

Issue 2 | October 2008

InForm

A journal for international foundation programme professionals

**Preparing for assessment in
foundation programmes**

**Recovering the international
advantage**

Academia and identity

**Developing academic skills through
blended learning tasks**

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From the Editorial Board ...

We are very happy to report that the first issue of *InForm* was well received by the IFP community. Since the publication of the first issue, we have been sent a number of very positive comments. The issues raised appear to resonate, as hoped, with IFP colleagues from a range of different institutions and curriculum areas. As a result, the journal will now be published biannually in October and April.

Changes have also been made to the *InForm* website including a new URL: www.inform.reading.ac.uk. Back issues will now be available in PDF form through the site. A facility also exists through the *Get InFormed* page to join or amend your details on the *InForm* mailing list and to send any comments to the editorial board.

With the ongoing interest of objectivity and transparency in mind, we are also pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Graham Van Wyk (Oxford Brookes University) who has joined us on the *InForm* Editorial Board at the University of Reading.

The content of this second issue echoes the diversity of academic provision in the IFP sector along with the varied pedagogic and cultural challenges which characterise this sector of Higher Education. Topics which are discussed in these pages, include internationally focused approaches to teaching and learning; assessment in the IFP context; blended learning and the challenges presented by online research.

In this current edition we have been able to include, for the first time, a readers' letters page. In this way it is hoped that the journal can act as an interactive forum, allowing readers to respond to featured articles. We welcome any comments that you may have in response to articles in this and subsequent editions of *InForm*.

As the readership of *InForm* increases, it is hoped that more and more practitioners from across the IFP curriculum will feel inspired to write about their experiences and research. If you are interested in writing for us then take a look at our Writers' Guide on the new website or feel free to get in touch by email, to discuss any ideas that you might have: Inform@reading.ac.uk.

Anthony Manning

Chair of the *InForm* Editorial Board



'Dear InForm'

This new section provides a forum for readers to comment on the articles which were published in the previous edition of InForm. If you would like to respond to anything you have read in this edition please write to: inform@reading.ac.uk

'Dear InForm,'

I was very interested to read the article written by Professor Macdonald in the first edition of InForm. The article clearly outlines the limitations of the traditional didactic approach and demonstrates how the FLAP scheme increases motivation as well as the development of appropriate self-reliant study skills.

To what extent could this flexible approach be applied to an intensive one-year English language foundation programme?

The development of reading, speaking and listening skills are processes that, to a great extent, are encouraged by interaction with peers as well as by private study. A purely self-paced or flexible approach to developing these key skills would thus perhaps deprive students of the chance of developing the ability to discuss, negotiate or co-operate in the target language.

However, academic writing is an intensely personal process during which students face many challenges: researching and organizing material, improving accuracy and developing an effective and persuasive personal writing style. It is thus unrealistic to expect students to improve in a uniform manner. Writing may be one area in which the relative privacy of a flexible learning package could encourage learners to take more responsibility for their own progress. It could also minimize the feelings of frustration and embarrassment felt by many students in writing classes as they struggle to make progress at the same rate as their peers.

Andrew Hemingway
International Programmes
Hertford College, Oxford

Response from Professor Averil Macdonald:

The great value of self paced learning packages is precisely that the mechanistic elements of factual knowledge and skills acquisition are devolved to the students, reducing their reliance on lecturers and developing their sense of responsibility. This then frees up class time for exactly those elements of the course that benefit from creative lecturer input, and that can never be obtained from print or on-line materials, namely spontaneous conversation and debate. I can see considerable scope for designing an intensive language course in this vein.

'Dear InForm,'

I read John Lake's article in the April issue of InForm with interest. However, I feel that by suggesting the sacrificing of a 'certain degree of reputation for academic rigour' he is advocating a dumbing down policy which may undermine academic standards and impinge on student's future performance.

Having taught numerous international students who are working towards international foundation programme courses, I have always sought to show how unacceptable plagiarism is because to do anything less is to lower the standard.

Speaking broadly, in the West it is a given that we do not simply quote verbatim. Rather we encourage critical analysis and independent thought. To start relaxing the rules for plagiarism is to start to undermine the very rationale by which we teach and learn. Furthermore, we should question whether not being able to conform to the stringent rules against plagiarism will lead students into difficulties after their studies when they must show their own opinions or source those taken from others in their professional lives.

Surely the way forward is to show how high the standards are at a university. We should demonstrate that we are not willing to cut corners or accept poor quality work. When marketing foundation courses we ought to make the most of the fact that we are not willing to sacrifice academic standards.

Chloe Courtenay
EFL Programme Leader
Thames Valley University

Response from John Lake:

I agree that the best course of action is for teachers to encourage and facilitate avoidance of plagiarism in all its forms, and that there is a danger of 'dumbing down' if the rules are relaxed. My comments about modification of standards were meant less as a desirable strategy and more as a prediction of what, I think, will happen inevitably. It may seem a gloomy forecast, but the combination of technology and market forces will drive us in a particular direction as they have historically always done, and perspectives on what constitutes academic rigour will adapt accordingly. This is a long-term - and admittedly, for some, a fatalistic - view: that our view of dumbing down for tomorrow is little different from previous generations' view of the dumbing down that gave us today.

Preparing for assessment in foundation programmes

About the author



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'It is not enough simply to learn the required subject content; competence in communication, study skills and literacy must also be achieved.'

The ability to handle assessment is integral to success in higher education and therefore needs to be central to any foundation programme. The results of a survey of assessment tasks undertaken by students in higher education at one university are presented. Considerable differences in the type and range of assessment tasks used across levels and disciplines were found. This variety uncovered contrasts with the relatively narrow range of tasks used in most text-books. It is argued that foundation programmes must broaden their horizons and more use be made of subject-specific material when preparing students for assessment.

Introduction

The purpose of foundation programmes is to prepare students to embark on courses in higher education at undergraduate or post-graduate level. In order to succeed in higher education, it is not enough simply to learn the required subject content; competence in communication, study skills and literacy must also be achieved. As these competences are partly developed and evidenced through the assessment process, the task of helping students develop strategies for handling assessment is central to the duties of any professional teaching on such programmes.

Assessment related skills are particularly important nowadays where demands are made for greater variety and for more effective use of feedback and formative assessment. This allows learning to become emancipatory, developmental and lifelong (Boud, 2000; Yorke, 2003). Biggs (2003) calls for constructive alignment, where the student is able to create meaning when teaching methods and assessment tasks line up with learning activities and outcomes.

