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Northumbria Conference 2010

Enhanced Induction to Postgraduate Learning for Geographically Diverse Students.

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Background:

- Northumbria University is ranked 12th in the UK for recruiting international students (UKCISA, 2009).
- 2007/8 (UKCISA, 2009) there were 95,090 (17,730 EU and 77,360 none EU students) full time students on postgraduate taught programmes.
- The top two non-EU countries students come from, are China (45,355 all levels) and India (25,905 all levels).
- Business and Administrative studies had the largest number of international students at 90,765 (all levels) out of 341,790 international students.

Background:

- The recruitment of Newcastle Business School postgraduate students is geographically diverse and mirrors UK recruitment.
- Such a diverse cohort presents particular challenges to both the students and NBS.
 - International students arriving in the UK find the learning environment challenging and often experience a loss of confidence (Carroll and Ryan, 2005) due to the different teaching approaches.
 - Issues apart from the obvious language problem include more student focused learning and the ability to demonstrate greater critical thinking. The students suffer what Warwick (2007;5) describes as a “form of cultural shock”.

Background:

- Carroll and Ryan (2005) would argue against the Deficit Model, where universities categorise problems based on difference between international students and the host country. They believe institutions need to change to reflect the geographical diversity of the student population. With this in mind NBS introduced in 2009/10 an enhanced pre-teaching Learning and Teaching Induction week.

The purpose of the week was to:

- Identify and overcome the barriers to postgraduate learning
- Enable all students to engage more effectively and earlier with their taught modules
- Introduce the students to NBS postgraduate learning and teaching culture.

PG Induction to Learning Week

A week of activities were delivered which included the following:-

- Students to work in mixed cultural groups, whilst developing their skills of information searching, critical evaluation and presentation skills (areas that many international students have limited or no experience).
- Introduce and discuss the role of the lecture, seminar, independent learning etc.
- Practical exercises to introduce marking criteria.

Induction week activities: detail

Marking criteria

- To show and explain an assessment brief
- To identify and explain NBS assessment criteria to you
- To establish your understanding of the assessment criteria
- To answer any questions you may have on assessment

Student expectations

- Explore the student profile and prior learning experience.
- Explore staff and student expectations of:
 - Lecture
 - Seminar
 - Identify NBS purposes of each
 - Provide advice for students on preparing for

Programme learning activity

1. Work in your allocated groups and report on an article related to your masters programme.
2. Explain how you found the article.
E.g. search terms used, the database used
3. Accurately identify the article using the Harvard system of referencing.
4. Critically evaluate the article.

Present your report using a Power point presentation (maximum 3 slides and 5 minutes)

Information seeking skills

- Introduction to NORA library skills
- Staff working with academics to identify relevant article
- Staff working with students to identify information sources and how to use
- Staff part of student briefing
 - Available in schedule slots in library for additional support
- **Exercise contextualised and addressing student need at the right time**

Main Findings

Staff

- Early development and introduction to students of key skills
- Practise in above
- Early development of programme identity
- Able to give early formative feedback

Students

- Active not passive role in the week
- Understanding of programme context
- Early mixing of students through treasure hunt, presentations

Summary

Before PG Induction to Learning Week

1. Programme based 2 hour induction session prior to the start of teaching.
2. Year Long PG Induction Module.

PG Induction to Learning Week

1. Addressing new international students 'cultural shock'.
2. Providing key induction messages.
3. Introduction to key skills.
4. Portfolio and programme activities.
4. Linked to Year Long PG Induction Module.

Discussion of Implications

Positive

- Good staff & student feedback
- General feel good ‘buzz’ with students
- Early introduction to key skills:
 - NBS L&T culture
 - Programme identity
 - Group working

On-going

- Degree of cultural mix
- Implications of programme group size
- Student retention during week
- Late arrivals

Any questions?



List of key references/resources:

Carroll, J. and Ryan, J. (eds) (2005) Teaching International Students – Improving Learning For All, Abington, Routledge

UKCISA (2009) Student statistics. Available online at:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/statistics (accessed 12 December 2009).

Warwick, P. (2007) Well Meant But Misguided: A Case Study of an English for Academic Purposes Programme Developed to Support International Learners, International Journal of Management Education 6(2).

Watkins, D and Biggs, J. (eds) (2001) Teaching the Chinese Learner: psychological and pedagogical perspectives. Hong Kong, Comparative Education Research Centre.