

Enhancing the experience of UEA International Students

Current issues and developments

Background research

2009: survey of international students' English language and academic skills development (students and staff) covering:

- ✦ respondents' perceptions of International students' English and academic study skills
- ✦ the effectiveness of the advice and guidance provided at UEA.

2009/10 UKCISA-funded project to enhance social interaction between home and international students

- ✦ observational research during orientation and arrivals period
- ✦ web survey of home and international students' social behaviours and interactions

Response rates

Academic and language skills survey

- ✦ Staff: 169 respondents (response rate c. 20%)
 - ✦ All Schools represented by at least 2 respondents except AMS (1) and MUS (0)
- ✦ International students:
 - ✦ 335 respondents (response rate 17% International and 13% EU students)
 - ✦ 72 nationalities represented

Socialisation survey

- ✦ 1200 responses (73% home, 27% international and EU)

English language skills: key findings

- ✦ Students from Chinese and other Asian language backgrounds most likely to have initial and later difficulties
- ✦ Participation in seminars/tutorials and writing present the greatest challenges
- ✦ Initial IELTS entry score has long-lasting impact, particularly for those with scores of less than 7.0
- ✦ Take-up of the English Language Support Programme (ELSP) is low
- ✦ Specific provision within Schools is very varied
- ✦ Highest rated sources of language advice are:
 - ✦ Lecturer/supervisor
 - ✦ DOS
 - ✦ Fellow students
 - ✦ Advisers
 - ✦ Proof readers

English language skills: recommendations

- ✦ Provide diagnostic exercises and intensive tuition on entry
- ✦ Develop the ELSP to match more specifically student need, including discipline specific provision
- ✦ Expand School and individual tuition
- ✦ Improve referral from Schools to central resources
- ✦ Provide guidance on the use of proof readers
- ✦ Develop further self-learning materials
- ✦ Expand peer support initiatives and opportunities for social interaction with UK peers

Academic study skills: key findings 1

✦ Areas seen by students as causing the greatest difficulty are:

- ✦ Challenging the views of others (42%; 24%*)
- ✦ Understanding what is expected in assignments (38; 7%)
- ✦ Structuring assignments (31%; 17%)
- ✦ Developing laboratory skills (21%; 20%)
- ✦ Taking notes (18%; 10%)
- ✦ Understanding referencing conventions (18%; 7%)
- ✦ Time management (18%; 18%)
- ✦ Understanding plagiarism (14%; 7%)

but 74% of staff said that understanding plagiarism was an area of significant concern, or that students were poorly prepared

* percentages are those finding the area very difficult or difficult on entry, and then in Jan 2009

Academic study skills: key findings 2

✦ Highest rated sources of academic skills advice are:

- ✦ Lecturers/supervisors (74%)
- ✦ Fellow students (72%)
- ✦ Individual DOS tutorials (71% *)
- ✦ ELSP classes (68% *)
- ✦ Workshops in School (68% *)
- ✦ Leaflets and web resources (58% *)

Percentages are those rating the advice as very useful or useful.

* Rated by less than 50% of respondents

School provision and staff awareness of central provision



- ✦ Very few Schools provide academic study skills guidance specifically for international students at other than an individual level
- ✦ Even fewer provide language support
- ✦ Just over a third of staff said that they were fully aware of the DOS provision (41% were 'vaguely aware')
- ✦ Just over a third of staff said that they were fully aware of the ELSP provision (51% were 'vaguely aware')



Academic study skills: recommendations

- ✦ Provide intensive introduction to study in the UK within induction
- ✦ Further develop peer mentoring programmes
- ✦ Provide sample essays etc to provide clear guidance on what is expected to achieve high marks
- ✦ Consider the impact of anonymous marking on the kind of feedback offered
- ✦ Recognise cultural difference in the guidance offered on plagiarism
- ✦ Provide more opportunities for home and international students to interact academically and socially
- ✦ Develop guidance materials and web resources on UK academic cultures and expectations
- ✦ Provide guidance for staff on teaching international students

Socialisation survey findings: frequency of interaction on campus with students of another nationality



	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely
On campus			
Home	34%	43%	23%
International and EU	61%	30%	9%
Evenings and weekends			
Home	25%	38%	36%
International and EU	50%	29%	20%

Socialisation survey findings

	About half the time	Some of the time	Rarely or never
	32%	22%	25%
			21%

How frequently to do you speak English with native English speakers (non-native speakers only)?

✦ Students from Schools with a high proportion of international students (eg NBS and ECO) are the least likely to spend much of their time talking to native English speakers.

	Agree
I would like to meet more UK friends (Int. and EU students)	83%
I would like to meet more UK friends (UK students)	88%

Making friends: key influences

Most important

Studying on the same course (56%)

Living together (54%)

Least important

SU events (59%)

UEA events (52%)

SU clubs 'very important' for 23%, but 'not important' for 39%

Preliminary project outcomes

Revision of the international orientation and home arrivals programmes to include specific opportunities for social interaction over the arrivals period.

Cultural awareness training to be provided for all student helpers working over the orientation and arrivals period

Some 'integration' activities already piloted (a Norwich 'treasure trail', a games evening and a coffee morning on arrivals Sunday for home and international students

Recent developments at UEA/DOS



- ✦ Appointment of a Careers Adviser for International Students from August 2009

- ✦ Appointment of a new Learning Enhancement Tutor from Jan 2010 to:
 - ✦ offer individual guidance to students on developing their English language skills
 - ✦ develop web- and paper-based resources
 - ✦ develop workshop approaches

- ✦ Responsibility for co-ordinating INTO English language and DOS language and academic skills provision now passed to DOS

- ✦ 'Internationalisation' special interest group established



What can we do to improve the experiences of UEA International students?



Develop a culture at UEA that provides '*greater appreciation of what such students bring to us as learners in the world.*'

Full report of 2009 research on academic and English language skills development available at:

https://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.131732!int_student_survey.pdf (See Survey Office web pages on DOS site)

Report on the Socialisation project will be available next term