If students are to be better prepared for this process, foundation programme professionals must first fully understand the nature of assessment tasks being prepared for. The research described here compares advice on best practice in assessment with analysis of what the learner actually experiences. The main research question is: What kind of assessment takes place across different levels in different subjects in higher education? It is argued that answers to this question would lead to a better understanding of the task facing the student and therefore better support and preparation

Methodology

To find out details of assessment across our institution, we sampled our online database of course specifications, known to us as Definitive Module Documents (DMDs). Details of assessment are given in the DMDs and useful information on the kinds of tasks used came from approximately one third of the database (2,367 modules). Using the complementary approaches to assessment practices discussed in, for example, Rowntree (1987); Habeshaw, Gibbs & Habeshaw (1993); Biggs (2003) a broad typology of features of assessment tasks used at different levels and in different disciplines was developed. Six key areas were identified:

Table 1 Typology of assessments tasks

Tasks [*Multiple choice; Open book; IT based; Interactive; Group element; Role play*]

Grouped together here are any tasks other than essay or exam that the learner may face in the course of an assessment exercise.

Medium [*Oral; Numeric; Diagram/Pictorial*]

These three features define assessment tasks that rely on means other than the written word.

Who assesses? [*Self assess; Peer assess; Self set element*]

All three descriptors highlight the learner's involvement in the assessment process.

Cognitive [*Analytic; Evaluative; Skills focus; Primary research; Theory focus*]

Used to categorise tasks that place an emphasis on certain intellectual processes.

Time-span [*Reflective; Process/Periodic; Portfolio*]

Lists assessment tasks that take place over an extended period of time and demand sustained involvement from the learner, thereby focusing on development.

Work-related [*Practice focus; Case study*]

The final category describes activities that focus on the future and the work-place.

'It would seem that institutions need to look more closely at how assessment works across the range of levels and subjects to ensure that students are better equipped for the learning society.'

Results

The results provided an overview of the assessment tasks undertaken by students at all levels in all subjects at our institution. See Gillett & Hammond (in press) for more details. The data clearly showed that assessment features varied substantially across levels and subjects. Students in year one, for example, were doing very different assessment tasks from students in year 3 across most disciplines. There was a particularly marked difference between Masters level and undergraduate level of study. For instance, oral assessment appeared to decrease from level 1 to level 3 and then increase at Masters level. Group work and self and peer assessment were more common at Masters level. As expected, focus on practical skills and IT based assessment decreased from level 1 to Masters.

It was also clear from the research that different disciplines made very different use of the range of assessment tasks uncovered. This needs to be borne in mind when designing preparatory programmes. For example, Health and Human Science and Art and Design made more use of reflective assessments than average. Engineering included more IT based assessment and used multiple-choice testing more. They also made use of oral assessment less.

Looking at the rank ordering of approximately half of the features that the research identified, it is clear that they appear to be under-represented in traditional study skills and EAP support material. We wonder to what extent they are covered in foundation programmes and would be interested to hear the views and learn from the experience of the InForm readership.

- Practice focus
- Process/Periodic
- Group element
- Reflective
- Diagram/Pictorial
- Portfolio
- Case study
- IT based
- Open book
- Self set element
- Interactive
- Peer assess

Conclusions

The research uncovered a wide range of differences in the type and range of assessment tasks used across levels and disciplines, far greater than the traditional diet of essay, report and oral presentation. Foundation programme professionals need to be fully aware of their students' future assessment needs in order to make them explicit for the learners, and better prepare them for success.

There is a large amount of excellent quality material available to students. However, there remains a

mismatch between text-book and real-life assessment. Published materials too often fall back on a staple diet of assessment tasks: how to write short texts, how to structure a talk or take part in a seminar, how to understand lectures and take notes. What is missing is any wider discussion of the range of academic activities and assessment tasks demanded of students in different subjects of study at different levels. This current orientation of most published EAP materials means that our students are at risk of developing a restricted view of the type of assessment tasks expected of them in higher education.

It would seem that institutions need to look more closely at how assessment works across the range of levels and subjects to ensure that students are better equipped for the learning society. As educators we should be focusing on a much wider range of tasks than those traditionally represented in teaching, study materials and course design. It is also important to address the variation in tasks this research demonstrates and the problems it throws up. Generic materials should broaden their base and more subject-specific material must be developed to accommodate the realities of University study.

Biggs, J. (2003). *Teaching for quality learning at university* (2nd ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Boud, D. (2000). Sustainable assessment: Rethinking assessment for the learning society. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 22, 151-167.

Gillett, A. J. & Hammond, A. C. (in press). Mapping the maze of assessment: An investigation into practice. *Active Learning in Higher Education*.

Habeshaw, S., Gibbs, G. & Habeshaw, T. (1993). *53 interesting ways to assess your students*. Bristol: Technical and Educational Services.

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Yorke, M. (2003). Formative assessment in higher education: moves towards theory and the enhancement of pedagogic practice. *Higher Education*, 45, 477-501

Recovering the international advantage – moving on from memorisation

About the author



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‘Memorisation can be an important tool on the path to learning, but relying on this alone can be problematic.’

Due to a mixture of anxiety and cultural differences, IFP students may rely on memorisation as their main tool of learning, which is not conducive to the requirements of the UK educational environment. By overly relying on memorisation, IFP students negate the ‘international advantage’ that makes overseas learning so enriching. I have outlined some reasons why international students over rely on memorisation and some techniques to counteract these tendencies.

Introduction

Teaching an IFP course can be a roller coaster ride – one moment encouraged by students’ critical capacity in discussion groups and in the next bewildered when those very same students submit essays filled with broken iterations of lecture or textbook material. Memorisation can be an important tool on the path to learning, but relying on this alone can be problematic in Sociology (as well as other social sciences or humanities disciplines) which values interpretation, synthesis, independent and critical thought. As international students, they enter the foundation programme already using nascent critical faculties to make sense of their new surroundings. Experiencing culture shock, they have what Mills (1959) called the ‘sociological imagination’, the capacity to question social structures, settings and customs that many take for granted. Unfortunately, the complications of culture shock in conjunction with ‘academic shock’ (Carroll and Ryan 2005), can cloud IFP students’ capacity to fully benefit from this advantage and lead them to rely solely on memorisation.

Below is a brief outline of some of the reasons why IFP students may rely on memorisation. Some modifications are included which I have incorporated into my own class structure in an attempt to ensure that IFP students recover the ‘international advantage’. The aim of this is to get the most out of their learning experience and build academic bridges that will facilitate a fruitful academic career.

Why rely on memorisation?

