

Proposal for LDHEN symposium April 2007 – Dr Tracy Johnson, University of Bristol

'How do international students engage with learning about study skills in British higher education?'

I would like to offer a workshop focused on the engagement of international students with study skills development. The session will address factors affecting how international, particularly Asian, students 'learn how to learn' in a western educational culture where expectations and objectives differ from those of their home institutions. The session aim would be to share teaching experience and establish examples of good practice, as well as to address the potential challenges encountered when teaching study skills in the British context to international students.

The session will include feedback and observations from international students currently studying at the University of Bristol who have attended study skills workshops in mixed student groups at the University's Student Development Unit. More than half the students attending these optional workshops are international, of which the majority are from Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese institutions.

Questions to ask and issues to consider:

- How can we help international students to transfer their existing academic skills to a different educational context?
- How can Asian students negotiate the paradigm shift required to engage with the critical thinking required in a British academic institution, as distinct from the more didactic framework within which they have previously been educated?
- As teachers, how do we manage mixed group teaching of study skills? These could be home & international students, students from a broad range of subject disciplines, and students from different levels of study.
- What are the 'hooks' on which to hang the development of study skills for international students?
- What are the 'hooks' on which to hang the learning of study skills for mixed student groups?
- How can we best support international students when they only have one year of a Master's degree to get 'up to speed' with new expectations of learning and skills development?
- What are the expectations of international students attending study skills sessions and how can we manage those expectations?

References:

- Carroll, Jude and Janette Ryan (eds), *Teaching International Students: Improving Learning For All* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005)
- Cottrell, Stella, *Teaching Study Skills and Supporting Learning* (London: Palgrave, 2001)
- Peelo, Moira, *Helping Students With Study Problems* (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1994)

Biography

Dr Tracy Johnson has been supporting skills development in degree programmes at the University of Bristol since 2001. Tracy delivers lectures and workshops on academic, personal and employability skills in academic departments and at the Student Development Unit, and is the Unit Director of the Career Management Skills Unit in the Faculty of Engineering. She supports PDP implementation across the Faculties and contributes to the teaching of new academic staff on the Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Programme. Tracy also works with departments to support lecturers in the development of their teaching skills, especially with regard to facilitating student learning. She is involved in a variety of current University projects, including research into the use of PDP to support the Bristol Innocence Project based in the School of Law. Tracy was previously a lecturer in English, and has taught at the University of Aberdeen and the University of the West of England.