Transition to university: providing the tools for success

Lecture rooms 1 – 3
Arts Building
Edgbaston campus – Red Zone (R16)
30 June 2018
HOW TO FIND US
EDGBASTON CAMPUS, BIRMINGHAM, B15 2TT

Key

Y2 Building name
• Information point
□ Level access entrance
□ Steps
□ Visitors car park
□ Hospital
□ 24 hour security
□ Bus stops
□ Library
□ Museum
□ Sport facilities
□ First aid
□ Food and drink
□ Retail
□ Toilets
□ ATM
□ Canal bridge
□ Sculpture trail
□ Rail
□ Lift
□ In development

Cultural attractions (open to the public)

Brummall Music Building (R12)
Barber Institute of Fine Arts (R14)
Lapworth Museum of Geology (R4)
Winterbourne House and Garden (G12)

Inform Conference 2018
InForm
CONFERENCE 2018
TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY: PROVIDING THE TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

Birmingham International Academy at the University of Birmingham, in conjunction with the Inform editorial board at the University of Reading, is very pleased to welcome you to the ninth annual Inform conference.

The theme of the conference is “Transition to University: providing the tools for success”. We believe this theme is central to the role of International Foundation Programmes and Pathways. Understanding that the personal, academic and, in most cases, linguistic transformation that students undertake during this year empowers us, as practitioners, to guide the students to their place at the heart of the academic community.

We have had a large number of excellent submissions, addressing the theme in a number of ways, and we feel confident that the talks will provide a stimulus for discussion and research into this vital area. We are very pleased to welcome Dr Vikki Burns from the University of Birmingham and Dr Ursula Wingate from Kings College London as keynote speakers. Both speakers have some crucial insights to share, and we are very much looking forward to their talks.

We hope that you will have a thought-provoking and stimulating day and that you are able to take advantage of the networking opportunities the event will offer.