Valiente (2008) explains that international students rely on memorisation for a number of reasons:

- 1 lack of comprehension or confidence in language skills,
- 2 fear of failure, or desire to survive
- 3 relying on learning methods suited to teaching methods in their home country but not in the UK
- 4 disassociation with reference points used in a UK setting.

The focus here will remain on the latter two causes as they are more likely to require adjustment at the level of instructor and less likely to be addressed through existing institutional support centres.

In East and South Asia, students tend to use memorisation as a main building block in the learning process which ultimately ends in application and critical thinking, but not until thorough repetition and memorization is achieved (Valiente, 2008 p. 77). Students can become frustrated and confused in the UK educational setting that may call upon students to critique the very concepts and theories they are still in the midst of learning. Instructors may find that these students will remain silent during discussion sessions.

Students may also turn to memorising upon feeling so disassociated with the reference points and case studies being used in their textbooks and lectures that they struggle to make meaningful connections to the material (Valiente, 2008 p. 75). This is unsurprising as most textbooks (certainly most Sociology textbooks) appropriate for use at the foundation level are written with an intended British audience. As such, they require a basic level of understanding of British culture, society and its institutions which textbooks have taken for granted. Without this familiar-

ity, students end up studying context without connection to the concepts and theories that case studies are meant to illuminate.

Making learning relevant

The provision of multimodal learning opportunities is particularly important for students in introductory courses and improves subject retention and comprehension (Cherney, 2008). Multimodal techniques may also provide IFP students a better grasp of the British context and equip them with alternate learning schemes to use beyond their remit in the IFP. What follows are some new techniques that I have recently introduced in an attempt to create an environment of opportunity for a comprehensive learning experience where students can better connect with the course material and are less likely to be as heavily dependent upon memorisation. While the examples are specific to Sociology, the techniques may easily be extended to other disciplines.

‘Excursions can make students more confident in their surroundings and enhance their grasp of a discipline within a UK context first hand.’

Off-campus excursions: There are two trips planned for IFP Sociology. One is designed to help build tangible connections to subject material and the other an exercise in observation.

The University of Reading is a short train journey away from London, which allows for a walking tour to the East End’s Bethnal Green and Brick Lane. These areas inspired what are now classic British sociological studies that have recently been revisited and encompass issues of immigration, race and ethnicity, class and social reform (Young and Willmott, 1957; Dench, Gavron and Young, 2006). The tour allows for students to experience the complexity of sociological issues and connect directly with at least some of the places that are discussed in their texts to allow for a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. Excursions can make students more confident in their surroundings and enhance their grasp of a discipline within a UK context first hand.

The observational exercise enables students to attempt using some ethnographic methods used in sociological research by choosing social actions to observe and to later reflect on how sociologists use such observations to construct knowledge. This exercise helps to develop critical skills as well as an appreciation of the benefits and limitations of this particular form of sociological research. Application of a methodological technique can be a useful tool to assist in a more active style of learning for students of all disciplines.

Learning cohorts: A fortnightly group-work requirement involves student collaboration in groups of 3-4 to engage in concept definition. Students are required to work together to make their own definitions and provide examples of how the concepts are used. This allows students to extend the familiar activity of note taking into an exploration of the subject while benefiting from their fellow students input. The aim here is for students to become more confident in their own

interpretations and lessen any tendencies toward over-reliance on memorisation.

Individual presentations: As part of their formative assessment, students are required to do an independent presentation as the launch point for seminar discussions to which feedback is given via personal email. Students are asked to relate the discussion topic to their understanding of how it applies to their country of origin. In the past, students have relayed their understandings of family structures, inequality, racism and social mobility to their home country. The presentations are useful as points of comparison and as a means to bridge the same issues in the British context.

Video presentations: Using websites such as YouTube to present clips of classic studies and independent documentaries helps students to make material relevant by connecting it further to ‘real life’.

The use of the above techniques in conjunction with more traditional approaches is intended to help recover the ‘international advantage’ for IFP students and increase their confidence and competency within the British education environment in the process.

Carroll, J. and Ryan, J. (eds) (2005). *Teaching International Students: Improving Learning for All*. London: Routledge.

Cherney, I. (2008). The effects of active learning on students’ memories for course content. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 9(2), 152–171.

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Mills, C.W. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Valiente, C. (2008). Are students using the ‘wrong’ style of learning? *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 9(1), 73–91.

Young, M. and Willmott, P. (1957). *Family and Kinship in East London*. Basingstoke: Penguin.

Academia and identity

About the author



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'For some students, the IFP may represent their first experience of developing and employing research and referencing skills.'

International students often face an identity crisis when they embark on a foundation course. Firstly, their sense of self may be transformed in the context of their new environment. Secondly, they are faced with the challenge of altering their usual means of self-expression in the context of academic writing and thinking. This paper outlines how foundation programme students' struggle with new identities can influence and be influenced by learning academic writing genres. The paper then concludes with some suggestions for teachers to assist their students in these matters.

New environments, new identities

Learners who come to the UK to study on international foundation programmes (IFPs) are faced with many new situations in which identity may have to be renegotiated. For example, most obviously, there is the dominant switch from being 'native' to 'foreign' and international students, depending on their origins, are sometimes perceived and understood via a multitude of stereotypes. This may even include racist or sexist prejudice, with which the students may have to struggle. Their previously perceived class, gender, religion and race, or 'institutional' identities may be completely renegotiated, for these are now experienced differently through new interactions and within different contexts. Moreover, their identities as English language speakers may be put into crisis as they attempt to communicate with native speakers (perhaps for the first time) as well as master academic genres and techniques previously unfamiliar to them. This could include, for example, learning oral and written academic registers; avoiding plagiarism and mastering referencing; and perceiving learning materials as a springboard for critical thought, rather than fodder for memorisation and repetition.

Academic voice and identity

In addition to general social factors in the new community of practice influencing students' identity, they are also faced with linguistic issues. Firstly, the content of such a course can put the students' identity as an English speaker in crisis as they switch from informal to a more formalised, perhaps less familiar, register. More importantly however, they will be faced with learning an entirely new genre, which entails culturally embedded linguistic practices and beliefs that they will have to struggle with. Academic writing genres and conventions in students' native countries may be quite different, thus positioning them in different micro-social frameworks and forcing them to assume new ideological positions within these.

Although both Westerners and Easterners are often stereotyped according to broad generalisations, Rinnert (1995) offers some useful points of embarkation when she explains that the fundamental qualities and rhetoric of academic writing differ in the east and west: while Westerners often intend to persuade or convince the reader to the writer's position, Easterners tend to make observations on a certain topic so that the reader can think for him/herself. Thus, the academic habitus of students from the East must shift from being one of an observer to the more aggressive role of an arguer.

