A cross-disciplinary, cross-University approach to enhancing the Asian student learning experience through appropriate and effective support strategies.

Dr Monika Foster
Edinburgh Napier University
Overview

- The Asian Learner Experience Project (ALEP)
- Results from online survey and interviews
- Activity – support strategies for international students
- Outcome of the study: E-mentoring project at ENU
The Asian Learner Experience Project (ALEP)

Two parallel streams of activity:

1. **Sharing good practice**
   - Meetings with colleagues at ENU and SHU
   - International wiki site to showcase examples of good practice  [http://shuinternational.pbworks.com](http://shuinternational.pbworks.com)

2. **Research into the student experience to**
   - Establish the key factors shaping the student experience
   - Evaluate the student use of existing support mechanisms
   - Explore the support required to meet the students’ expectations and cultural values.
Research methodology

- Cross-university and cross discipline to achieve a rich picture of the student experience and to enable sharing of good practice
- Two sets of data
  - Quantitative (online survey)
  - Qualitative (semi-structured interviews)
Sharing insights – online survey

- 164 students altogether
  - 100 at Edinburgh Napier (43/57 Hosp/Eng)
  - 64 at SHU (11/53 Hosp/Eng)
- 4 parts:
  - Pre-arrival and induction
  - Your programme
  - Study experience on the programme
  - Social integration
Sharing insights – online survey results

Very positive experience

Pre-arrival and induction:
- Students would like more accurate and earlier information, students value meet and greet efforts and helping them with a start
- Students rely on seniors who are already in the UK to provide them with info / support (academic and pastoral)

Your programme:
- Some students say they don’t have time to study, they’d like more information, skills training and regular feedback on how they’re doing
Sharing insights – online survey results

Study experience on the programme:
- More attention given to international students by the tutors, career advice, resources for research /books in the library
- Relying on peers, not reaching out with the immediate peer group

Social integration:
- Would like more social / sports activities within the programme and with non-Indian students
- More opportunities to interact with students from other nationalities
Sharing insights – interview results

- Small sample – 5 students from Edinburgh Napier, 8 students from Sheffield Hallam
- Semi-structured interview format allowed students to introduce different viewpoints on studying in the UK
- Qualitative analysis, key themes identified.
## Interview results - pre-arrival

### ENU & SHU Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demand for English language support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English skills confidence pre-arrival</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Study skills practice requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study skills information received</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarification required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help on practical &amp; logistical issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further pre-arrival advice that could be given</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-arrival advice given</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further information that could be provided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provided</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview results - Induction

ENU & SHU Interviews

- Suggestions for improvement
- Most useful aspect of induction
- Length of induction
- Usefulness of induction

[Diagram showing the results for each category with bars representing the scores]
Interview results – programme of study

ENU-SHU Interviews

- Mentor support
- Study experience overall
- Student attitude
- Relationships with other students
- Study approaches Group v. individual
- Advice to future students
- Support type preferences
- Support as a last resort
- Regular support
- Plagiarism
- Adapting to the language
- Combining work & study
- Support - suggestions for improvement
- Encouragement to use support
- Career support
Interview results- social integration

ENU & SHU Interviews

- Social relationships with other students
- Non-University social events
- Engaging with other students
- Use of social networking
- Use of Student Union
- Activities related to programme of study
- Suggestions for other activities
- Non-participation in sports activities
- Participation in sports activities
- Non-participation in social activities
- Participation in social activities
Sharing insights – interview common themes

A need for:

- Better awareness of University support mechanisms on offer, and their usefulness
- More established peer support (peer mentoring scheme)
- Opportunities for social networking
- Better social integration
Activity: Support strategies for international students

- Use the Activity handout
- Give your suggestions on how to enhance academic support at your institution in view of the responses from the students?
- Write down your suggestions.
## Current support and ideas from colleagues at Edinburgh Napier workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current support</th>
<th>Ideas for new support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-arrival</strong></td>
<td>Direct contact by phone / email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prog Leader talks to students</td>
<td>Consider mini certificates for participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In year 1 and 2</td>
<td>Use attendance monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to sts /info sent out</td>
<td>Target specific groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching in partner institutions</td>
<td>An incentive to complete SPICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPICE pre-arrival induction/Get Ready</td>
<td>Use of informal student networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff dev in partner institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Induction</strong></td>
<td>Engage students in upper years to design induction activities for year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Induction at college / univ level</td>
<td>Employ more student coordinators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling induction</td>
<td>Virtual enquiries / guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open access to academic st advisors</td>
<td>Incentivise – marks for attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1 guidance in subject areas</td>
<td>Specialised workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student helpers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddying /mentoring of students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social events in halls /on site</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Current support and ideas from colleagues at Edinburgh Napier workshop

Current support
Half way through trimester 1
1 to 1 tutorials / group interviews
Confident Futures / employability
Come to tutorials as Prog Leader
Just before assessments
Workshops
Drop in support
Embedded work of Academic Advisors
Assessment workshops
Start of trimester 2
Week 1 induction
Commissioned workshops by tutors

Ideas for new support
Using current international sts
who arrived a trim earlier to inform
new ones as student ambassadors
Strengthen staff support
mechanisms
Self formed peer support group vs
More structured and possibly paid
mentors introduced
E-mentoring project with Indian direct entry students at ENU

Students use it informally anyway
Peer mentoring introduced to provide training, extra skills, give ‘correct’ information.
Using Elluminate Live and a Wiki.

Very successful at ENU – more for mentors than mentees, largely due to location. Last year’s mentors will now act as ambassadors for the scheme. Last year’s mentees will be approached about being mentors.
References (1)


Kontoulis, E. and Williams, M., (2000) "The course is just fit for us: learning English for academic purposes in China" in Hudson, B and Todd, M.J. (eds) Internationalising the Curriculum in higher Education: Reflecting on Practice, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University Press
