'in different places there are different understandings of what knowledge is and how learning should progress.'

Here we can continue the Russian doll analogy by nestling the recognition of the need to introduce more specific language inside wider linguistic competence. Indeed EAP courses still tend to be seen as a subset, and often follow on from more general EFL programmes.

**The third stage – Needs analysis.**

The new understanding that students were learning English not just to *know* it, but to *use* it was part of a wider move; education at all levels was increasingly seen as assisting the development of competences rather than just acquiring knowledge. This also matched a wider movement in language studies from the focus on *linguistic competence* to a focus on *communicative competence* and the associated discipline of discourse analysis. This incorporated a movement from the sentence focus of grammar, to a new focus on the complete texts which are exchanged in specific situations.

To devise preparation courses reflecting this understanding it became necessary for the EAP staff to liaise with the technical subject staff of their institutions, and to collect from them examples of the texts their students would read, hear, write, and discuss on their future courses. Genre analysis involved breaking down texts, both spoken and written, such as laboratory reports and seminar discussions, and identifying the necessary components of these. From these it was possible to prepare teaching materials for intensive preparation courses, and to demonstrate features relating to target texts such as laboratory reports, lecture notes, or instructions.

Hence it is possible to add another doll to the analogy by nestling *subject-specific texts and genres* inside the more general outer linguistic shells.

**The next focus – Study Skills**

It is likely that the next major step came with the mass recruitment of international students to join degree courses in the UK, USA, and Australia. These students were initially offered pre-sessional courses based on the current understanding; EFL + EAP + simulated use of texts, but things did not work as well as expected.

Some students on degree courses seemed reluctant to discuss in seminars; they seemed to reject group working, and they were reluctant to demonstrate referencing of sources in what were often patched-work essays. The apparent lack of competence in these activities was interpreted as a result of *knowledge gaps* concerning our methods of education.

Hence there developed another layer in the nestling Matryoshka: pre-sessional courses now concerned 'EAP and Study Skills': by using a scaffolding approach students could be shown and could practise these necessary academic competences. The early study skills courses were still deficit models, and they assumed that there were expected behaviours which some students simply did not know how to fulfil, so the remedies were to teach them seminar skills (set phrases and formulas) and then they would speak up; or to supply

them with Havard Referencing guides and then they would begin to use appropriate citations.

**The next focus – moving from deficit to difference.**

Increasingly, however, it was recognised that these issues really concerned differences between academic cultures, not mere deficits. More detailed research has shown that academic cultures are complex, and that adaptation when people move between cultures needs time, support and negotiation. Put simply, and this is the crux of this paper: in different places there are different understandings of what knowledge is and of how learning should progress.

A significant part of students' identity (and other things such as their concepts of 'what is a good teacher') are firmly linked to their initial cultures of learning. Hence it is possible to see educational practices as cultural practices, and that successful student transition involves ethnographic explorations beyond and beneath the surface of observable behaviours. This involves the staff assisting the students to recognise that their students have their own established and deeply rooted expectations of learning, so the novel requirements of their new settings need to be negotiated and integrated with the existing aspects of education which they already have achieved. Achieving this can be thought of as the innermost layer in the analogy in this paper.

Students' previous experiences will have created deeply ingrained expectations. Examples can include:

- Were students expected to be silent or to participate?
- Was work academic work normally individual or collaborative?
- Was originality of work expected, or were students expected to learn orthodox positions?
- How was 'theory' and 'application' balanced?
- Was student work valued if it demonstrates 'voice'?
- What was the relationship between maintaining group cohesion and engaging in debate?

**Turning to the transition for all students moving into HE**

Even with home students, it is a misunderstanding to expect that secondary schools should have prepared students for the learning styles used at university. Much of what is needed to be done in the final layer of addressing competences for international students should also be done with all students moving into HE. Below are two examples of aspects of HE learning styles which need to be explored with all new entrants.

Things to explore – Example 1:  
Developing critical thinking

Demonstrating critical thinking is seen, in universities, as the only way to get a good mark. This means accepting that the topics being studied can be seen differently by different people, and can be explained

'each change in focus recorded here follows emerging recognition of additional needs. Previous understanding of what were the requirements were not replaced but were added to.'

by different theories. Critical thinking means each student showing that they have decided what their position is on any topic. For example students may need to demonstrate this by making recommendations concerning a real world example, that they can see a practical application of the topic being discussed. It also means that students should never just describe what other people have said; they need to make some kind of value judgment about these views.

Things to explore – Example 2:  
Self-management.

Higher Education is linked to employability skills. Students need to juggle the requirements of different modules to plan their use of time. They need to multi-task: i.e. to work on several assignments at the same time. They need to work on different types of assignments, including many which may be new to them, whether international students or others new to HE.

In order to justify the expectations which universities place on students we need to explore with them the differences they may find, in comparison with their previous experiences, and to *link these expectations to theories of knowledge*. Below are several examples of the theories of knowledge which are current in UK HE, how these theories are realised in daily academic practise, and the difficulties they may present to new students.

Our use of seminar discussions is linked to an assumption of the social construction of knowledge. If students' previous experiences are solely of individual work, then simply teaching discussion skills and phrases *without* exploring our belief that some knowledge comes from interaction with others is unlikely to succeed.

Our expectations concerning individual researching is linked to assumptions about the value of autonomous learning. Again, if students' previous experiences are based around learning facts presented to them in set books, then it is essential to spend some time on preparation courses to explore why our culture of education emphasises the value of discovery.

Our use of portfolios is linked to an idea of learning being about reflection, change, and continuous development. The focus in many humanities and social science subjects on reflective learning, in contrast to learning facts outside of ourselves, may need introduction and experimentation. Such experimentation should be best done in the safety of the supportive environment of a Foundation programme.