This may not seem like a major transformation, but as Vygotsky (in Shutz, 2004) asserts, the ways in which people think and organise their thoughts is not innate, but is rather a result of the impact of activities done within the social institutions of the culture in which an individual is communicating. Consequently, an IFP student's social, personal and cultural history will have influence over how s/he will think (Shutz, 2004). Furthermore, literacies can be said to be grounded in cultural traditions, which in turn influence ways of thinking. Thus, for international students, such as those on foundation programmes, to be successful, Ryan (2000) claims that the very foundations for thinking may need to change: whilst Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic societies tend to value the ability of students to quote from famous writings and sayings passed down through the centuries by leading scholars, Western academia is inclined to reward independent thinking and critical analysis of more current researchers. This may particularly cause identity crises for students from cultures in which it is not culturally encouraged to question authority (Sowden, 2005).

Identity and critical thinking

For some students, the IFP may represent their first experience of developing and employing research and referencing skills.

'International students who come to study on the UK foundation programmes are immediately faced with several situations in which their previous identities are put into question, due to the influences of new communities of practice, discourses and genres.'

This usually includes referencing and supporting their own voices, or subject positions with references from multiple theorists. Although students may attempt to make their writing polyvocal, substantial research has demonstrated that is often difficult for students to determine the difference between intertextuality and plagiarism. In other words, it can be very difficult for students to write from a point of view that expresses thoughts reflecting positions they identify with, whilst referencing these correctly. There have been several explanations offered for this.

Borg (2005), for example, blames a lack of attention on behalf of teachers, and states that any materials produced to help students may confuse them more. Liu (2005) suspects that deadline pressures and a lack of English proficiency, as students may not have enough lexical or grammatical resources for proper paraphrasing, could cause plagiarism, but believes that much more empirical work needs to be done before the key cause of this problem is uncovered. Ivanic (1998) points out that all students want to pass, and thus may include ideas that they believe the tutor will mark positively, although their writing does not necessarily represent thoughts they really identify with. The very mechanics of referencing sometimes also proves difficult, even for native students, and can lead to plagiarism. For IFP students, however, it can be especially daunting to determine the difference between copying, paraphrasing and quoting. Additionally, these students often have to wrestle with the grammar of expressing different voices, including learning reporting verbs, reported speech, and the passive aspect (Ivanic, 1998). In addition, Ivanic's research revealed that students were not always satisfied with the voice they used to represent themselves within papers, and felt that their truest sentiments were expressed mainly in conclusions.

Solutions

Given the challenges which face IFP students as they adapt to their new learning environment and its requirements, tutors on such pre-undergraduate programmes can do much to support and guide during this transitional phase. The suggestions below outline activities and practices which take into account developing identities:

- offer a generic writing formula such as: student's point>writer's support>student's analysis of the point, until the student feels more comfortable using the academic style in the UK
- encourage academic debate in the classroom to ensure several points of view are not only heard, but are shown to be acceptable
- approach reading from a critical perspective and ask students to identify the various viewpoints represented in any academic research
- be more aware of how our own perspectives and biases may dominate our teaching, and how these may belittle what students may already know and

discourage them from expressing their own points of view.

Conclusions

International students who come to study on UK IFPs are immediately faced with several situations in which their previous identities are put into question, due to the influences of new communities of practice, discourses and genres. It may not be easy for the student to forge new identities, and it may be especially difficult for them to separate their voice from the points of view of experts in their writing. To better facilitate this, teachers could employ some of the suggestions made in this report. As a result, students will have further support in managing the challenges presented by new means of expression as they embark upon undergraduate courses in the UK.

Borg, E. (2000). 'Citation Practices in Academic Writing' in P Thompson, *Patterns and Perspectives: Insights into EAP Writing Practice*, Reading: CALS University of Reading

Ivanic, R. (1998). *Writing and Identity: the discursive construction of identity in academic writing*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins

Liu, D. (2005). 'Plagiarism in ESOL students: is cultural conditioning truly the major culprit?' in *ELT Journal*, Volume 59/3 Oxford: Latimer Trend and Co.

Rinnert, C. (1995). *Written Communication in Culture and Communication*, Kitao, Miller, Carpenter and Rinnert, Tokyo: Yugamuchi Press

Ryan, J. (2000). 'A guide to teaching international students', Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

Shutz, R. *Vygotsky and Language Acquisition in English Made in Brazil*, www.sk.com.br/sk-vygot.html, downloaded December 5, 2004

Sowden, C. (2005). 'Plagiarism and the culture of multilingual students in higher education abroad' in *ELT Journal*, Volume 59/3 Oxford: Latimer Trend and Co.

Further Reading

Maybin, J. (2003). *Voices, intertextuality and induction into schooling*, in Goodman, S, Lillis, T, Maybin, J and Mercer, N, *Language, Literacy and Education: A Reader*, Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books

An excellent article about how students can discover their own academic voices

Olson, D. (2003). *Literate Mentalities: Literacy, consciousness of language and modes of thought*, in Language, Literacy and Education: A Reader, London: Trentham Books Ltd

A very good read on how independent thought processes develop

Developing academic skills through blended learning tasks

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'Blended learning is relevant to all subject areas and could be applied to other IFY modules to integrate the teaching of content with academic skills related to the subject area.'

Tutors may have limited class time to help international foundation year (IFY) students to improve their skills and acclimatise to a new culture of learning. Blending learning is a useful method to help students to improve their skills and meet the challenges of life at a British university. This paper describes a blended learning activity on a study skills module of the IFY programme at the University of Leeds, as an illustration of the way blended learning can assist IFY tutors in making optimum use of time and resources.

International Foundation Year (IFY) programmes can be very challenging initially because of the need for students to adapt to a new learning environment and culture of learning. If IFY students originate from countries where the culture of learning is very different, which is often the case; there may at first be a mismatch between the students' current study skills and attitude to learning and how s/he is expected to perform on the course. Tutors on IFY programmes are given limited teaching time to help students to develop appropriate academic study skills and to adapt to the demands of life at a British university. In this paper, we describe a blended learning activity which is designed to help students learn how to select reference materials more effectively as an illustration of the way blended learning can assist IFY tutors in making optimum use of time and resources.

On the IFY programme at the University of Leeds, all students take at least two subject modules, as well as a compulsory English & Study Skills module in both semesters. The principal aim of the English & Study Skills module, which is taught by staff at the Language Centre, is to equip students with the academic study skills needed for undergraduate study.