Mike Groves
College Programmes Manager
Birmingham International Academy
University of Birmingham
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Speaker(s)</th>
<th>Institution/ University</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08:50 – 09:15</td>
<td>Registration – refreshments</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:15 – 09:20</td>
<td>Welcome and conference opening (all delegates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:20 – 10:05</td>
<td>Keynote address 1</td>
<td>Dr Vikki Burns – University of Birmingham</td>
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<td>Vikki explores our approach to integrating international students into university study and life. Often support is provided to enable students to overcome cultural differences and, in a sense, conform to our expectation of what we think students should be. Vikki considers an alternative approach that does not view international students as being 'deficient' in particular academic communities and practices, but instead embraces their differences, enabling the unique strengths of individuals to develop.</td>
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<td>10:05 – 10:40</td>
<td>Assessed reflective writing; friend or foe?</td>
<td>Maria Hussain – University of Leeds</td>
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<td>Assessed reflective writing has gained ground in many fields in recent years, including STEM related areas. However, for many international students the ‘cultural-situatedness’ (Tsui and Ng, 2010:32) of this genre acts as a barrier to engagement. This presentation offers practical insights in addressing and overcoming such challenges in assessment and course design.</td>
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<td>10:45 – 11:10</td>
<td>Refreshments and posters</td>
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<td>11:10 – 11:50</td>
<td>From IFY to FY with home students: challenges and strategies – an EAP tutor’s experience</td>
<td>Deirdre McKenna – University of Sussex</td>
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<td>The IFY/EAP practitioner, specialising in language and skills development for international students, may need to adapt to a changing HE sector by delivering such content to ‘Home’ students. This talk presents the recent experience of a Teaching Fellow in ELT delivering academic skills to FY ‘Home’ students. It focuses on the IFY skills which can be transferred to a native speaker FY context, the challenges this transition in teaching poses for the practitioner, and outlines the strategies which have been found most effective in overcoming these difficulties.</td>
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<td>11:50 – 12:30</td>
<td>‘Unity in diversity’ – introducing a broad range of students to the requirements of university writing</td>
<td>Shuna I. A. Neilson – Richmond The American International University in London</td>
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<td>Richmond University requires all students, regardless of nationality, to complete two credit-bearing modules in research and writing providing them with the tools to successfully develop these skills at University. I will present research undertaken to revise these modules and the effects that these revisions have had on student performance.</td>
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<td>11:50 – 12:30</td>
<td>Problem-based learning: solving the problem of preparing high-level students for undergraduate study</td>
<td>Elizabeth Allen and Ruth Taylor – University of Bristol</td>
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<td>This presentation outlines how problem-based learning has been used with students with a high language level to develop their academic language and literacy through discipline-specific problems. This approach has also developed other essential skills required for undergraduate study, especially the ability to work collaboratively with peers, independently of the tutor.</td>
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<td>11:50 – 12:30</td>
<td>Highlighting the factors that can make Foundation writers English appear unacademic</td>
<td>Matthew Lemon – University of York</td>
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<td>This presentation will investigate this issue and demonstrate ways to improve writing beyond focusing on individual grammatical / vocabulary errors, based on research conducted using systemic functional linguistic genre and register analysis.</td>
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<td>11:50 – 12:30</td>
<td>‘Flying start’ – a framework to facilitate the transition of undergraduate international students to UK Higher Education</td>
<td>Clare Poulson – University of Leeds</td>
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<td>The session examines some of the issues related to the transition and acculturation of international undergraduate students’ transition to UK HE. A framework developed to facilitate this transition will be presented, as well as materials used with students. Feedback from both students and teaching staff will be discussed, together with the limitations and possible wider applications.</td>
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<td>11:50 – 12:30</td>
<td>An online academic study skills course</td>
<td>Aysen Gilroy – Zayed University</td>
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<td>Zayed University provides online courses to students graduating from high schools to prepare them for undergraduate studies in an English-medium instruction higher-education institution. The speaker will introduce the Academic Study Skills for University course which aims to develop skills necessary to make the transition from high school to university successful.</td>
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<td>11:50 – 12:30</td>
<td>The university food transition: what tools can we provide?</td>
<td>Liz Wilding – University of Reading</td>
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<td>This presentation will describe the International Student Food Project, an initiative designed to explore the role that food plays in the transition experiences of international students and to find ways to enhance their adjustment to shopping, cooking and eating at university in the UK.</td>
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<td>12:30 – 12:45</td>
<td>STEM focused IFY study skills: an evaluation of changes implemented at the University of Leeds (2017 – 18)</td>
<td>Jenny Hirst – University of Leeds</td>
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<td>The presentation will evaluate changes implemented in order to support the transition of International Foundation Year students at the University of Leeds onto STEM undergraduate programmes.</td>
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<td>Lunch and posters</td>
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<td>13:30 – 14:15</td>
<td>Keynote address 2</td>
<td>Dr Ursula Wingate – School for Education, Communication and Society, Kings College London</td>
<td>Ursula investigates the concept of academic discourse, specifically teaching, assessing and providing feedback on writing. Drawing on her own research into students’ own perceptions of their difficulties in this area, she focuses on the vital, but complex, area of argumentation, highlighting the various notions students have of what argumentation is, and how these notions may affect their transitions into university-level academic reading and writing.</td>
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<td>14:15 – 14:55</td>
<td>Mastering academic writing – the key to a successful transition</td>
<td>Kerry Tavakoli – University of St Andrews</td>
<td>Academic writing and the successful completion of assignments constitute a significant cause of anxiety for many students. If sufficient attention is paid to this aspect of academic success, then many other aspects of transition may be less problematic. This presentation considers the impact of intensive, scaffolded writing instruction on students on foundation courses.</td>
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<td>Under the formative sun – moving towards authentic assessments using response e-portfolio</td>
<td>Sebastian Kozbi and Michael Salmon – University of Liverpool</td>
<td>The presentation includes three ideas that relate to the use of formative assessment as the key element in getting students ‘university ready’: 1) inclusion of relevant sub-skills, authentic tasks and meaningful output; 2) working with formative feedback; and 3) involving alumni, experts, practitioners etc. as the audience when assessing students.</td>
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<td>Looking 4 solutions: managing liminality and transitions on Foundation Programmes in the UK</td>
<td>Clare Nukui and Martin Millar – Oxford Brookes University</td>
<td>This presentation reviews some of the literature on liminality and asks whether FPs might be seen as liminal zones. Does the introduction of four-year programmes and Level 4 modules go some way to alleviating this potential liminality and facilitate better transition to UG studies?</td>
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<td>Refreshments and posters</td>
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<td>15:20 – 16:00</td>
<td>Effectively developing IFP students’ library skills</td>
<td>Hannah Gurr – University of Bristol</td>
<td>This session will look at the ongoing collaboration between EAP tutors and subject librarians at Bristol University to effectively develop our IFP students’ information literacy – essential library skills for transition into university.</td>
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<td>Backwards planning in practice: how a small UK HEI went about it</td>
<td>Julia Clifford – University College Birmingham</td>
<td>In order to provide students with the tools to succeed on their main programmes, module leaders on the International Foundation Diploma English and Study Skills modules at University College Birmingham have been applying the backwards-planning curriculum design model. This paper outlines the steps taken and comments on their application.</td>
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<td>Developing ‘soft’ transferable skills to achieve ‘hard’ targets through cultural and community engagement</td>
<td>Rebecca Hooker and Felicia Heard – University of Exeter</td>
<td>A new academic English module has been developed which focuses on community and cultural engagement. It helps students acquire ‘softer’ skills, such as reflective and critical skills; and builds confidence and a sense of ‘fitting in’. This allows students moving on to pathway/degree programmes to develop the general skills and attributes needed for future academic challenges.</td>
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<td>16:00 – 16:40</td>
<td>Using Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to enhance students’ academic writing</td>
<td>Paula Villegas – University of Sheffield</td>
<td>Based on Maton’s (2009) Semantic Dimension, Ingold &amp; O’Sullivan (2017) and Brooks (2017) have developed practical activities to help students produce academic texts. This presentation merges both techniques, providing a hands-on model on applying this conceptual toolkit in the foundation EAP writing classroom.</td>
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<td>‘DISCERN’: the discerning student</td>
<td>Dave Watton and Jake Groves – University of Birmingham</td>
<td>Can EAP tutors help their learners foster a more critical approach by teaching a ‘language’ of critical thinking? To address this question, we identified, taught and practised seven cognitive skills forming the acronym ‘DISCERN’. We evaluate how meaningful this process was through the eyes of both tutors and learners themselves.</td>
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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Arts Lecture Theatre 1
09:20 – 10:05

