Academic Skills for MA – Developing a student-driven, subject specific, EAP support programme for PG students.

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BALEAP 2017 "ADDRESSING THE STATE OF THE UNION: WORKING TOGETHER = LEARNING TOGETHER**"**
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Outline

- Background
- Action Research
- Academic Skills Programme
- Issues
- Student Feedback
- Future Developments

Background

- Coventry University's innovative approach to including the students' voice in their course design and quality review process (Orsini –Jones et al., 2015)

- Student feedback from this process

- Development of a new student driven, subject specific *Academic Skills for MA* support programme

- International PG level students in the School of Humanities.

- Drawing on a SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) approach, the aim is to critically explore what students' perceptions of their EAP needs are in order to improve the courses that the students are taking (Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone, 2011, p.xix).

- The initial *Academic Skills for MA* support sessions were developed with the students from the MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics

- The programme aims to build links between students, EAP staff, subject specialists and researchers.

Project Aims

This student driven programme aims to support international students in their transition to MA level study within a new academic culture by building links between students, EAP lecturers, subject specialists and researchers.

Action Research Cycle

- Reconnaissance
- Planning
- Acting
- Observing
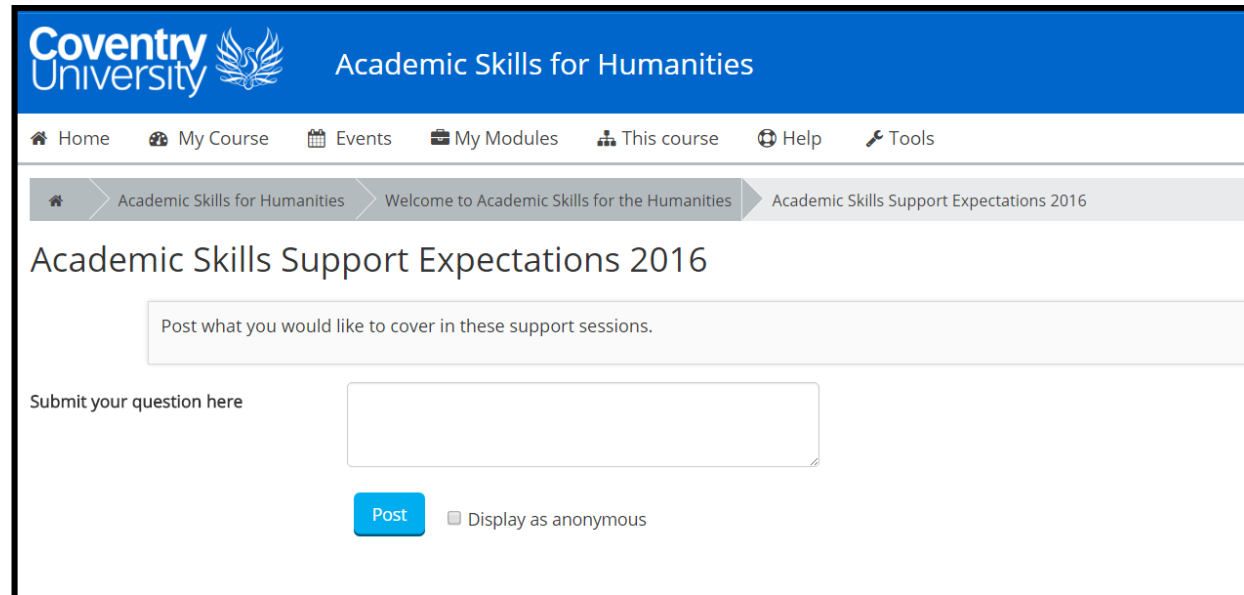- Reflecting
- Re-planning

(and cycle starts again)
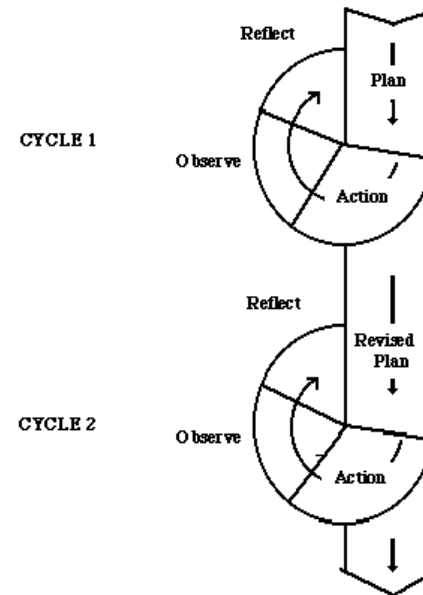
Kemmis and McTaggart 1988:14 and 2005.