The module is delivered via a mixture of face-to-face classes for up to 8 hours per week and through guided self-study tasks, which require students to use resources in the virtual learning environment (VLE) and the library. This is a form of blended learning, which is defined by Armitage & O'Leary (2003, p. 6) as 'the blend of the use of technology alongside traditional face-to-face teaching'. Blended learning is relevant to all subject areas and could be applied to other IFY modules to integrate the teaching of content with academic skills related to the subject area.

Content-based instruction

The approach adopted on this module is 'content-based instruction' (CBI). This is defined by Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989, p. 2) as 'the integration of particular content with language-teaching aims'. A series of projects related to topics of current relevance, such as renewable energy or fair trade, comprise the content of the module. The relative emphasis given to content and language skills depends on the needs of the students, which makes CBI particularly appropriate for a module with such a varied student cohort with a range of proficiencies in English and study skills. End-of-course evaluations also suggest that Leeds IFY students are motivated to complete the assessed written and spoken tasks because of the relevance of the topics to everyday life. One of our students commented, 'The course has made me more aware of so many things that we take for granted such as water and human working conditions'. Another said 'energy was the most interesting topic. I am now more careful with energy'.

Academic study skills

Throughout the course tutors need to help students to develop a wide-range of academic study skills such as listening and note-taking or writing academic essays. However, this paper will concentrate on only one skill: selecting appropriate reference material. This is a key skill which students need to master for all their IFY modules.

At the start of the programme, the students may find it hard to select suitable material in preparation for a written or spoken task such as an oral presentation or piece of writing. A possible reason for this is that the students have been accustomed to a teacher-directed learning environment at school, where they may not have been expected to take responsibility for their own learning. At university level, students are expected to learn to study

with relatively little direction from their tutors, which may be in contrast to their previous learning experience. Pennycook (1997, p. 44) observes that ‘a notion of [learner] autonomy will be very different in different educational contexts’. Given the varied nature of our student cohort on the programme, it is not surprising to find students with differing degrees of learner autonomy at the start of the course.

Another reason why students may find it hard to select appropriate reference material is that they often lack a sufficiently broad vocabulary. Each week, on the English and Study Skills module, students acquire topic-specific vocabulary, which helps them in the selection of suitable reading material and provides the language necessary for improved fluency in writing. This vocabulary is recycled in the reading and listening material that students access in completing self-study tasks such as preparing written or spoken summaries about a topic.

Blended learning activity

Reference to **Figure 1** below indicates the support provided to students outside the classroom in the completion of self-study activities.

Stage 1: The students are introduced in class to the task, which, for example, is to produce an information sheet about a topic such as ‘fairtrade’ for a defined audience.

Stage 2: The students are directed to a project website, which is available through the VLE. It provides a restricted number of core references to resources in either the library or on the Web. It is designed to assist students in navigating through the potentially infinite quantity of resources related to a given topic and to encourage students to access multimedia materials so that they practise key skills such as note-taking and synthesising content from multiple sources. Students can seek assistance from tutors and share ideas via the discussion forum. Progressively, the students are given less

guidance about the resources they should access so that they learn to accept more responsibility for their learning.

Stage 3: When reviewing the ‘information sheets’ presented in class, the tutor helps the students to think about the reference material they have selected, in terms of its relevance and suitability for the task, and the ways the information has been incorporated into the student’s speech or writing. CBI is beneficial in this regard because of the wide variety of resources about a topic, not all of which are appropriate, and from which students must make a selection.

As a result of blending classroom activities with self-study tasks based on the course content in the Leeds module, students develop transferable academic study skills by the end of the course. They also improve their ability to communicate their ideas about a topic in an original way and develop a greater degree of learner autonomy. The challenge for the future will be to enhance the support provided to the students outside the classroom using the increasing number of technological tools in the VLE such as blogs, wikis, voice tools and at the same time to maintain high levels of face-to-face tutor support.

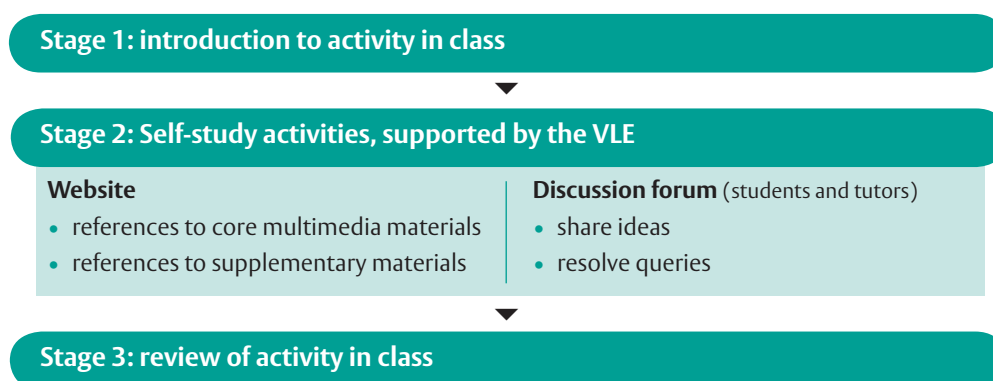
This approach to blended learning is also applicable to other areas of the IFY curriculum, where students may be involved in preparing individual or collaborative subject-specific tasks. These could be practical or written pieces of work. If tutors adopt the proposed approach, students can benefit from tutor support at all stages of the task through interaction face to face and within the VLE to help them to complete the task appropriately.

Armitage, S. & O’Leary, R. (2003). *e-learning Series No. 4: A guide for learning technologists*. Learning and Teaching Support Network

Brinton, D., Snow, M. & Wesche, M. (1989). *Content-based Second Language Instruction*. New York: Newbury House

Pennycook, A. (1994). *Cultural Alternatives and Autonomy*. In Benson, P. & Voller, P. (Eds.) *Autonomy & Independence in Language Learning*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman

Figure 1: A guide to the three stages of a project sub-topic



Laying down the law on the IFP – the art of how to keep it real

About the author



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'In my experience it is important for tutors to keep alive students' initial spark and enthusiasm for Law as this can quickly be lost if the work before them is allowed to appear too impenetrable.'

Society is a living organism and so is Law, constantly changing and mutating. As members of that society, and as teachers of a social science, we must try to keep up with changes and developments both with regard to the Law itself and the best ways to teach it. Law is exciting and dynamic when studied in the context of the real world. In this article I will describe how I try to inspire IFP students through references to current affairs and popular culture and by encouraging debate and discussion of personal opinions and experiences.