Our demands concerning critical approaches are linked to ideas of knowledge being around contested and fluid propositions rather than solid and unchangeable facts. This may be the most difficult transition for students whose prior experiences have been restricted to situations where there are orthodox and correct positions to be learnt and repeated, without demonstration of student voice.

We hold a view that application of learning is of more value than reproduction of theory, this employability

aspect may be the opposite of other cultures of learning where theory is high and application is low.

With all students entering HE it is therefore necessary to go beyond and beneath mere descriptions of our academic culture ('this is how we do X'). We need to explore with students the reasons *why* we expect certain things. Crucially, with international students, we must *not* imply that our culture of education is better than their previous experiences: they need to understand the new requirements being made of them but we should not expect them to abandon behaviours they may remain deeply attached to.

### Concluding summary

Language competence is important, but is not sufficient; Foundation programmes are much more than IELTS preparation.

EAP is one area where the language and content staff can liaise – ranging from consultation to collaboration. These are opportunities to introduce key content and concepts from the students' particular specialities.

The course content should include use of the main text genres of the area of studies the students will enter.

Study skills elements should go beyond description to include exploration of what we assume knowledge to be and hence how learning should happen: what are considered to be good student behaviours and good teacher behaviours in this setting.

Students' original cultures of learning should be respected, we need to show why we do certain things, not to imply these behaviours are better.

# IFP and the transition to UK academic culture: Bridge, ferry or ford?

## About the author



**Elspeth Jones**

Emerita Professor of the Internationalisation of Higher Education, Leeds Metropolitan University and International Education Consultant

*Universities around the world are nowadays taking the issue of internationalisation very seriously. But what is internationalisation and how do International Foundation Programmes (IFPs) fit into this agenda? What part do tutors on IFP programmes play and how can the nature of the programme itself play a role in student success? This article considers the role of IFPs in broader university internationalisation. It goes on to look at the diverse nature of learners in UK universities and reflects on the role of IFPs in the transition to academic study.*

Internationalisation has become part of the agenda for most higher education institutions in the UK and is increasingly a key topic of concern for universities around the world. This does not mean, however, that all institutions share the same view of what they are pursuing in their efforts to internationalise. It is variously interpreted as being about international student recruitment; internationalising the campus; league table positioning; international partnerships and networks; curriculum internationalisation for all; study abroad and exchange or the internationalisation of research and scholarship. In reality internationalisation involves all of these and more. Knight (2004) offers the most frequently cited definition, declaring that internationalisation is –

'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education' (p.11).

While this definition seems to cover the full range of university activity, it has not stopped others from trying to extend or clarify the definition. For example the term 'comprehensive internationalisation' (Hudzik 2011) is gaining ground, particularly in the USA. Essentially, however, if we are interested in internationalisation which is 'transformational' rather than merely 'symbolic' (Turner and Robson 2008), internationalisation is about students and how their university experience results in changed intercultural mindsets and new perspectives on global issues (Jones 2010). It is clear from this that internationalisation is for all students, not only those from other countries.

As universities have come under pressure to diversify income sources, one response has been to see international students as a source of funding. IFPs have arisen from the need to support students who are not yet ready for direct admission. To some managers, IFPs are merely an additional form of income from

international students before three years or more of fees for their main programme of study. Academics are often heard to complain about the 'poor quality' of international students they are 'expected' to teach. Rarely is this heard of students who have followed a good IFP programme as they tend to be both better prepared for academic study and have acclimatised to life and academia in the UK. Academic staff complain also about 'falling standards' in the domestic student population. As the system has moved from elite to mass participation so diversity has increased, with the full spectrum of the Diversity Wheel (Loden 1996) visible among the student body. Many of this wider range of students would benefit also from an IFP-type programme as a guide and support for their university studies; those who are the first in their family to participate in higher education offer a prime example of this, especially if their first language is not English.

Another way in which IFP programmes can support wider university internationalisation stems from the greater confidence and willingness to engage in academic life which students from these programmes often demonstrate. There is a common issue in universities across the globe of 'integrating' domestic and international students (Volet & Ang, 1998; Montgomery, 2010; Thom, 2010). The dilemma may be exacerbated by the fact that although studies show that international students want to get to know UK students (e.g. i-Graduate annual reports), they are often in the UK for a relatively short time and may lack confidence to strike up friendships with UK students. IFPs can help international students to counter their unease. The best kinds of IFP offer strategies for working with and befriending domestic students, which not only helps students on the programme but can also broaden the global perspectives of the local students they encounter.

IFPs can therefore support internationalisation of the campus and curriculum, all the

**'The best kinds of IFP offer strategies for working with and befriending domestic students.'**

‘The four most frequent elements of an IFP, namely language development, subject content, study skills and ‘acculturation could equally benefit large numbers of students in today’s universities.’

more so if staff teaching on IFPs and mainstream programmes work together on reaping the benefits. There are a number of barriers to this, however. To begin with, IFP teachers are often seen as outside the ‘mainstream’, so their expertise can be overlooked by academics who often fail to take the time to understand the real issues for their international students. As a result IFP teachers can feel undervalued and under-recognised, when in fact they are providing a key service both to the university’s internationalisation objectives and the programmes their students will go on to study. Meanwhile, the link between what goes on in an IFP programme and that which could benefit students from so-called ‘widening participation’ backgrounds is almost entirely unrecognised. The four most frequent elements of an IFP, namely language development, subject content, study skills and ‘acculturation’ (life and study in the UK or ‘how we do things around here’), could equally benefit large numbers of students in today’s universities, if only this were to be recognised. All students come to university with different histories, contexts and backgrounds. Each has differing needs, learning styles, expectations and ambitions. University leaders should recognise the strengths and value of the IFP and consider how this might support a broader range of students than is currently the case.

Yet, we should not be complacent as not all IFPs are created equal. In the transition to UK academic culture, does the IFP operate as a bridge, ferry or ford? As a ‘bridge’, the IFP offers good support and is solid and secure. As with the longest bridges however, students cannot always see where the IFP is leading. It is crucial to be emphasise its link to the main programme. The programme also requires ‘maintenance’ and should not be allowed to fall into ‘disrepair’.