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Action Research Problem

- Students identified areas of concern

VLE - Moodle

Students' Areas of Concern

- *got confused how to cite and quote and put it into a text or sentence on my essay properly, as well on the list of references.*

- *organizing arguments on writing, how to use a critical, analytic , and evaluative approach rather than a more descriptive approach. referencing and avoiding plagiarism.*

- *want to learn in a broader perspective research strategies on how to approach an essay question in order to present your arguments in a critical and presentable way.*

Students' Areas of Concern

- *I want to learn how to write critically and present my argument in an academic way required at the masters level.*

- *Avoid plagiarism. Referencing.*

- *Read materials to get the appropriate information?*

- *How to study effectively in class and at home, because the study environment in the UK is very different from that in my home country.*

- *I want to know how to deduct opinion from others and make it logical in academic writing.*

The Academic Skills Programme

- Optional or Mandatory? - on their timetables

- Diagnostic

- 1 hour a week

- Student centred – Subject specific

- Technology Enhanced

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Technology Enhanced

- Materials designed to be used:
  - in the face to face sessions
  - and online in the CUMoodle.
- International PG students often approach their studies with varying levels of digital literacy.
- Help to develop the students' digital literacy skills.

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The Academic Skills Programme

The Academic Skills Programme

The Academic Skills Programme

Expansion

2015/2016

- MA English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics

2016/2017

- MA International Relations

- MA Diplomacy, Law, Global change

- MA Terrorism, International Crime, and Global security

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Subject Specific

Rationale

- Enhance student engagement

- Academic discourse varies enormously and so a discipline specific approach aims to help the students to progress within their field (Hyland 2004).

Reality

- Easy with ELT

- HUM sessions:
  - Students brought articles
  - AE strategies

  eg, articles with no references

  Footnotes

- More input from subject specialists needed.

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2 Different Issues
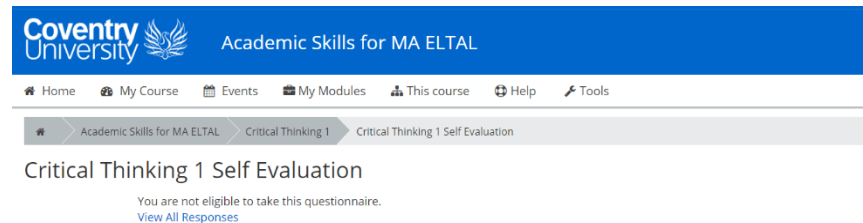# EAP – Academic Skills

MA ELT AL

- More EAP

- Need support with English level.

- UG was not in English

MA HUM

- More Academic Skills

- Need support with moving to a different Academic Culture

- UG usually in English

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Student Reflections

- Students identified Critical Thinking as a problem area

- Critical Thinking Self Reflection (Cottrell 2011)

The Academic Skills Programme
Critical Thinking

I understand how to structure an argument.

Response	Average	Total
4 = strongly agree	20%	2
3 = agree	40%	4
2 = sort of agree	40%	4
Total	100%	10/10

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The Academic Skills Programme
Critical Thinking

I can tell descriptive writing from analytical writing.

Response	Average	Total
4 = strongly agree	10%	1
3 = agree	40%	4
2 = sort of agree	20%	2
1 = disagree	30%	3
Total	100%	10/10

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The Academic Skills Programme
Critical Thinking

I can spot inconsistencies in an argument easily.

Response	Average	Total
4 = strongly agree	10%	1
3 = agree	30%	3
2 = sort of agree	20%	2
1 = disagree	40%	4
Total	100%	10/10

Student Feedback

Student Feedback

Future Developments

- Logistics:
  - Sept starters + Jan starters x 2
  - Teaching hours
  - Timetable fit
- Technology enhanced:
  - Not all computer rooms
  - Time to develop
  - Accessibility issues

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Future Developments

- Subject Specific:
  - More input from subject lecturers
  - Students bring materials
- Course Directors
  - Verbal feedback is supportive
  - Measurements to examine if the way EAP support has been integrated into the curriculum has had an impact

Conclusions

- Students can become the driving force behind developing their EAP and academic skills.

- Students want this support

- Course Directors want this support

- Can the Faculty provide it?
  - Solution EAP lecturer in every School?

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References

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