Introduction

Through my experience of teaching international students, as a tutor at the University of Reading and at an International 6th Form College, I have benefitted from working with students from different language backgrounds with diverse religious beliefs. These young individuals are experienced in various national laws, conventions and cultures. This article will explain how these rich resources can be harnessed in the IFP Law classroom.

Law and the IFP

Most IFP students have not studied any Law before commencing the course and often feel daunted by the volume of law reports and statutes on the library shelves. From the students' perspective, these thick text books, with no pictures and dense small print, may appear to be full of the incomprehensible words and phrases of judges and academics who assume that their readers share the same background of knowledge and understanding. News reports in the broadsheets can be difficult for some teenage native speakers to digest, let alone international students who, in some cases, are still taking English lessons to prepare for undergraduate studies.

In my experience it is important for tutors to keep alive students' initial spark and enthusiasm for Law as this can quickly be lost if the work before them is allowed to appear too impenetrable. There are many user-friendly ways of encouraging a thirst for enlightenment and a drive to actively participate in the learning process among these inspirational young people. I make it clear early on in the course, that any exposure to matters of a legal nature can be beneficial, even if it is through watching soap operas and TV dramas where there will often be a story-line regarding some entertaining domestic issue or misdemeanor. In fact, television series such as *Judge John Deed* are often quite meticulous and

instructive in matters of legal process and terminology. Other students can be motivated to maintain a quest for insight into the legal systems and criminal minds through the pages of authors such as John Grisham and PD James. As far as films are concerned, there are also many easily accessible blockbusters such as *The Firm* and *The Shawshank Redemption*. For tutors interested in how film can be used in the teaching of Law, Elkins (2004) makes some useful suggestions for how this can be achieved.

Very often, the students themselves begin to raise questions and seek solutions to problems inspired by what they have read, seen or experienced, and as a group, we try to work out how the law would and should deal with such diverse conundrums as the possible legalising of euthanasia, the detention of terrorists without charge, the ways to reduce criminal behaviour, and how the law is used to mould society's values and attitudes. One example case which I have used in class and which often arouses animated debate refers to Aisha Azmi, the Muslim primary school teacher in Dewsbury who refused to remove her veil in class.

Margaret Thatcher famously said, 'There is no such thing as Society' – yet somehow the law does need to reflect the collective needs of this thing called Society – of you and me.

Keeping Law real

It is uplifting and sometimes humbling to see a group of 15 to 20 young people from very different backgrounds, striving to express themselves in a passionate and yet proper manner, being aware of the feelings and sensitivities of their peers, allowing each to have their opinions listened to and respected. It is encouraging to see these opinions and strands of argument evolve and develop over the IFP year in the context of their study of the English Legal System, life's experiences and their learning from each other.

'... the Law teacher needs to strive to balance the encouragement of inspirational research and resolution with the solid learning of basic principles and memorising of case law.'

Acquiring the learning process and learning about each other is as much a part of the IFP course as learning the substantive content. Seeing how different students react in different ways can provoke probing thoughts. Many educational cultures do not foster a questioning and challenging approach in the classroom; in some cases, the teacher and the text is always right. With Law, perhaps more than with almost any other subject, there is rarely a right or wrong answer – this is why cases go to court – for the judge to decide.

'You be the Judge!' is the challenge which the students are set. However, in the same way that a concert pianist needs to practise scales, in order to play a complex piece with perfection and passion, so a Law student needs to cover the sometimes tedious groundwork so that their opinions, problem analysis and proposed solutions are based on sound, established, impartial and objective principles rather than random raw emotion and bigotry. This is where the Law teacher needs to strive to balance the encouragement of inspirational research and resolution with the solid learning of basic principles and memorising of case law.

At a micro level, this can be done through some of the following methods:

Method	Purpose
Create flow charts, mind-mapping and mnemonics	to show and help remember the relationship between legal structures and processes
Hang-man, word-searches and crosswords	to practice legal vocabulary in context
Compile case card index files	for portable revision
Introduce competitive quizzes	to encourage teamwork and problem solving
Play Pictionary and charades	to memorise and contextualise cases
Put together a file of relevant news articles collected during the course	for group discussion purposes and illustration of key legal cases

I have even known some students to put legal principles to music and learn them by rote (I have the video evidence to prove it, your Honour!)

In line with the recommendation made by Woodbridge (2007, p.6), experiential learning through a visit to the law courts is also a useful way of introducing students to the law in action. However, planning is important as a litany of financial transactions may not have the desired motivating effect. Students who have come to expect *Murder Most Foul* and Tom Cruise, could be disappointed when the justice system does not oblige.

The learning of Law is largely about the use and interpretation of words, as the somewhat unsavoury case of *Cheeseman v DPP*, the sexist case of *DPP v Bull* and the infamous case of the prostitutes on the balcony, *Smith v Hughes*, demonstrate. With this in mind, in class students are encouraged to use dictionaries and compile their own vocabulary books. This usually requires monitoring as problems can also ensue from out of context interpretations. After a lecture on pensions, a student

was once left puzzled as to why it was so important to invest in European boarding houses. As far as key texts are concerned, extracts from publications such as Bradbury (2007) in the *Philip Allan 'A Level Law'* series at one end and *The Law Society Gazette* (2008) at the other are invaluable adjuncts to class notes. Repetition of words, phrases, principles and processes throughout the year consolidates issues already covered.

Conclusion

The point that I hope has been made in this article is that although the study of Law is complex, challenging and time consuming, the IFP tutor has many resources at their disposal, both within the diversity of the student body and from the wider world around us. This can greatly assist in the active encouragement and motivation of students. Through delivering the IFP Law course with approachability, patience and a fair degree of warmth and humour, the learning experience can be made less daunting and more achievable.

Bradbury, E. (2007). *AS/A Level Essential Word Dictionary*. London: Hodder Education

Elkins, J.R. (2004). *Vermont Law Review* [Internet] Available from: <http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/lpop/etext/vermont/elkins28.html> [Accessed 23 July 2008]

The Law Society. (2008). *The Law Society Gazette* [Internet] Available from: <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/> [Accessed 23 July 2008]

Woodbridge, T. (2008). Experiential learning within a foundation framework *InForm* (1), April 2007

Legal Cases:

Azmi v Kirkles Metropolitan Borough Council (2006). Times April 17th 2007

Cheeseman v DPP (1990). The Times 2, November 1990

DPP v Bull (1995). Q.B. 88; [1994] 3 WLR 1196; [1994] 4 All E.R. 411

Smith v Hughes (1960). 1 WLR 830; [1960] 2 All E.R. 859

Write-aloud protocols as a pedagogical tool

About the author



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'... using a write-aloud protocol is one very effective and direct method of getting the student unstuck and aware.'