Not a problem to be fixed

When we consider transition to university for international foundation pathway students, we often focus on how we can support the incoming students to overcome cultural barriers and “fit in” to our institutions. Although these initiatives are always well intended, I will propose in this talk that they can encourage a “deficit” approach, in which international students are a “problem to be fixed” in the classroom, rather than valuable and skilled members of our academic and social communities. I will discuss how we can encourage our international students to recognise their own strengths and contributions to the university, as well as the potential benefits of extracurricular activities in supporting their development and integration. Finally, I will propose that Foundation Academy leaders have an important role to play in influencing institutional narratives regarding international students.

Dr Vikki Burns is a Reader in Science Education, with a special interest in how we can support students to become effective, educated citizens. She uses experiential learning, innovative assessments, and extracurricular activities to give students opportunities to connect theory to practice, learn to communicate effectively with different audiences, and promote intercultural understanding. In recognition of this work, she is a National Teaching Fellow and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.
Lost in transition: How to prepare students for reading and writing at university?

I will present an ‘essay-writing framework’ and argue for the use of this in teaching academic reading and writing in pre-sessional and foundation programmes to facilitate students’ transition into university. I draw on research I conducted with two cohorts of first-year undergraduate students to identify typical difficulties encountered in academic transition. These include the understanding of the discourse of academic writing guidance, assessment criteria and feedback, and in particular of the key requirement of critical thinking and argumentation. Focusing on argumentation, I will discuss the concepts of argumentation that students bring to university and the type and quality of instruction they receive. I will also show that incorrect concepts of argumentation are related to considerable difficulties in academic reading.

Dr Ursula Wingate works in the Centre for Language, Discourse and Communication at Kings College London, and is the convenor of the Forum for Academic Language and Literacy (FALL). She teaches on the BA English Language and Linguistics, the MA Applied Linguistics and ELT, the MA TESOL and also supervises several doctoral students. She was joint editor of the Language Learning Journal from 2011 to 2015, and regularly reviews papers for various academic journals.
Assessed reflective writing; friend or foe?

Reflective writing has gained ground in many fields in recent years, including STEM related areas and many EAP courses. This upward trend is supported by recent studies showing a positive correlation between reflective writing and the development of critical thinking.

However, for many international students critical self-reflection is a novel genre of writing due to the differences in cultural expectations of writing and thus may act as a barrier to engagement with this ‘culturally-situated’ (Tsui and Ng, 2010:32) type of writing. This issue is also compounded by the ambiguity that surrounds this genre of writing for both students and teachers alike (Clarà, 2014).

