

Improve your CPD skills: enhancing the international student experience

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Seminar outline

1. Principles and theoretical frameworks (10 minutes)
2. Small group discussions of scenarios (15 minutes)
3. Whole group discussion (15 minutes)

1. Principles and theoretical frameworks informing staff development activities

1.1 Mindfulness

The outcome should not be an accumulation of facts, such as learning details about different cultures or learning styles, but rather the development of a stance, which Gudykunst (1988) labels mindfulness: 'the ability to recognise that there exist other systems.' Without such understanding there is a constant danger of confusing *one* way of doing things with *the* way of doing things, and so to assume that certain expectations and requirements are obvious and do not need explanation. For example we need to be able to look at our communications with students such as when giving assignment instructions, or supplying details about campus health centres, or sending pre-arrival information, and to recognise that some details we may assume as 'given' may in fact need to be unpackaged.

1.2 Reflective practice

This links to reflective practice as a suitable approach to such training, leading each participant to analyse their own roles, their own encounters, and the conventions of their communities of practice. The reason for this training is to allow – via the reflective/action cycle – participants to make amendments to their activities which will be improvements, possibly improvements for all and not just international students.

1.3 Research based

As the intended outcomes are changes in behaviours these changes should be firmly based on good quality research, conducted by others and by the participants themselves, as part of their ongoing professional development, so the training materials should prepare the participants for such small-scale research.

1.4 Adherence to professional standards

It is essential however, in any amendments to their operations which the participants plan, that professional standards are recognised. The training materials should ensure that the participants refer to the relevant standards when considering amendments to their activities, for example:

- National Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education.
- Professional Standards relating to Information Advice and Guidance professions (IAG)
- Continuous Professional Development Framework for staff working in Professional Services in Higher Education

1.5 Andragogy

The training materials used should suggest a generic framework of good practice, rather than supplying specific content, that participants can adapt and apply to their own specific work requirements (whether as teachers, careers advisors, educational developers, ...) to ensure relevance to their own situation and constraints. This recognises that participants are self-directed and autonomous learners, and – given the dynamic nature of internationalisation of HE – that this will be an ongoing process.

1.6 Agents of change within communities

Much of the above perhaps gives the idea of this being an individual activity; however participants should be expected to become agents for change, to interact with colleagues and a range of stakeholders, and to recognise the constraints that other functions in the institution operate under. The training must therefore aim to encourage the development of communities which are willing to engage in informed, considered, research-based change.

2. Scenarios for small group discussions

Take one of the scenarios below and discuss:

- Which different sections of the university (stakeholders) will need to be involved to make the plan successful?
- What will be training needs required for each of these sections?
- What will be the time-scale necessary for this training?
- How can the effectiveness of the training be assessed?

2.1 Scenario One

A UK university has an existing top-up degree related to financial services. This has been taught for some years and graduates have included many international students. The university now wishes to offer this course using supported distance learning in Hong Kong. The students will use a VLE to access the materials, so the course needs to be adapted for this mode of delivery. The students will also be able to make use of a study centre in a college in Hong Kong and get some support from tutors there, but assignments will be marked by tutors in the UK. Members of the faculty in the UK will travel to Hong Kong to run weekend workshops (one per module). It is also hoped that some of the students will attend summer schools on the UK campus although this attendance does not lead to any summative assessments.

2.2 Scenario Two

Two universities (one in the UK and one in India) have received funding to develop jointly an undergraduate module aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills and intercultural communication. The module needs to be jointly validated by the two universities and the lecturers of the two universities are to develop the content together. The course will be delivered via the VLEs of the two universities and the students will be form working groups where each group contains students from the two universities. The careers advisory services of both universities must be consulted during the development of the module. The language of instruction and assessment will be English.

2.3 Scenario Three

A university which already runs courses connected to logistics is designing a training package concerning logistics for middle-level managers of state-run enterprises in a North African country. This course will be funded by their government. The participants' will come for a twelve week block which will include lectures, visits to industry, and short work placements. Accommodation must be in home stay with two students allocated to each host family. All the participants will be males. A social programme must be included, and this must respect the social, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the participants.

2.4 Scenario Four

A faculty of Environmental Science is going to collaborate with several European universities to develop joint activities related to waste management. This will be a

complex network with a range of activities including joint research (for which they will collaborate in seeking funding), student exchanges for periods of various lengths, development of teaching materials (reusable learning objects), joint supervision of PhDs, and the organisation of dissemination activities including workshops and conferences.

3. Existing resources in this area

Participants might be interested in the following resources:

- 3.1 Training materials concerning internationalisation for institutions to adapt as they feel fit have already been produced and are available online from the LLAS Subject Centre, complete with a trainers pack. These materials are likely to be mostly used selectively, with individual activities being used on short events such as away-days.

Details at: <http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/mb/2968>

- 3.2 At Northampton Business School we have just launched a more in-depth '*Postgraduate Certificate in Enhancing the International Student Experience*' which is an online course of three modules aimed at practitioners (academic staff and support staff) working in HE and FE across the UK.

Details at: <http://www2.northampton.ac.uk/business/nbs-courses/enhance-int-experience>

- 3.3 The 'Teaching International Students' project is a two-year initiative which aims to enhance the teaching experience for university teachers and for their international students. Based at the HEA with PMI2 funding, the project will:
- Develop a repository of information and guidance about teaching and learning for international students
 - Establish a network of interested people to discuss and debate issues
 - Organise and contribute to events for staff development and dissemination of information.