Seen as a ferry, the IFP superficially does the job by taking students across the river, but then they are left on the other side with no route back to the support given during the IFP. It is important then that the IFP also offers transition into on-programme support. Overloaded ferries can see passengers struggling for space and may be in danger of capsizing. Crucially, then, there must be sufficient space and individual attention for students on an IFP if they are not to flounder or even go under.

Conceived as a ford, the IFP offers no real support beyond the absolute basics and students are essentially left to their own devices. Intermittent support, just as with stepping stones, can lead to a false sense of security, unless students are experienced. Even with the help of others crossing at the same time, students can still end up sinking and having to resort to emergency measures.

In summary, properly designed the IFP can offer firm support and will not be too difficult to cross. It should allow students to pass back and forth between the IFP, ongoing support and mainstream academic content.

Which model is your IFP, bridge, ferry or ford?

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# One size doesn’t fit all

## About the author



**Anthony Manning**  
Director of CEWL, Kent International Pathways & Kent Extra, University of Kent

This session describes an approach to providing for the diverse needs of students on the International Foundation Programme at the University of Kent. The Kent model takes into account students with differing linguistic entry points and attempts to provide two different pathways which allow students to both develop their EAP skills and manage their content modules according to their strengths and weaknesses on admission. The title *One size doesn’t fit all*, also recognises the fact that different pedagogical solutions to managing the different needs of IFP students have been adopted and employed with different institutions and that the InForm conference represents an excellent opportunity for the sharing of good practice.

This session was developed according to a premise which acknowledges the need to account for the different educational and cultural backgrounds pertaining to students following undergraduate pathway programmes. In this respect, a need was identified for educational provision which accommodates diversity and facilitates differentiation. In other words, One size doesn’t fit all, both in terms of our students’ needs when they enter pathway programmes, but also in the diversity of options available to us for meeting their requirements.

## Differentiation and diversity

With regard to differentiation, the benefits to students and the learning process are highlighted by educationalists such as Baumann (1997) and Capel et al. (2001) for whom differentiation can be described as a:

- way of organising learning activities
- process of adjusting what is offered according to what is needed
- process of evaluating the point in learning that the student has reached and considering what needs to be attained
- means of taking into account students’ particular skills and abilities

In addition, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) refer to differentiation as the process of achieving equilibrium between academic content and learners’ particular learning requirements. This objective can be seen to align particularly well with the aims and objectives of IFP provision, as we seek to assist students in applying their existing skills and knowledge to a new educational paradigm, in the form of UK undergraduate study. Tomlinson and Imbeau suggest that the target educational balance can be attained through adjusting:

- Content** — information and skills that students need to learn
- Process** — how students make sense of the content being taught

- Product** — how students demonstrate what they have learned
- Affect** — the feelings and attitudes that affect students’ learn

In terms of the importance of recognising the diversity of our IFP cohorts, a number of experts in the field of international education have made key comments which were identified in the presentation.

According to Hyland (2006, p.73) our provision should recognize the importance of affective, personal and social expectations of learning. It should also embrace many aspects, incorporating learners’ goals, backgrounds and language proficiencies along with their reasons for taking the course. Jordan (1997, p.1994) also takes into account factors such as learning styles academic culture, general culture, British life and institutions. Similarly, Alexander et al. (2008) stress the importance of accepting that in a new academic context the rules or expectations that students bring from their previous educational experiences can operate at different levels. With particular reference to international EAP classrooms, it should be realised that every student is an individual with individual expectations and individual needs.

## The Kent IFP model

After highlighting the importance of differentiation and diversity in the IFP classroom, the presentation moved on to identify an example of how these key considerations have been taken into account in the context of the IFP at the University of Kent. This example was identified and discussed with a view to showing one method of approaching the challenge. Importantly, it was acknowledged that the transferability of such a model would need to take into account the idiosyncrasies of local contexts given that IFPs are structured in different ways, due to institutional specialisms and constraints. This often means that it is not simple just to adopt a model which might be successful at another institution.

‘a dual pathway allows... students to manage their language and skills development differently alongside their academic subject study.’

The context at Kent was described in the following terms:

- Like many programmes of this type, the Kent IFP has a diverse cohort with different learning backgrounds, currently with students of 45 different nationalities
- The Kent IFP has two notable different groupings of students in bands of language proficiency, namely a group of students with proficiency above IELTS 6.0 and a group of students with a level of proficiency below IELTS 6.0
- There is perceived need to manage language, academic skill and knowledge development at different paces, according to the different levels of incoming language proficiency, as noted above. However, this challenge needs to be met within the confines of an academic year whilst working towards more one-dimensional learning outcomes
- The experience and data available to Kent staff has shown to date that students with lower IELTS entry grades find it more challenging to engage with academic content and tend to require more EAP and skill support. On the other hand, students with higher IELTS entry, who still have to achieve higher EAP and skill targets for progression, need to be motivated and challenged in different ways

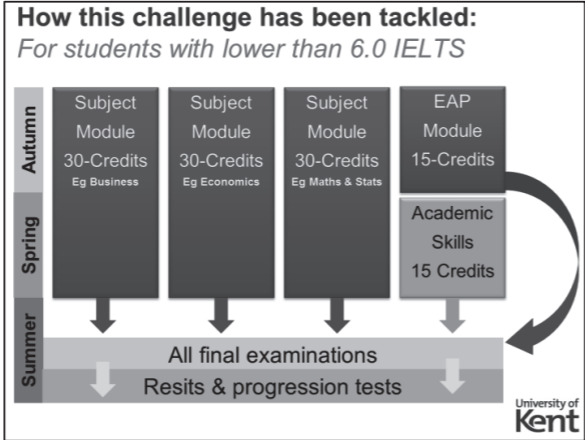
In order to attempt to meet the challenges identified above, a dual pathway has been devised at Kent which allows students to manage their language and skills development differently alongside their academic subject study. Slide A below shows the pathway for students who join the Kent IFP with a lower level of EAP proficiency. This mode allows students, alongside content module study, to undertake a larger number of hours of EAP study before embarking further on an academic skills module in the second term. Slide B shows the approach for students with higher entry-level proficiency. This mode allows students initially to focus more on academic skills and to undertake a more independent applied project module in the second term.