This presentation will explore the relationship between reflective writing practices and the development of critical thinking as a transitional aid for international students into the academy. It will also discuss practical challenges and limitations in addressing those needs in assessment and syllabus design. This is informed by data gathered from current International Foundation Year (IFY) students over the span of a year through teacher observations, student reflective writing samples and surveys. With explicit genre-based approaches to reflective writing in the second term, results showed a marked improvement in both the quality of students’ reflective writing and awareness of the potential benefits of ‘critical reflection’ beyond the IFY programme, with a view to transferability of skills to future academic and professional contexts.

The findings do suggest that with greater explicit genre-based instruction of such ‘fuzzy’ (ibid:262) concepts, IFY students are better able to engage and benefit from this writing practice and assessment.

References

An online academic study skills course

Recently, Zayed University in the UAE has taken on the responsibility of providing online courses to students graduating from a dual language school system with the overall aim of preparing them for undergraduate studies in an English-medium instruction higher-education institution. As part of this brief, the Academic Bridge Program has created a number of online courses, one of which is Academic Study Skills for University. This course specifically targets students who are about to embark on their university career and aims to develop skills that are necessary to make the transition from high school to university successful.

In this presentation the speaker will:
• talk about the UAE and ZU context;
• explain the principles upon which this online course was based;
• introduce the different units covered in this course and explain how this content was selected (Units: Introduction to Life at University, Critical Thinking, Time Management, Assignment Management); and
• highlight one of the units, namely the Critical Thinking Skills, to demonstrate how the learners’ needs combined with the institutional needs informed the content of the course.
‘Flying start’ – a framework to facilitate the transition of undergraduate international students to UK Higher Education

All undergraduate students experience the transition from pre-university life to their new academic community, and this transition stage is key to their future academic development and success. However, it can be far from smooth, with many students encountering problems along the way. Research suggests that this could be due to a number of factors, including a lack of knowledge and understanding about the university context and environment, and lack of preparation for what is involved in university-level study (Briggs et al., 2012; Scanlon et al., 2007; Wingate, 2007; Harvey et al., 2006). The presentation will examine issues relating to the transition and acculturation of international undergraduate students as they embark on their journey into UK Higher Education.

A framework developed to facilitate this transition will be presented, along with examples materials used with students, including interactive online Padlets, online student confidence surveys and personal development plans. The framework itself is based on Wingate’s (2007) ‘Framework for Transition: Learning to Learn in HE’. Both the framework and materials were developed from the findings of tracking research undertaken at a University of Leeds undergraduate student cohort. Feedback from both the student cohort and teaching staff, together with the limitations, will be presented.

The framework and its individual components could be further developed and adapted for wider application including:

- Adapting the content for application across discipline-specific contexts
- Using confidence surveys across modules/programmes
- Developing the content of the materials for use with both home and international students.

References


From IFY to FY with home students: challenges and strategies – an EAP tutor’s experience

The role of the IFY/EAP practitioner is changing in the current HE sector, blurring the traditional lines between language and skills development for native / non-native English speakers. At the University of Sussex, for example, a core FY module ‘Academic Development’ has been designed for a cohort of over 700 ‘Home’ students; the module is delivered by Teaching Fellows who specialise in working with non-native speakers, given that they are largely from an EAP/ELT/IFY background. This diversification in the IFY/EAP role suggests that the teaching culture itself may be changing (Munn, 2017). Due to this, questions may arise for the practitioner in terms of their teacher identity, the teaching methodology they apply, and their role within the wider HE context (Ashwin, 2015; Kreber, 2010).

The transition from IFY to FY teaching may present a number of teaching challenges (Kavanagh, 2017), including student attendance issues, lack of engagement, and extensive pastoral support. However, despite the apparent differences in teaching context, the needs of the Home FY student can in fact be similar to those of the IFY student, particularly in terms of training for academic writing (Jones, 2017, p.935). In addition, the principles which are applicable in course design for EAP courses, such as liaising with subject specialists (Basturkmen, 2010), can also be applied to the FY ‘Home’ student context. This means that the IFY/EAP practitioner has a broad range of skills which can be transferred to FY modules, including the English language specialism, which can be evidenced through the experiences of the University of Sussex Teaching Fellows.

References


Highlighting the factors that can make Foundation writers English appear unacademic

Introduction – IELTS writing chestnuts on-screen: A selection of clichés sure to get eyes rolling (especially if you’ve ever been an IELTS examiner!).