Write-aloud protocols are perhaps a little known and undervalued method of bringing out the root causes of problems writers of English as a second language may be experiencing. They are ideally suited to dealing with the problems involved in academic writing in a range of academic fields, from planning or writing introductions to grammar and spelling. The students' problems may be quite entrenched and need something more than the usual approach of explanation and practice. This article shows the basics of how to perform a write aloud protocol with your students and argues for the benefits of the exercise.

Using write-aloud protocols on the IFP

Write-aloud protocols are useful ways in which to uncover hidden problems in a pre-undergraduate international student's approach to written work, whether it be in the form of an essay, a lab report or a longer dissertation. They are particularly applicable to academic writing in the varied contexts of international foundation programme modules where students are learning to communicate in new writing genres. Often students get stuck on a particular area in their writing, for example introductory sentences, integrating references, or with the overall organisation of their essays or reports. Whatever it is, using a write-aloud protocol is one very effective and direct method of getting the student unstuck and aware of what the problem is and therefore set on the road to resolving it. It functions very much in the same way as a mirror, holding up the problem areas for the student to see them clearly. One prerequisite of this process is that students are able to express themselves adequately in spoken English to communicate their problems, so this is a technique that would work best with students whose spoken English is intermediate level and above. I would also like to argue here that the method could be applied to other curriculum areas as well as essay or report writing.

What is a 'write-aloud protocol'?

Sometimes called 'compose-aloud protocols' or 'think-aloud protocols', write-aloud protocols have been used in a variety of studies of writing in English as a second language since Emig (1971) completed his landmark study *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (in Krapels 1990, p.38) where students gave Emig 'writing autobiographies' based on their talking aloud about their writing processes and answering follow up questions from the researcher on how they went about their compositions. It has been shown by a number of researchers (Hayes and Flower 1980, Matsuhashi 1981, Van Waes and Schellens 2003, in Jones 2007) that

the process of writing with pen and paper or at a screen involves numerous pauses and revisions in a number of different ways. The write-aloud protocol takes advantage of these pauses and reflections to find out from the writer what the cognitive processes behind them are. The protocol basically involves the writer 'thinking aloud' as he or she composes; that is to say the writer explains his or her thought processes to a second person in the room (the teacher or researcher), who sits near taking notes, or if that is not convenient or too inhibiting, speaks into an audio or video recording device.

Uses of the write-aloud protocol include the gathering of data on the writing process for research purposes, but for this article, we will consider it from the pedagogical point of view of a student who is having problems with some aspect of his or her writing. He or she is stuck in some way and the teacher has become aware of this and is not sure as to what to do next. This process of thinking aloud, as guided, when necessary, by questions from the interlocutor, raises the student's awareness of how he or she is going about the compositional process and thereby reveals the limitations or inconsistencies in the approach he or she is taking.

The technique is particularly effective with students who seem to need additional support in some way. The teacher may have tried every strategy he or she knows to help the student and the student still has not developed; awareness may not seem to be there in relation to how to write an introduction, how to structure the report, how to use a relative clause, how to spell correctly or punctuate appropriately. Finding the time to take the student aside for a short time for the purpose of a write-aloud protocol session may show great dividends.

Getting started

- Find a time and a location where you can be with your student undisturbed in a one on one situation; you will need about 30 minutes.

- Give the student a topic to look at, perhaps it is an essay he or she is working on and is stuck on in some way, or an exercise you have been doing in class.
- Ask the student to proceed with the writing task and to simultaneously tell you what they are thinking at various points during the writing process.
- If the student is silently ruminating for what seems to be rather a long time, the teacher can simply ask ‘What are you thinking?’ or ‘What seems to be the problem?’ The teacher notes down the response, keeping in mind the stage of the composition and the topic under consideration.
- The student then continues writing or thinking until this stage is passed and a new one entered or until enough data seems to have been gathered to deal with the particular area of writing under consideration.

‘The responses can be revealing and offer a unique insight into the hitherto hidden and very private processes of composition.’

The responses can be revealing and offer a unique insight into the hitherto hidden and very private processes of composition. Video, if available, will further reveal the exact correlation between the point of the pen on the paper and the thoughts of the student. Areas at which the student speeds up or slows down their writing can also be very telling; showing aspects of fluidity or resistance, confidence or doubt; these can be questioned and noted as necessary by the teacher.

Usually 15–20 minutes is enough to identify the patterns of a basic problem. The teacher then gives feedback to the student explaining what information and insights they have gathered. The next step might be for the student to acknowledge the comments of the teacher or negotiate further as to their implications and meanings. The student could then attempt the same passage of composition again applying the new insights or save them for future work. The process can be repeated as many times as necessary.

An example of my personal experience using write-aloud protocols

As an example, I have used the technique to good effect with a Russian student who was having problems with writing shorter pieces of academic writing. It was noted by his teachers that his answers were overly complex and off-topic. He was referred to me for private tuition and I thought a write-aloud protocol might be a good way to get to the root of the problem. I discovered through the session that although his language ability was adequate to write a reasonable response, he had trouble formulating introductions, directly answering the question and expressing his ideas. It was quickly revealed that he tended to digress easily from the main topic and attempt overly complicated sentences. The protocol allowed him to become aware of these problems and of how far his thought processes were digressing from the task, or how they were simply too complex for the range of language at his command. This awareness enabled him to modify his ideas to a level he was able to express and to answer the question in a more organised fashion. At the end of the interview process he had seen this with enough clarity not to want another session. Other teachers commented that his approach to writing had improved shortly after this.

Adapting the protocol to other situations

Obviously time and resources are limited for most of us and the protocol works best when these are sufficiently available to allow the teacher to take the student aside for a short time outside of regular classroom hours. The protocol is not something which I suggest be used on a day to day basis, but should perhaps be reserved for special situations relating to particular individuals, which require careful consideration and as outlined above, one-to-one attention. This said, however, there may be opportunities to adapt the protocol to a variety of contexts as the basic format is the same for any pedagogical situation.

It can easily be adapted to a reading context, or perhaps even a listening context, focusing on particular words or sentences the student has difficulty comprehending and raising awareness of listening or reading processes. For example, with reading, it could quickly reveal whether skimming or scanning techniques were being used. It could also be used by teachers on content specific modules, such as business, art history or even mathematics to find out what exactly is going through the student’s mind as he or she undertakes a task. As mentioned previously the protocols have been used very fruitfully to reveal the underlying cognitive processes in composition and there is obvious scope for further research in a variety of different contexts.