The presentation also identified certain strengths and weaknesses, (see Table 1 below) with this potential model, which practitioners could take into account

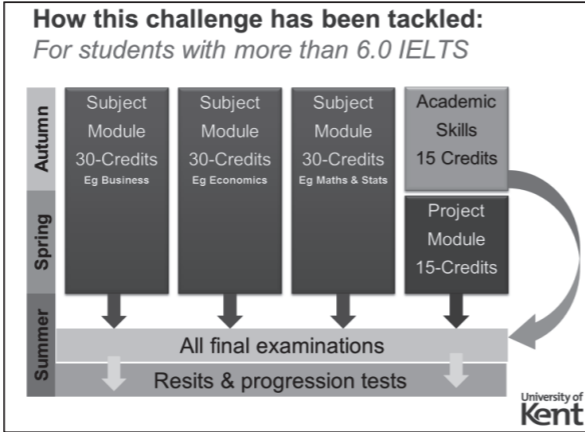
Table 1

Strengths	Weaknesses
Take into account linguistic challenges	Heavy load of EAP in the first term
Supportive for students with lower entry language proficiency	Academic content is not arranged progressively according to linguistic challenge
Motivational for students with more independence and better English	One pathway may appear remedial and may be culturally devise
Tailored according to student needs	More complex to administer
Balances product and process	Gap between EAP tuition and final assessment

Slide A



Slide B



when reflecting on possible transferability to their own contexts.

**Sharing good practice**

The final phase of the presentation returned to the central aim of the InForm forum and invited members of the audience to describe and share features of their own institutional models for the provision of IFPs and the manners through which differentiation and diversity are taken into account and reflected in the programme structure. This aspect of the session was particularly engaging and it is hoped that a more structured mechanism for the sharing of features of

course structure might arise as a ‘call to action’ from this paper. It may be possible for this to be undertaken through the InForm JISC email list.

**Conclusion**

It is hoped that this session served to highlight the importance of addressing the different needs of IFP students, despite the requirement for students to reach more uniform programme learning outcomes. With this in mind, key and important aspects of diversity and differentiation were highlighted and a model inspired by the need to address student needs was described in the context of the IFP at the University of Kent. The discussion which ensued from this presentation at the conference, regarding how other institutions seek to meet similar challenges, was perhaps the most fruitful aspect of the session and it is hoped that the benefits from learning from good practice and experience across the sector will be possible through a follow-up stage, via the InForm discussion forum.

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# Getting the balance right: A case of cooperation on the Diploma in Business

**About the author**



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EAP – Pathway Programmes,  
INTO Newcastle University

*This paper will outline the way in which the EAP module functions within the International Diploma in Business at INTO Newcastle University and specifically how the changes that have been made in approach have enabled an increase in the pass and progression rates. It will focus on a number of areas including the cooperation of subject and EAP staff, with particular focus on the EAP module which has undergone significant transformation from a generic curriculum to something that functions to serve the purpose of developing EAP skills as well as supporting the other academic modules.*

**Background**

The International Diploma in Business functions over a whole academic year as the first year of three undergraduate programmes for the Newcastle University Business School. It involves six modules: EAP and Study Skills plus four academic subjects. Each module is intense and has a variety of assessment methods with most of the summative assessment taking place in the second semester.

**Colleagues**

Despite having a very experienced team of staff, a key aspect to improving the quality of the programme was working in a collaborative way and this took a number of forms. One of the starting points was examining how EAP might better support the subject modules. This may sound simple and in a way it is, yet this is often overlooked or not done well enough. The process involved meeting with module leaders to find out where previous students had performed inadequately in the assessments and lessons. Then it was a case of identifying how EAP could help by

scaffolding some of the necessary elements (e.g. developing the writing style for a management report) and at what stage in the course this support should be provided. Peer observations with EAP teachers paired with subject staff also provided additional information in this regard. Therefore, the process aimed to identify any learning gaps and then involve EAP and subject colleagues working together to develop resources and support sessions. Also, EAP support as provided by reviewing language used in assignment questions to help clarify tasks and focus the assignments on the intended output from the students.

**The EAP module – differentiating the semesters**

The EAP module was divided into two clear functions for each semester. The first semester is used to teach specific EAP skills, while semester two offers both further EAP as well as support sessions for many of the subject module assignments. Both semesters mainly focus on reading and writing

‘students can see the connections between their EAP module and their content module and apply their skills.’

skills and include aspects of weekly homework and self-study. In semester one, there is a need to prepare students to complete their first written assignment for submission in week 4. Therefore, the scheme of work was designed to help the students understand what they need to do for this assignment with a logical approach to the order of input such as understanding the question / task, reading skills applied to an academic text, followed by some writing skills at sentence and paragraph level.

Each lesson comes with its own materials based on a learning point (for example, clauses and sentence structures) and each week there is an academic text for teachers to exploit in the form of a journal article that relates to the topic of the forthcoming, previous or current week in one of the subject modules. This means that the content of EAP fits in with the topics the students are encountering or are going to encounter on the programme. This content integrated language learning (CILL) approach replaced the more generic and compartmentalised EAP module where materials could be about any subject broadly relating to business. This way the students can see the connections between their EAP module and their content module and apply their skills to texts that are similar in genre and specific topic to what they will encounter when they search for suitable assignment materials. As the knowledge covered in semester one in the subject modules needs to be applied in semester two, the journals are also used in semester two as teaching resources to support the other lesson material. The texts are not only used to teach reading skills but to show how language is used, to enable students to rewrite sections using the techniques covered in class, to see examples of how language can be used for different purposes, to enable students to have summarising and paraphrasing practice with real texts as well as engaging all language level students with some critical thinking – a crucial element of academic success. This enables teachers to exploit in some depth the authentic texts in a way to suit their.