The IELTS exam – A discussion of how it is and isn’t academic due to the limitations of the nature of the exam.

Systemic functional linguistics – brief introduction to what it is, referencing Michael Halliday.

Genre/register analysis – more detail on what this is and why it is a useful and different approach to analyse choices made rather than focusing on the mistakes themselves.

Genre requirements of academic writing – brief outline of academic writing genre referring especially to Hyland.

Outline of research and findings – an outline of the findings of research conducted on analysing essays written by Foundation students, with specific examples – highlighting what made it appear unacademic. The conclusion drawn from this was that, aside from grammar/lexical mistakes, it was largely down to lexical density, because students were not producing nominalised noun phrases. Examples will be provided to illustrate.

How to address this issue – an outline of how students were guided to rewrite their essays with more lexical density – with examples on screen.

The university food transition: what tools can we provide?

Food can play a significant role in the acculturation of international students, but is its importance sometimes overlooked by international foundation programme staff and students alike? Can we do more to support our students’ transition into eating, as well as food-shopping and cooking, at University? Experience suggests that these questions are especially relevant to IFP students, and research suggests that the answer to both of them is ‘yes’ (see Brown, 2009 and Hartwell et al 2011). With funding from UKCISA, the International Student Food Project was designed to explore this ‘food transition’ in more depth and to develop interventions that might enhance the experience of international students when they first arrive on their programmes in the UK.

This presentation will describe the aims and activities of the one-year project, which has sought to obtain feedback on the food-related experiences, issues and needs of students at the University of Reading and to produce a bank of resources for use by new students. We will report on the outcomes so far, including the findings of our questionnaire and our focus groups and on what we have learned from our ‘food chat’ sessions and competitions.

Attendees should expect a menu of food images and metaphors as we serve up our challenges and successes. We will also invite attendees to join us ‘at the table’ and give feedback on our ideas for future developments of this work in progress.

References


’Unity in diversity’ – introducing a broad range of students to the requirements of university writing

I will present on the criteria upon which the two research and writing modules at 3,000 and 4,000 level were reformulated for their launch in September 2015, followed by an assessment of the effects of these changes on student performance.

The origin of these modules lies within the US liberal arts tradition, but in response to student feedback, Richmond focuses solely on academic tools required for success at university. The experience outlined here is likely to be of use to those in the UK system who are required to formulate a ‘learning academic writing’ module to facilitate the transition of all kinds of students from school to university.

To benchmark these modules we examined the explicit requirements of both our UK and US accrediting bodies, plus the SEEC level descriptors for levels 3,000 and 4,000.

We undertook a review of the research in the field, with particular focus on the work of Wingate and Hardy and Clughen, and looked at practice elsewhere at other liberal arts universities and at universities in the UK.

Richmond faculty was interviewed for their contribution to the debate and a survey was distributed to Richmond final-year students for their assessment of the research and writing modules they had taken.

The modules were revised by specialists in academic literacies and were launched in September 2015.

Refinement of the modules is on-going, informed by regular dialogue among the teaching faculty and feedback and data from the students. Yearly reviews are conducted on the effects of the modules.

Problem-based learning: solving the problem of preparing high-level students for undergraduate study

This presentation outlines how a problem-based learning (PBL) approach has been used on an EAP unit to address the problem of how to engage foundation students with a high level of English. By giving students complex, real-world problems to solve, they are provided with a challenging, engaging context in which to develop a range of academic literacy skills through conducting research, seminars, presentations and writing reports. Moreover, as PBL places the teacher in the role of ‘guide by the side’ or ‘meddler in the middle’ (McWilliam, 2009) rather than ‘sage on the stage’, students develop other essential skills required for undergraduate study, most obviously problem-solving. Other key skills are: working collaboratively with peers as part of a team, studying independently of the tutor, critically evaluating their own work as well as the work of others, and reflecting on progress.

This presentation also addresses the issue of how to provide students with suitable problems. Based on an approach used by Wood and Head (2004), students work in teams to create problems for each other that are discipline-specific and meet the requirement of a ‘good’ problem. This is itself a problem requiring students to research their peers’ proposed undergraduate disciplines, as well as the requirements of a ‘good’ problem.

The presentation will conclude with a discussion of the students’ and course tutors’ evaluation of problem-based learning, and the extent to which this approach helps students develop the skills needed to transition to undergraduate study.

