

Examples of transition work at Queen Margaret University

Title: *Learning methodologies for postgraduate students*

Transition(s) the practice supports: This module supports students making the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study.

Abstract: This case study presents a programme designed to introduce students to postgraduate study and the differences they will encounter as they transition from undergraduate study. In addition, as students are entering the postgraduate programme at QMU from other universities outwith the UK, the programme also offers a focus for transition into a new culture and country.

Description: This programme is aimed at students entering postgraduate studies, primarily from outside the UK. Five MSc programmes in the field of Health Studies and all programmes for the International Institute for Health Development have students attending the programme, and it has also recently been made available to Education students. In many cases, the students entering postgraduate study are used to significant hours of classroom attendance. They may not be familiar with the level of critical evaluation required in academic writing at postgraduate level and have unrealistic expectations of what will be provided to them and required of them in a UK postgraduate study environment. In some cases in the past, students have become aware of this disjuncture at the point of failure. The programme helps students to develop self-efficacy and self-regulation skills and also provides students with a social connection and sense of belonging in their new institution.

Before the programme commences, students' prior learning is evaluated using a diagnostic formative assessment that covers the different academic skills necessary for Master's level study; students who are at an appropriate level will be permitted to undertake some elements within a shorter time period. The students' Personal Academic Tutors are also linked in to delivery of the programme, and the initial assessment is used by students and PATS to inform the development of a learning contract.

The programme is delivered as follows:

- an initial three-week induction package covering topics such as strategies for active reading; learning technologies; plagiarism; academic writing; critical analysis; web research strategies. This part of the programme is rounded off with a 1,500 word assignment.
- seven further sessions during the first year of the Masters programmes covering: feedback on assignment presented during induction; critical analysis of journal articles; use of statistics and statistics software; professional body registration; continuing professional development.

There is a strong emphasis on student-directed learning and practice-based learning, which facilitates student understanding of these different educational philosophies and expectations.

Although the course is a compulsory part of the Masters programmes, it is non-credit-bearing. In this way, Learning Methodologies does not add to the students' already heavy burden by creating

further pressure and stress. Social events are also organised, such as the international students' meal, where each student brings a dish from their own country to share.

In addition to providing a transition experience for students, the programme provides an avenue for collaboration within the institution, being jointly designed and delivered by Physiotherapy staff, Centre for Academic Practice staff, including the Effective Learning Service, and Learning Resource Centre staff.

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