In conclusion, the write-aloud protocol is extremely easy to set up and use and I would recommend it to anyone interested in getting to the bottom of a student’s difficulties with composition, and perhaps in other contexts, whatever the genre might be. As Russo, Johnson and Stephens (1989, p.767) affirm, although verbal protocols may include an element of reactivity to prompts, ‘nothing can match the processing insights provided by a verbal protocol.’

- Emig, J.** (1971). The composing processes of twelfth graders. *Research Report No.13*. Urbana Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Hayes, J., & L. Flower** (1980). Identifying the organisation of writing process. In L. Gregg & E. Steinberg (Eds.), *Cognitive processes in writing* (3–30). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Jones, S.** (2007). Composing in the style of Mozart: An exploration of the ‘struggling boy writer’ comparing the composing processes and strategies of boys and girls. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 6 (1), 97–112
- Krapels, A.R.** An overview of second language writing process research., in B. Kroll (ed.), (1990) *Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Matsuhashi, A.** (1981). Pausing and planning: The tempo of written discourse production. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 15 (2), 113–34.
- Russo, J. Johnson, E& Stephens, D.** (1989). The validity of verbal protocols. *Memory and Cognition*, 17, 759–69.
- Van Waes, L. & Schellens, P.** (2003). Writing profiles. The effect of the writing mode on pausing and revision patterns of experienced writers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35, 829–853.

Web resources and the hazards for IFP students – can you help?

About the author



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‘Students were willing to spend hours searching digitally, rather than use print resources, even though they may simply be floundering, and failing to retrieve adequate information.’

This article presents a number of hazards which confront international foundation programme (IFP) students when they start to try and use web research. A number of questions are presented which InForm readers are then invited to respond to. An annotated list of further reading is also provided.

Introduction – reliable resources online

The use of online journal archives such as those available through the ‘Athens’ system represent a reliable resource for academic consultation. When properly used such electronic data carriers allow students to:

- reduce the time students spent on the background research (to browse through catalogues and to sample relevant sources of information);
- decrease time students spend on copying / rewriting/ reproducing parts of the information in the analytical part of their courseworks and dissertations.
- reach information sources distantly

Nevertheless, I would suggest that these high calibre resources are not usually known to or used by IFP Students at this stage in their academic careers. The alternative, which is the use of the internet or digital databases, often produces an excessive number of unnecessary results.

Understandably, when confronted with such a wealth of information, international students, like those on IFPs, can feel overwhelmed. Furthermore, students who spend hours sieving through all these results, rather than using printed resources, risk losing time and often fail to retrieve suitable information for their coursework. In addition, a predominant amount of resources available on websites are public domain materials. Much of the information on the Internet can be altered any time. Sadly students often fail to grasp that these resources are unreliable and feel displeased when definitions or facts taken from sites like Wikipedia are not accepted.

In order to retrieve relevant and reliable information from electronic sources the students are required to be overly specific in the use of search language (Kuhlthau and Tama, 2001). This is often out of the question with international students who are still developing language skills.

I believe that the remark written by Schwabach (1997) more than 10 years ago still stands:

‘Students were willing to spend hours searching digitally, rather than use print resources, even though they may simply be floundering, and failing to retrieve adequate information.’

Hazards to be aware of

Below, I have outlined what I believe, from my experience, to be the main hazards presented by reliance on electronic sources for IFP students at this point in their education:

- The logical structure and comprehension of what students are writing about seems to be suffering. In my experience, IFP students hardly do any extensive background research. Students often use a cut and paste approach from online resources which leads them to miss the point and use information out of context.
- Arguments and the supporting online examples, which students select, frequently do not match. Typically, students’ work shows a mix, but not a flow of argumentation, with little coherence and reasoning. Consequently, many students fail to write a successful conclusion as they have barely formed an opinion, when producing their piece.

- The possibility to use digital sources and to compile a “newish” (cut and paste) text can make students passive. IFP students are seldom able to make the most of traditional library resources. Students attach themselves to computers and are less keen to look up printed sources or go to other libraries.
- In coursework, students can struggle to present ideas simply and briefly without unneeded repetitions. This is perhaps due to a lack of thorough background reading.
- Overuse of online research can lead to a situation whereby students progress without developing an investigative, critical and analytical approach to deal with problems in their subject areas.

Whilst many of the problems associated with online resources may be apparent, the solutions for students who have grown up in the digital era are not so straightforward.

Forum for further discussion

There will no doubt be questions that will arise from this article, which are worthy of further discussion. You may even have had different experiences to those which I have described. Readers are encouraged to share their thoughts with their colleagues and the readership of *InForm* along the following lines:

- How can students be encouraged to move away from dependence on electronic sources?
- How can the negative aspects of electronic resources be overcome?
- Once these negative aspects have been addressed, should students be encouraged to move back to careful use of reliable electronic resources?

Kuhlthau, C. and Tama, S. (2001). Information search process of lawyers: a call for ‘just for me’ information. *Journal of Documentation*, 57, 25–43.

Schwabach, A. (1997). An analysis of first-year student Westlaw use: why vendor training isn’t enough. *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, 16, 7–54.

Further Reading

HE Academy Economics Network (2008). Finding Economics Resources on the Web [Internet] Available from: <http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/links/general.htm> [Accessed August 2008]

I like the workshops offered by the HE Academy Economics Network which offer practical tips on Internet, teaching and learning.

HealthLinks (2008). Navigating the Web: Using Search Tools and Evaluating Resources, University of Washington [Internet] Available from: <http://healthlinks.washington.edu/howto/navigating/> [Accessed August 2008]

This website has a good section on criteria for evaluating web-sites in terms of a site’s authority, accuracy, coverage, up-to-date data and objectivity.

Schrock, K. (2008). Successful Web Search Strategies. [Internet] Available from: <http://kathyschrock.net/slideshows/searching.pdf> [Accessed August 2008]

The presentation ‘Successful Web Search Strategies’ by Kathleen Schrock is very detailed. It is a good manual for web search usage. Of course not everything can be taken in the first instance, but you can come back to it again and again.

Turnitin (2008). The Turnitin Write Cycle [Internet] Available from: <http://turnitin.com/static/index.html> [Accessed August 2008]

Teachers can also make use of smart software packages such as Turnitin. Turnitin is able to instantly identify whether a student’s work contains any unacknowledged statements. Teachers should however avoid using such programmes in isolation as digital plagiarism detection is not perfectly reliable.

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