References


STEM focused IFY study skills: an evaluation of changes implemented at the University of Leeds (2017–18)

The presentation will be divided into six sections, each with questions that have arisen from my research and findings from implementation, which I have tried to answer – input from the audience is welcome.

1. Context and Transition: overview of University of Leeds IFY programme and new strands (student cohort demographics, additional modules and progression departments).

2. Stakeholder Expectations: Students’ Progression Departments; other module tutors. Questions: What do students and departments really need? Do they know what they need? Can we provide it? Can we please everyone?

3. Content Changes: transition to STEM focus (what, why and how); UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Citizen Project. Questions: How do we engage and prepare students for the transition into a range of undergraduate STEM departments?

4. Delivery Changes: Conferences, Workshops, Debates, Lectures, Listening tests, Campus Treasure Hunt, Padlets, Socrative, combined class groups, group work and peer assessment. Questions: How much control should the course lead, the tutors or the students have regarding input? How do we guarantee students (all of them) are adequately and appropriately challenged? How high do we set the bar? Are we teaching language or content?

5. Assessment Changes (providing evidence of being ready for the transition): Annotated Bibliography; Assessed Discussion; Report; Abstract; Individual Presentation; Reflection; and Marking Criteria. Questions: What should assessment do? to what extent should it/or can it replicate tasks/skills required at UG level?

6. Transition to International University policy and student experience. Questions: What does it mean to be an international student to IFY students? How are university internationalisation policies implemented? What is the actual experience of international students?

Can we provide generic skills and tasks which are transferable to a range of STEM academic disciplines?
Mastering academic writing – the key to a successful transition

Making the transition from writing school assignments to developing competence and confidence in completing a range of university assignments is a considerable challenge. In fact, adapting to academic culture may be more of an obstacle than social acculturation, and is likely to be perceived as more important to many international students. Research suggests that this is not confined to international students, as many native speakers ‘experienced a range of problems in “bridging the gap” between A level and degree’ (Ballinger).

Given that the medium for much assessment is written (Lea, 1999), the ability to write well is fundamental to success at university. If students are unable to articulate their knowledge in writing, they will not be classified as ‘successful’, and this is a major cause of stress. A foundation programme which focuses heavily on instruction in writing, providing a thorough grounding in syntax can make a considerable difference to the student experience. The same applies to the acquisition of vocabulary, as students, both native and non-native speakers, have been shown to lack academic vocabulary (McKeown & Beck, 2004; Stahl, 2005).

A small study in ELT at the University of St Andrews suggests that international students preparing to enter their first year become increasingly less anxious about the transition as they gain confidence in their ability to write through multiple drafts of assessments with detailed written and oral feedback.

Under the formative sun – moving towards authentic assessments using response e-portfolio

This session aims to illustrate the importance of authentic assessment and its key element, formative assessment, as they relate to the theme of the InForm Conference “Transition into University: Providing the Tools for Success”.

Firstly, the presentation briefly introduces these two terms and why it is thought they are essential in students’ transition into university. Then, it moves onto illustrating the development of ‘Response E-portfolio’ (RE-p) at the University of Liverpool (UoL), an innovative new approach to authentic, formative assessment, in which students react dynamically to teaching material and remix in-class stimuli into output (in the form of a wide-ranging electronic portfolio). This allows for greater creativity and reflection on the part of the students, but also requires a great deal of academic rigour in the selection of relevant sub-skills that student need to practise / master in order to be ‘university-ready’, alongside authentic and appropriate portfolio tasks that allow these skills to be developed.

The second part shifts its attention to formative assessment and examples of tasks from RE-p. This section is devoted to practically illustrating how this approach could be utilised with students intending to study different university courses in disciplines as varied as Music, TESOL and Accounting.

Finally, the presentation concludes with the upcoming developments in terms of further integration of skills and greater use of technology, as well as anticipated issues.

References

The answer is 4: questions of liminality and transition on Foundation Programmes in the UK

The first part of our presentation will look at the notion of liminality (Van Gennep in Turner, 1967) and ask whether student on a Foundation Programme could be said to be in a liminal space, “a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state” (Turner, 1967). We will explore whether or not placing students on a 4-year integrated programme with a year 0 as compared to a stand-alone Foundation year does anything to mitigate against the possible feelings of liminality that might be experienced by Foundation students. A cross-institutional analysis of Foundation Programmes structures as well as focus groups will be employed. Traditional liminal phases are marked by rites of passage and we will investigate whether opening and closing ceremonies are an important aspect of a Foundation programme.