EAP support sessions and joint marking

In semester two the EAP module contains sessions that support the development of all the assignments and also offers specific support sessions, particularly for Quantitative Methods (QM) and Economics. This was important as the writing aspects for QM was often something neglected by the students, yet formed a proportion of the marks that they often missed out on despite making accurate calculations. In particular, one aspect where EAP helps is to encourage the students to move beyond the calculus, put the final outcome back into the context given in the brief and to write some recommendations based on this. For Economics, the main coursework assignment is jointly marked based on content and EAP ability, each with a different focus for the marking. This written assignment is arguably the most challenging one that the students face and is worth 30% of the final Economics mark and 20% for the EAP mark. The content is led by the Economic module and the EAP facilitates the

planning, reading and writing aspects by offering support with the following aspects: writing the introduction / conclusion, research presentation on macro & micro economic factors, essay plan support / feedback and first draft tutorials. The marking takes place separately but it is possible to identify any issues (such as plagiarism) and to discuss student results so that we can understand how to further develop support mechanisms. This is an example of how the modules can connect clearly with EAP so that the students understand EAP in the context of what they need to accomplish. I believe this has made a significant difference to the quality of assignment writing across the range of levels where even the linguistically weaker students are able to attempt to generate writing that is coherent, critical and credible (in terms of using appropriate sources correctly). Feedback from our External Examiner suggests that we are doing the right thing by engaging with these modules and in particular by offering the type of support sessions we do. The Economics module leader has also commented on the improvement in the content and writing style of the students.

Final thoughts

The impact of all of these factors has resulted in a more focused EAP module with better student focus and better collaboration and integration within the whole programme. This is only a starting point, but it provides a strong platform to develop the programme. The awareness of the programme being collective rather than formed of compartmentalised modules is something that is both visible and positively impacting the students and staff. Although aspects of English language teaching need to improve on the programme, the results are promising and the levels of engagement are higher than before.

The content / skills debate – A view from the Malaysian context

About the author



Mike Groves  
Director – Arts Foundation,  
University of Nottingham,  
Malaysia Campus

The University of Nottingham runs different foundation programs on the Malaysia Campus of the university. There is a tension within curriculum design between content and skills modules. A questionnaire delivered to students found that students felt better prepared for study in the Social Sciences where there was an emphasis on skills modules in the course. This has implications for the future design of the foundation curriculum .

Introduction

The University of Nottingham established its campus in Malaysia in 2000 as part of its strategy of internationalisation. Having started with very career focused degrees, such as Engineering and Business, it has recently branched out into less vocational courses such as English Studies, International Relations and International Communication Studies. In order to prepare students for these degrees, the university launched the Foundation in Arts (renamed The Foundation in Arts and Education in 2012) to sit alongside the existing foundation programmes in Engineering, in Science and in Business and Management.

Foundation programmes play a key part in recruitment for the campus, with a large number of students choosing the route after leaving school with SPM qualifications (approximately GCSE level) and studying an extended foundation programme before joining undergraduate degrees.

There is a tension within the curriculum design of these programmes about whether the emphasis should be on generic skills or academic content. This may be because skills specific modules have less academic kudos (Bennet, Dunne and Carre, 1999). However, the value of explicit skills instruction for students has been repeatedly shown at all levels of HE, especially when students have to cross some type of cultural bridge – whether that be by moving to another country, or when a university from another country moved to them, as in the case of Nottingham (Perpignan, Rubin and Katznelson, 2007).

For the purposes of this paper, skills based modules will refer to modules that contain a certain amount of content, but this is not necessarily linked to the students’ target degrees. The emphasis on these modules is on the process of academic study with explicit work on EAP and forms of expression. On the other hand content based modules have a focus tied to that of the target degree, and the ability to study effectively and express ideas appropriately is assumed or ignored.

Within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, there are two parallel foundation programmes. The Business and Management Foundation is a more content based course, with only 20 out of 180 credits being made up of skills modules. The Arts and Education foundation, on the other hand, comprises 100 out of 180 credits of skills based modules. In order to inform future curriculum development, a questionnaire was carried out among the students on both courses to try to discover which cohort of students felt better prepared for undergraduate study

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was delivered at the end of the programme, and was made up of two sections. The first section contained 6 multi item Likert scales shown in Table 1, with 6 sub items in each scale. The second section asked for demographic information including age, gender and whether or not the students had already met the English language requirements for automatic progression.

Table 1: Multi Item Scales – headings

1	I have adapted to university life
2	I am autonomous
3	I am confident about year one
4	I know what is expected of me as a student
5	The content of my course is relevant to me
6	I find the course rewarding

Fifty four students completed the questionnaire: 27 from Arts and Education and 27 from Business and Management. The Cronbach’s alpha value for the 6 items was between .64 for scale 1 and .904, indicating a reasonable to strong level of internal reliability (Dornyei, 2003).

Results

There were two statistically significant results which were evident from the data. Independent samples T-tests showed that the skills focussed, Arts and Education founda-

tion students felt more adapted to university life (M=3.84, SD 0.47) than the content based Business students (M=3.55, SD= .50) (t(2.259)= 2.259), p<0.05. In addition the Arts Foundation students had a better idea of what was expected of them at Undergraduate level (M=3.62, SD=0.47) than the Business students (M=3.35, SD=.70) (t(2.231=52), p<0.05 .

A variety of other tests was run on the data. There were no statistically significant results for any of the demographic data, as it related to the Likert items.

