

Title: **'...They should make feel like it's home...': towards understanding the expectations and experiences of first year international students**

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Take account of the learning cultures from which their students come and consider ways to improve their transition to (UK) HE
- Recognise and understand some of the problems around the first year experiences of International students and consider remedies
- Recognise and understand the positive aspects of their experiences and build on this, including using the students as a resource
- Recognise and relate how good practice regarding International students may benefit all students

Session Outline

The *Experiences of first-year international students at UAL* project was funded by the Creative Learning in Practice CETL to conduct an in-depth investigation into the experiences of first-year international students in mainly practice-based courses across the University of the Arts, London. Key issues to be addressed are:

- assessing the extent to which international students integrate and adapt to a different teaching and learning environment
- identifying the causes of obstacles and enablers to such integration and adaptation
- proposing ways in which these can be remedied.

The research focused on groups from six areas: Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, USA, and India. International research students with similar backgrounds to the students conducted the interviews in their own languages and then translated them into English.

The lack of differentiation between different groups and sub-groups of international students has been highlighted in some of the more original studies on specifically pedagogical issues. (Dunbar 1988; Reid 1989; Ashman and Conway 1997). Other research (Okorochoa 1996; Li, Clark et al. 1997; Nishio 2001) points towards the need for special clarity in briefing international students about the learning environment which they are entering. Recent work suggests that innovative course design and effective student support policies enable students to develop better communication skills, critical thinking and independence right from the start, and this in turn improves their integration with local students and makes the whole transition process easier.

The aims of this workshop are to introduce some of the findings of the project through extensive use of the student voice from interviews, focusing on key lessons for learning and teaching. Participants will reflect on these lessons and their own experiences and suggest actions to support the findings. We will also consider the implications for professional development and institutional approaches to engaging with International students.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

20 Minutes: Presentation on the research: the questions, methodology, key findings, areas for further exploration.

45 minutes: In groups, analyse student quotes in key area, eg independence, making information explicit, etc across a range of cultures, looking for obstacles and aids to learning. Develop actions to provide support for Learning and Teaching and identify implications for institutions.

25 minutes: Report back to group, discussion and summary.

References

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