

Teaching and Learning Projects



academic disciplines. In focusing solely on international students we would be able to better generalise our findings specifically to international students and colleagues who work with them specifically.

Live audit lecture

This lecture uses the student response software Mentimeter to facilitate an anonymous reflective quiz. This software works in a similar way to clicker devices but allows students to use their phones to input their answers in a variety of forms knowing that their names will not be displayed. This provides learners with an anonymous space to air any transitional concerns they may have. In addition students are re-assured when they are able to share concerns and aspirations.

You can view the quiz questions and responses from our induction lectures at:
Summer: <http://tinyurl.com/s4kresults1>
January: <http://tinyurl.com/s4kresults2>

This activity was supported with an online learning package containing useful facts about Keele, sources of support, drop in times, library opening hours, etc. This lecture took place in September 2015. See links on page 25.

Online resources

We felt further targeted support around common assessment periods would be beneficial so designed online learning packages around the areas of academic writing and revision techniques. Combined with the above, these resources comprise our four resources which make up Skills4Keele. The online resources were created using Google Forms to allow us to gather data whilst providing learning content with a longer term aim of being able to feed the data back into academic programmes. In addition to this, the forms used video content to demonstrate points; these videos were

screencasts (created using Screencastomatic) and informative videos produced using PowToon.

The initial plan had been to stagger the release of the three online resources, with one released shortly after the September induction lecture and the other two released just before the University assessment period. However, a significant increase in the day-to-day duties of the project team made this unachievable. Therefore, the resources were released in one email to all of our September cohort students in mid-November. This release was followed up with several emails to students in January, February, March and April to encourage use.

The numbers

In total we gathered transitional data from both cohorts as follows:

	September responses	January responses
Induction audit lecture	132	79
Academic writing resource	5	1
Revision techniques resource	8	1
Facts about Keele resource	5	2

This obviously is a low response rate from our initial sample gathered at the induction lectures with just 14% of the September cohort utilising the online resources, and 4% of the January cohort.

How did we evaluate Skills4Keele?

Evaluation of this project is difficult with students having such transitory and varying experiences at university. For both cohorts, an end of year survey was released which mirrored the questions asked in the live audit so we could view ‘distance travelled’. The survey asked about experiences of UK study and how prepared they may feel for the next stage in their studies.

The survey received a low response rate of eight students (response rate of 4%) of the 199 we saw in the induction lectures across the two cohorts. General findings were that most students accessed academic support in the form of individual tuition services and workshops signposted in the induction audit lectures. Of the six students who used the online resources, the following qualitative feedback, while from an extremely small sample, offer some positive evaluation of the resources:

- *Presentation ideas were useful and some of the essay writing resources*
- *I think it can be useful*

We conducted some immediate evaluation of the January audit lecture, a step we felt important following the first cohorts lecture. Evaluative data gathered from 66/79 students (84% cohort) indicated a hugely positive experience for our learners. 100% of learners felt this would have a positive impact on their studies and 94% indicated they intended to use the Skills4Keele online resources; however, this did not translate into comparable usage of the online resources.

The limited responses to the end of year survey, and the evaluation of the January live audit indicate that these resources have evaluated well. The plans for the 2016-17 cycle of this project include immediate evaluation at the end of each live audit and a greater focus on data tracking of the online resources, as anecdotal evidence indicates a much wider use of the resources than the 22 recorded uses.

Sustainability

The resources created by this project are entirely sustainable. The online resources will continue to be offered to our international students each year. Furthermore, the live audit lecture has been firmly cemented as part of our welcome to international students. This means that this project will gather

data beyond this academic year, potentially leading to an even more significant piece of work tracking the longer-term transitional issues faced by international students at Keele.

Timescale: a model for a similar project

Development of audit resources and initial design of online resources – July/August 2015.

September cohort

1. Live audit lecture: September 2015
2. Release of online resources: November 2015
3. 4 x emails encouraging use of online materials: January–April 2016
4. Release of end of year evaluation survey: April 2016
5. Close evaluation survey: 31 May 2016

January cohort

1. Live audit lecture and lecture evaluation: January 2016
2. Release of online resources: January 2016
3. 3 x emails encouraging use of online materials: February–April 2016
4. Release of end of year evaluation survey: April 2016
5. Close evaluation survey: 31 May 2016

Challenges to the project: staff resource and technology

This project was a new undertaking for both the Student Learning and International Student Support Teams. Whilst elements of the resources did exist, the overall package of content needed to be developed and refined before it was ready for delivery. The project launch coincided with the busiest time of the year for the support services involved and consequently, this development was time-consuming and had to take place alongside intensive planning and preparation for the start of the academic year.

The project sought to re-purpose Google Forms, a survey software, for teaching and learning purposes but has highlighted the limitations of this use. In order to capture the data from each use of the resources, students must press submit at the end of the resource. Anecdotal evidence indicates a much higher use of the resources than the 22 recorded. Therefore, we can hypothesize that more than 22 students used the resources but perhaps failed to press submit. Investigations are underway for the 2016-17 cycle to work on developing more complex learner analytics to inform the next stage of the project.

Key findings

Key findings gathered at the induction lectures from 199 students are:

- Students are most excited at the prospect of meeting new people, not studying in a new culture.
- Students are least excited by the prospect of exams and assessments.
- In addition to essays and exams, students in both cohorts were particularly worried about class presentations and managing their own stress.
- There was a significant disparity in how challenging the two cohorts felt the transition to UK HE would be. Our January cohort felt much more confident in this respect.

These findings place a renewed importance upon social inductions to university, as well as a new focus on academic conventions and assessments. Future inductions will keep an academic focus through the Skills4Keele programme which will gather academic-focused transitional issues for academic programmes.

Recommendations for other institutions

This project suggests that proactive interventions aimed at academic

attainment remains a fruitful area for future research and that tackling academic anxieties represents a productive use of staff time in any international welcome or induction process. The resources created here correlate with separate research undertaken with cohorts of first-year students across our institution with regards to academic transitions into higher education. This suggests that these resources have significant potential to benefit all students, not just international students.

Dissemination

Following the presentation of the project at the UKCISA Annual conference in 2016, initial discussions are underway with a number of colleagues at different institutions to consider rolling out Skills4 projects at their universities. Fellow practitioners wishing to help the team at Keele to continue their work, gain a detailed report of the project findings and gain extra resources to use with their teams and students, can take the Keele staff survey at www.tinyurl.com/s4keele

Further information

The online resources can be viewed at the following web links:

- Academic writing resource – www.tinyurl.com/keelewriting
- Revision techniques resource – www.tinyurl.com/keelerevision
- Key facts about Keele resource – www.tinyurl.com/keelefacts

You can also view the presentation of the project on the UKCISA 2016 conference page (session F6) at www.ukcisa.org.uk/F6

These resources can be shared with colleagues in fellow institutions but the project team would encourage you to contact us before use. Please **contact** the project lead, **Dr Chris Little** on: c.w.r.little@keele.ac.uk Tel. 01782 734347, @drlittle26 on Twitter.