Discussion

The effect size of the difference was not very large; however it was statistically significant. This indicates that an emphasis on skills does lead to a greater confidence on the part of the students in terms of their own perceptions of their preparedness for undergraduate study.

It is interesting to note here that there was not a trade-off. According to these results, an emphasis on skills adds to the students' readiness for their undergraduate study without taking away from any other area. In other words, including a significant number of skills based modules does not mean that students have to lack in other areas of their university preparation.

Therefore, it would seem clear that in order to best prepare students for the world of undergraduate study, there needs to be a focus on explicit academic skills within a foundation year programme. These skills are not exclusively EAP/language based – also included are skills of information management, management of self and others and of the task. (Bennet, Dunne and Carre, 1999). However, the focus of the learning is not tied to the content of the target degrees.

This is not to argue that all modules on a foundation programme should be skills based – there clearly needs to be a link to the content of the target degrees, and the small effect size in this questionnaire suggests that an exclusive focus on skills over content would be a step too far, and most likely unproductive. However, it would seem clear that explicit training in the norms and values of the academic community of practice into which the students are about to jump provides vital help in the process of academic acculturation outlined by Smith and Khawaja (2011).

What is needed in the curriculum design, at least within the context of the Malaysia campus, is a balance of skills and content: in other words a portfolio of modules whose learning outcomes complement each other – some aiming to give the students content based knowledge for their intended discipline, but also including modules which give students a thorough, planned and staged introduction into the community of academic practice.

Bennett, N., Dunne, E. and Carré, C. (1999). Patterns of core and generic skill provision in higher education. *Higher Education*, 37, 71–93.

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‘helping students gain access to a variety of academic communities.’

be transferred to the new academic communities they hope to join, integrating these skills with learning a new academic language, and contextualising the two in content which will engage students to think critically (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). This article will consider the challenges to achieving this before illustrating how these needs are addressed on the core module of the University of Leeds IFP: Study Skills in English.

Challenges of teaching EAP

Perhaps the first challenge for IFP teachers is justifying the intended learning outcomes. Some students start an IFP with a false perception of what it is for: students with a low level of English typically want to learn language, i.e. remedial work, whereas high level students may not. However, it can be argued that EAP is useful to *all* students, regardless of their first language, as its aim is to help them gain access to a variety of academic communities

An added problem is that within universities, content is often deemed more important than language, with language proficiency seen as a pre-requisite for entry to departments, not an ongoing process of development linked to what is being studied (Turner, 2004). Yet students need to be able to manipulate language in order to show their understanding of content and critically engage with it (ibid). Differing responses to language difficulties in departments further complicate the issue; some actively promote proof-reading services to their students, whereas tutors in others correct language errors themselves or simply ignore them.

A second challenge for teachers can be identifying what academic skills and genres are transferable across disciplines, i.e. what set of skills all students need (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). IFPs typically have students from a range of disciplines who, understandably, are concerned about learning content which is directly relevant to them or that they are familiar with. This has the potential to result in another mismatch between the expectations of students and the aims of teachers in terms of what content and skills are taught in the classroom. Most EAP courses cover neutral topics from social sciences as subjects are discursive and enable students to critically engage with content. Here the balance between language, skills and content is especially important: the skills of argumentation and criticality are ones that all students need and for science students in particular, this may need emphasising if they see them framed in non-science content.

Case Study

On the University of Leeds IFP module, Study Skills in English delivers content through projects on contemporary global issues which allows students to develop their critical literacy by exploring other perspectives, forming their own opinions and arguments, and evaluating information from different sources. This takes place whilst students are making connections with the academic disciplines to which they are progress-

ing. However, in reality engagement with content can be a challenge for some students due to barriers of intellectual maturity and educational culture. Many students do not realise until the end of the course, or even once they have started their degree courses, that teaching critical thinking is one of the main aims of the module.

One project which showcases how global issues can be used as a springboard for the development of study and language skills is on the topic of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Different aspects of CSR are explored using a critical literacy approach: ethical consumerism and issues surrounding customer choice; the concept of rights, in particular those of workers, and how these are often exploited; and the question of whether it pays for a company to be socially responsible. Students are guided to identify general academic as well as subject specific vocabulary which they can use to discuss the issues.

The following are comments from students given in an end of semester evaluation questionnaire last year on whether the project met their expectations; most negative comments were about the fact that the topic of CSR was not directly related to their degree so therefore not deemed useful. However, most students were able to recognise the benefits of learning about this topic and the overall learning outcomes appear to have been met foremost in terms of developing study skills.

‘CSR is a very critical topic especially in relation to our first long assignment in relation to McDonalds. I think it involves much thinking and analysis and it is good for us as students whose aim is to think analytically.’

‘It’s a good topic for us to learn because of it push ourselves to thinking deep and looking for different sources through internet.’

‘The topic is interesting as it directly relates to everyday life. I am now more aware of what I have to consume and what effect I could have on other people. It really makes me feel responsible for my purchase choices.’

These comments are unprompted so hopefully are fairly convincing evidence that although there may always be a mismatch between student expectations and the overall aim of any EAP module, students can appreciate and assimilate some of the complexities of joining academic communities through the delivery of critically engaging content which integrates language and skills.

Hyland, K. & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2002). *EAP: issues and directions* Journal of English for Academic Purposes Vol 1, Issue 1 pp.1–12 [online] <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1475158502000024>.

Turner, J. (2004). Language as academic purpose Journal of English for Academic Purposes Vol 3, Issue 2 pp.95–109 [online] <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1475158503000547>.

Study skills in English: Does it do what it says on the tin?