The second part of the presentation will present the organisation of Oxford Brookes’ foundation courses and the original rationale for the inclusion of an alternative compulsory Level 4 module in all of these. This will be followed by a discussion of how this rationale has changed in the light of cultural shifts in the principles and practices in HE (Barnett, 2011, 2013 and 2016; and Ball, 2015), before moving on to a comparative analysis of foundation student performance on a small sample of Level 3 and Level 4 modules, and their performance in comparison with the undergraduate students taking the same level 4 modules. In the conclusion, the presenters will argue that liminality is now an emerging aspect of undergraduate education and that this development is set to impact on foundation courses in various ways.

References


Effectively developing IFP students’ library skills

Library Skills are a key skill for students to develop while at university. However, many students come to us unaware of the need to do research, evaluate sources, cite or reference at the end of their essays. In 2017–18, we wanted to get IFP students and subject librarians together, alongside IFP teaching staff, to explore the most effective ways of helping students acquire these essential skills, and moving away from Google/Baidu as a way of finding information for their academic writing. The subject librarian for Economics (Sarah Brain) and I trialled two library skills sessions with our Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Law pathway students. Students learned how to locate their subject library and identify their subject librarian, as well as find the class mark of textbooks from their course reading lists. Students also learned how to find journals and articles using Library Search, and apply appropriate filters to help narrow down the results. In the second session, students compared books with the journals that Sarah had brought in to help them make the connection between the physical journal and the need to find them on a database. By encouraging questions and feedback throughout the sessions, we were able to identify problematic areas and areas of interest. We are now working on making the sessions for next year even more effective by flipping the input for the very basic information by using edpuzzle.com. This will maximise the face-to-face time students have with their subject librarian.

Backwards planning in practice: how a small UK HEI went about it

There is a great deal written about using backwards planning for the design of language curricula (see, for example, McTighe and Thomas, 2003; Wiggins and McTighe, 2006; and Richards, 2013), with various models provided for approaching it, but how can it actually be done? University College Birmingham, a small specialist UK HEI, has been applying this approach to the design of the EAP modules on its International Foundation Diploma for the past seven years and this paper will outline the steps that staff have used in an attempt to make the English modules engaging and relevant for students at the University. Drawing on the work of Richards (2013) and Wiggins and McTighe (2006), the discussion will consider the three key stages of identifying the desired results, deciding on appropriate sources of data and developing an action plan.

Each of these stages will be discussed from the point of view of the English teaching team, with an explanation of how the team went about the backwards planning process so as to ensure that the English and study skills modules provided the students with the tools they need to succeed on their BA and FdA programmes.
Foundation Programmes as socialisation structures: understanding the first year experiences of post-EAP Foundation students

Background
EAP courses: the what, why and how
Our Foundation programmes: aims & context

The Research
Research aim: to investigate the missing link – post-EAP Foundation students’ experiences.
RQs:
• How do students fare in their first year?
• What is the impact of their EAP education in their transition?
• What this means for EAP & Foundation Programmes?
Methodology: face-to-face semi-structured interviews (students, lecturers & EAP tutors).
Theoretical framework: socialisation theories (transitioning into a new environment); understanding EAP from a socialisation perspective.

The Findings
Positive impacts:
• Academic: skills, knowledge, linguistic competence, academic expectations
• Non-academic: relationships, familiarity with context

Negative impacts:
• Academic: specific linguistic socialisation, workload, task types
• Non-academic: level of autonomy & agency

Other findings: spaces aided integration especially e-spaces & online resources.

Conclusion
Foundation Programme are part of institutional socialisation structures to support student transition; however, more departmental collaboration is necessary for more effective preparation.
Using Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) to enhance students’ academic writing

**Objectives**
- To briefly introduce Legitimation Code Theory
- To explore the Semantic dimension
- To discuss practical activities in which LCT and SD can be included in the IFY writing classroom.
- To explore IFY students perception on LCT

This practical session starts with a brief introduction to LCT. A practical approach will be taken, thus participants will be asked to look at 3 authentic samples of students’ writing and discuss what makes the samples academic. This practical reflection will be followed by a brief introduction to the semantics dimension. Emphasis is given to semantic gravity and semantic density, as well as the concept of semantic waves.

