Session title: Embedding study skills to improve student attainment, feedback and retention

Session type: Lightening Talk

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Session summary:
Developing academic skills alongside subject-specific skills is essential for success at university (Menz, 2020). How do we support students on our courses to develop these skills in tandem? Drawing on theory such as scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976) and a spiral curriculum (Bruner, 2009), this lightning talk explores how we are embedding core study skills within our MA Education (online) to support students' academic achievements, showing practical examples of how teaching and learning approaches can support students' agency in this area.

Session outline:
Whichever subject area a degree course sits in, students will be required to undertake study at level 4 and above. Academic success requires a myriad of study skills that are likely to be impacted by factors such as Covid-19 (Fabian, Smith, Taylor-Smith, and Meharg, 2022), and neurodiversity such as dyslexia (Mortimore & Crozier, 2007). Without teaching to enhance these study skills, students may not have the tools for success even if they have a depth of subject knowledge, resulting in poor attainment, feedback, and retention. What can we as subject specialists do to support students in developing their study skills?

Separating study and subject-specific skills may not be the most effective approach to supporting students (Wingate, 2006), yet most universities have departments for study skills that students can access beyond their courses, supporting their understanding of skills such as academic writing, critical thinking, and referencing. However, there may be barriers that prevent students from accessing these resources. To overcome these, we are beginning a project that embeds study skills into each week's teaching, drawing on the materials available and directing the students to workshops and individual support. Mapping the study skills against those required for success in each module, we have designed activities that embed the study skills through scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976), revisiting skills throughout the course as with any spiral curriculum (Bruner, 2009).

Underpinning this teaching and learning approach are the concepts of inclusion and student agency. We will outline how embedding study skills can support both neurodiverse and neurotypical students, before considering how student self-assessment of their study skills is central to the success of this approach. We will offer practical examples that could be applied across courses beyond our subject specialism, asking the audience to reflect on their own practice in this area.

References:
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