About the author



Alison Leslie  
Teaching Fellow,  
University of Leeds

*One challenge for EAP teachers on international foundation programmes is equipping students with skills to function in diverse academic communities by contextualising language within content that engages them to think critically. This article considers this challenge by illustrating how these needs are approached on the core module of the University of Leeds International Foundation Year: Study Skills in English. It will conclude that although there will almost certainly remain a mismatch between student expectations and the overall aim of the module, which is to develop academic skills, with time students can learn to appreciate and assimilate some of these skills*

Introduction

The debate about language versus content is particularly pertinent within the context of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP). One of the greatest challenges facing EAP university teachers is demystifying their aims and methodologies to academic and

administrative peers, and to their students. This is because teaching EAP is not only about remedial language work but also deals with helping students gain access to a variety of academic communities. For teachers on international foundation programmes (IFPs) this involves identifying a set of academic skills which all students need and which can

# 'InFormal'

## Subject-based content in EAP Foundation

Andy Hoodith, Lecturer in EAP,  
INTO, Manchester

*Following my presentation on the shift toward subject-based content in EAP/Science at the INFORM conference earlier this year, two issues in particular became apparent, especially when considered in the context of the conference as a whole (namely: 'balancing linguistic and content teaching'). Firstly, the gap in perception of student needs between EAP practitioners and their academic colleagues is wider than is immediately apparent to those not working in a university campus setting. Secondly, the barriers to full cooperation are more complex than the terms 'content' or 'syllabus' can adequately cover.*



In terms of perception, the value of EAP is arguably significantly and consistently underrated by other departments and faculties. As was pointed out by at least two presenters, EAP teachers are not, for the most part, considered by university hierarchies to be 'academics' in the same way that, say, Physics or Economics lecturers are. Terminology has a lot to do with this. Just as the jargon of EAP and EFL sometimes serve to muddy the waters rather than clarify matters, so the term 'teacher' is primarily associated with secondary or tertiary, rather than higher education, whereas a 'lecturer' is almost always considered to be engaged in some form of higher education. This immediately creates a status difference and, as with all such phenomena, those with a higher status are arguably loathe to 'open the doors' to others. The solution seems to be simple – EAP teachers become Lecturers in EAP or are given some similar title. The problem however remains. This is because the original distinction does accurately represent a difference in approach to the 'classroom' or 'lecture hall'. Historically and pedagogically, EAP and EFL teaching is closely related to the concepts of acquisition and language skills, which are essentially interactive, whereas lecturing is, by definition, a much more unidirectional mode of instruction, requiring learners to understand and absorb a fixed body of knowledge which, once they have grasped it, can then be discussed and debated at postgrad levels.

One of the prime requirements for any university undergraduate is the ability to think critically. The fact that many EAP students do not come from backgrounds where this is part of their educational tradition presents problems for all Foundation teaching staff, including those involved in writing assessments (both in terms of individual assignments and exam questions). So how can students whose English is not particularly good, for the sake of argument say IELTS 5.5, begin to engage in meaningful discussion on Politics or Marketing unless they have had prior experience of and practice in critical thinking in English. It is easy to overlook exactly how difficult a task we are setting our students. It is not enough simply to be competent in a language if the aim is academic competence, as millions of native speakers of English prove each year!

A key component of my presentation concerned to what degree EAP and subject content should overlap. A key weakness in approaching the issue in this manner is the distinction inherent in it. In short, EAP is a subject in itself. Of course, Foundation students are unlikely to be aiming to pursue an undergraduate degree in teaching English as a foreign or second language (though some are). However, EAP's role as essentially a 'support' subject has exacerbated a view of it as being of secondary importance. It is a simple matter of logic to prove that this view is misguided, because the medium in which students will be studying is English and therefore failure to reach the required level of competence is arguably the key deciding factor, not in whether or not they get into a university course but how well they are equipped to perform once there.

It is worth noting here that the 'dumbing down' of entry requirements, whether in EAP or content courses, is a completely separate issue which has more to do with the worldwide education market than with the much more localised concerns of an individual Foundation programme. It is as easy to set the bar lower in any given subject as it is to lower IELTS requirements in order to access a greater number foreign students. The results of such policies are that the raw material instructors have to work with is becoming more challenging for all. So the paradox presents itself whereby any significant expansion in student numbers will almost certainly result in more students failing courses, or the courses themselves becoming devalued.

To return to the focus of this reflection on the Inform conference it is useful to draw a comparison between EAP and another core subject, Mathematics. While it may be difficult for a student to complete a foundation course in, say, Economics without a good grounding in Maths, the degree to which 'Maths for Economics' differs from that for other Humanities subjects is minimal compared to the difference between the genre of English required to function in an English language-speaking country and that needed to write essays, understand lectures, actively take part in seminars, give coherent and understandable presentations, and manage the challenges presented by the complexities of university administration departments. A large proportion of the evidence for this is the fact that most native speakers of English, even with the benefit of eleven years of full-time education in a range of subjects and 24/7 exposure to many genres, are not equipped to begin an undergraduate degree. Thus the challenges facing our students go beyond pure 'academic' concerns.

In terms of the expertise which EAP instructors bring to foundation courses, it is somewhat ironic that because many of them come from an EFL background they often have several years' experience in teaching non-native speakers, often abroad, and consequently have a greater awareness of their probable needs than do instructors whose teaching experience is solely in the UK. This point was highlighted by Elspeth Jones in her keynote speech at the conference. This expertise is recognised in some quarters but is all-too-often overlooked by university hierarchies who may assume that EFL and EAP professionals are in some way less 'intellectual' or 'academic'. This despite the fact that Applied Linguistics and Psycholinguistics are well-respected and highly valued specialities at many universities worldwide.