The activities used with IFY students, based on Ingold and O’Sullivan (2017) and Brooke’s (2017) approach to including LCT in the classroom, will then be explored. This presentation will conclude with a brief summary on qualitative data collected from students discussing their experience with LCT.

Developing ‘soft’, transferable skills to achieve ‘hard’, targets through cultural and community engagement

Some might assume that there is limited value neither in acquiring ‘softer’, more personal skills/attributes nor in attending a non-accredited academic English (AE) module to prepare for university study. This session will present and evaluate a newly-piloted (2017) AE module from INTO, University of Exeter (UoE), which directly confronts these two assumptions.

The module, Engagement in Community and Language Skills (ECLS), prepares international students at INTO, the University of Exeter (UoE), for transition to pathway / degree programmes at UoE. Notably, it is a non-accredited module, although it is informally assessed.

This session will report on some of the activities and projects involved, e.g. a project on an artefact from the local museum or weekly class visits to historical sites or charity shops.

It will also outline some of the identifiable benefits of this module for students’ personal/linguistic/academic development and for teachers.

We argue that students can benefit enormously by having ‘softer’ as well as measurable ‘hard’ skills, e.g. presentation skills, framed in a less-threatening and engaging learning environment. By reducing performance and language anxiety, transferable skills can be developed to increase students’ confidence to undertake some of the more traditional tasks faced with university study.

Such benefits for students include: opportunities to interact with native English speakers in authentic communicative situations; improving culturally-appropriate communication; developing cultural awareness, both of British culture and their own culture; and reflective skills.

It has been significant that teachers on subsequent pathway programmes have commented that students from this module demonstrate both confidence and communicative competence.
‘DISCERN’: the discerning student

Although the term ‘critical thinking’ is commonly used by academic tutors and curricula, its precise meaning can be vague and little understood by learners. This issue is compounded in the case of international students, many of whom are second language learners with limited linguistic resources at their disposal.

In this context, Ellerton (2014) calls for a “language of thinking”, specifying the cognitive skills involved in critical thinking such as evaluation, inference and categorisation. Ellerton asserts that students who can develop an understanding of these terms can then learn to think critically in much the same way as they would master a physical process such as playing a musical instrument, whereby different elements of the activity can be honed and practised.

In tandem with Ellerton’s insight, our practical experience of foundation teaching has led us to consider how we might foster a more discerning approach in learners who are taking their initial steps in tertiary level study. Foremost in our considerations is how students might perceive ‘quality’ in terms of effective argumentation, communication and language use in an academic context.

We thus identified seven cognitive skills which formed the acronym ‘DISCERN’: Differentiating, Interpreting, selecting Strategies, being Critical, Evaluating, Reflecting and Noticing. Our aim was to teach students these terms and to integrate them into lesson planning, study materials and classroom discourse in a consistent way.

This session will share our action research, exploring the extent to which both learners and tutors found the ‘DISCERN’ skills meaningful in fostering a critical approach.

References

Salmah Yakoob
Coventry University

Providing tools to reference accurately: observations of citation practices of IFP students

The poster presents observations of the citation practices from a corpus of 45 IFP student essays. Using discourse analysis, the findings present specific ways referencing is constructed by novices. This can provide as a pedagogical tool for teaching Academic Writing to Foundation students, especially curriculum and assessment planning.

Emdad Aziz
INTO University of Exeter

Peer review: a tool for success in transition to university

The poster will present the importance of a peer review process through software called MyReviewers where students review each other. The peer review process has got the potential to improve analytical skills of the students which might support their transition to University.

Richard Cotterill
University of York

The poster provides an analysis of how Hofstede’s power-distance model could be applied to the teaching of Chinese students in UK universities. It offers some insights into how Chinese students’ expectations of their relationships with teachers is strongly influenced by their culture.

Nadia Sucha
University of York

How has English language teaching in China transformed over the previous 15 years, and how might it change in the future? This research, based on students’ questionnaire responses and interviews with Chinese teachers, analyses prior English language learning experienced by Chinese foundation students now studying at The University of York.
THIS IS A CALL FOR PAPERS FOR ISSUE 18 OF INFORM

The submission of papers is now invited for the eighteenth edition of InForm from members of the academic community associated with international foundation programmes. Issue 18 will be published in December 2018.

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 30 September 2018.

For more information and a full writer’s guide please visit www.reading.ac.uk/inform

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If you wish to discuss an idea for an article, please email us on inform@reading.ac.uk
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