

From Assessment to Development: Report of a project to support first year nursing diploma students

Lindy Syson, Learning Development Adviser, Northumbria University.

Students enrolled on the diploma course are often skilled practitioners with experience in the nursing and caring professions. Once in higher education, however, they are likely to encounter, and feel challenged by, unfamiliar academic practices/discourses (Northedge, 2003).

This paper argues that to engage students in learning, strategies should be developed which attempt to demystify academic practices, particularly academic writing conventions. It will report on an ongoing small scale collaborative project, involving academic, library and learning support staff. A group of students, identified on the basis of their performance on formative essay writing tasks, were invited to participate in a project to pilot and evaluate an online interactive academic skills resource (SkillsPlus).

Data was gathered via focus groups and in-depth interviews with the students. This paper will report on the students' understandings of the challenges of HE, including their perceived barriers to engagement. It will also report on their responses to, and evaluation of, the SkillsPlus resource.

Within the session there will be opportunities to discuss and compare delegates' experiences of developing similar on-line provision or models of learning development.