The above is a conundrum which must be addressed if we are to arrive at coherent syllabi which fully address the needs of our students. If we continue to contradict Marshall McLuhan, the

Canadian philosopher of Communication theory, and insist on separating the medium (English) and the message (the subject) then we are in danger of alienating and confusing our students and prolonging the artificial barriers between us as educators. Where we may differ from McLuhan is that from the viewpoint of the educator teaching, for example, Physics, the medium is clearly not the message, simply the means by which it is conveyed. For the students however, the two are inextricably linked. Just as proficiency in English is not a reliable indicator of academic prowess, neither is it the case that a student who has an excellent grasp of Economics or Biology is able to convey that knowledge through the medium of academic English (as this term would be understood by a native user). It therefore follows that only a combined approach to syllabus design – well-planned, co-written and properly piloted – will enable delivery of a course or courses which fully meet the needs of our students. Such cooperation is happening now, though it is far from widespread and in many cases haphazard and lacking in medium to long term goals. Most of the obstacles to progress are, in my view, self-imposed and a result of what might be termed 'status quo' thinking. This along with the inherent protection of academic turf within institutions is detrimental to the long-term future and growth of our sector within the wider educational environment.

## Thinking Back . . . Looking Forward – An insight into an end of term IFP event

Chris Walklett,  
Strand Leader Academic Skills/Lecturer,  
IFP, International Academy,  
University of Essex

*We have long debated how to successfully conclude our IFP and get students to reflect back (both personally and academically) on the momentous changes that they have gone through, and wondered what format such a venture could take. From humble and somewhat vague origins, a germ of an idea emerged for an end of programme event. This germ has now blossomed into our Reflective Event. For this the students draw on their experiences under the heading of 'what the foundation year has meant to me'. Focus has recently been established by the introduction and utilisation of a year round blog*



## Introduction

The Foundation Year (or Bridging Year as it was previously known) at the International Academy, University of Essex has always included a successful social programme. What did not exist however was an event that served to satisfactorily tie up the year. Previously the programme had ended with the submission of a portfolio however it emerged through student feedback that this was something the students did not enjoy, and that what would be more appropriate might be something more suited to an undergraduate course rather than a foundation course. Clearly it was time for the IFP staff to create something new.

## An idea emerges

IFP Staff were asked to come forward with ideas for a social form of assessment with which to end the course. The ideas included

a poster event which had previously proved successful on a post-graduate level programme. From humble and somewhat vague origins, a germ of an idea emerged and grew in a very organic way and was mostly shaped by the students themselves.

This 'Reflective Event' is now in its fourth year and is improving year on year. The students are asked to draw on their academic experiences under the heading '*what the foundation year has meant to me*'.

## A concern to be remedied

An on-going concern in the early days of 'The Reflective Event' was that the students found it hard to reflect retrospectively on their experiences and generate ideas. Additionally, with lots of other assessment taking place prior to the Easter break, the students were already under a considerable amount of time pressure. What was needed was some kind of way in, or support to help them access their ideas and form the basis of a theme which they could pursue.

## The way in – a blog

The IFP staff decided to use an assessed weblog (commonly known as a blog) and this enabled the students to reflect on their academic life day to day. It was hoped that the blog would act as a kind of academic travelogue of their time on the IFP. Additionally, students would be able to revisit these blogs at a later date for ideas on which to base their end of term Reflective Event poster.

The staff asked students to comment on three blog topics which were set to coincide with aspects of the students' lives at a particular time. The themes are as follows:

Entry one deals with their first impressions of student life and asks them to consider any academic cultural shock they have experienced. This blog is due just a few weeks after they have arrived at the IFP.

The second blog entry is on the theme of the pressure of tests and students are asked to comment on the stress that they have experienced in their first term.

The third blog topic is entitled lecture technique. Students comment on their experience of lectures and note taking, which was a new experience for the majority.

## Student responses to the weblog

'You are not spoon-fed like in school . . . more critical thinking is required'

'I never seem to understand what I am revising for'

'Take a pen and a notepad because . . . you only remember ten percent of what you hear'

'The moment you walk out of the lecture hall half the things said go out with you'

## Fair assessment?

A mark sheet was constructed which consisted of three elements:

- Content – idea and effort
- Execution – innovation and presentation
- Task – the level of detail used (including blog entries)

Summative assessment of such a project, as with many forms of assessment, presents challenges as grading must be objective therefore it was necessary to employ stringent marking criteria.

The reflections themselves

The innovation shown by the students in the four years that this event has been running has been nothing short of staggering. As well as posters, Power Point presentations and portfolios the reflections have included:

- Poems, songs, raps and videos
- Interactive computer programmes
- Live questionnaires
- Scrapbooks and photo diaries
- 3D Models

Comments & considerations

Feedback on the project has been complimentary and our External Examiner commented that it is something that ‘fosters autonomy and collaborative work’. It has clearly become so much more than we had originally envisaged.

There are though other considerations to be addressed as well as the afore-mentioned issue of marking consistency. Firstly, contribution in group work was not always equal. Further, as regards the blog entries, not all were completed in full and the

third blog in particular (perhaps due to its topic or the students’ workloads) had fewer entries. Additionally, the issue of style over substance has also, unfortunately, occasionally been noticed.

Conclusion

In the first Reflective Event a student used the slogan ‘live and learn’ to describe their reflection. The Reflective Event project is a living embodiment of this sentiment, a way for the students to showcase their academic lives on the IFP and talk about the educational journey they are on.

# Call for papers

This is a call for papers for Issue 13 of *InForm*.

The submission of papers is now invited for the thirteenth edition of *InForm* from members of the academic community associated with international foundation programmes. Issue 13 will be published in April 2014.

We are interested in articles related to the variety of academic disciplines commonly found across international foundation programmes and remind contributors that *InForm* is not predominantly an English language teaching journal. *InForm* also includes a letters page with readers’ responses to the articles included in previous editions. Letters should be no longer than 200 words.

Journal articles (of no more than 1200 words) should be sent by email to **inform@reading.ac.uk** by 12.00 pm on 31 January 2014.

For more information and a full writer’s guide please visit:  
[www.reading.ac.uk/inform](http://www.reading.ac.uk/inform)

We regret that contributing authors to *InForm* will no longer receive payment for papers published.

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## ***InForm***

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