Compulsory EAP classes and social integration: helping international students succeed

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Aims

- To outline our approach to international student support:

    1. Compulsory Generic EAP course

    2. Social integration project linked to internationalization strategy

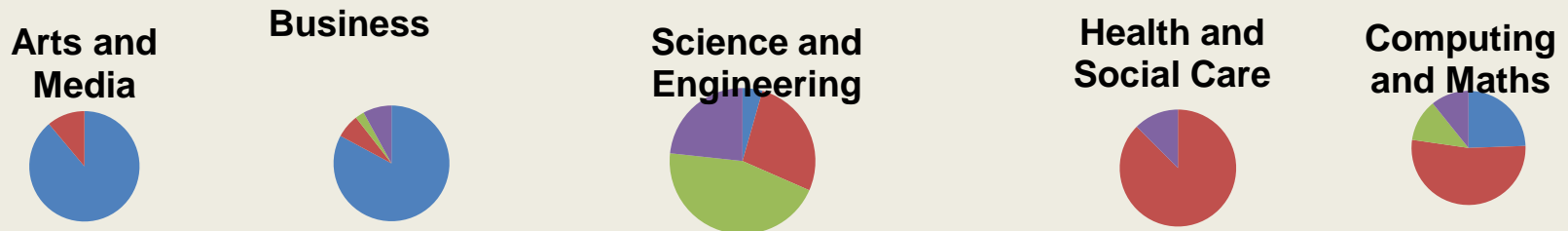- Discussion, suggestions, advice

Who we are

- English Language Support
- Subject group within School of Social Sciences & Law
- Set up 2006
- 5 full-time staff, 5 – 15 part-time tutors
- Presessional & Foundation courses
- Insessional course
- DISSC (6 hours/week 30min 1-1 tutorials)

International Student Population

International enrolments UG & PG

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
380	416	623	852	946

Distribution of nationalities by schools

Arts and Media

Business

Science and Engineering

Health and Social Care

Computing and Maths

Aims of insessional Support

- *Transition from didactic to experiential learning (core academic skills)*

- *English language - accuracy, fluency & confidence*

- *Opportunities for cross cultural communication*

- *Help with academic shock and culture shock*

Insessional EAP course

- 1 x 2-hours per week

- Evenings/Wed afternoons

- 20-credit module → UCCE / 10 Erasmus credits

- Indicative content: Academic literacy & Accuracy

- Assessment – 2000 word portfolio

- Streamed by ability only

- Not subject specific

Insessional Enrolment & Pass Rates

Course start date	New International students	Enrolled on insessional	Passed	Pass rate
Oct 06	380	168	33	20%
Oct 07	416	204	56	27%
Oct 08	623			
Oct 09	852			
Oct 10	946			

Changes 2008

- Streamlined the testing and class allocation process

- School module re-approval event
  - Constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2007)

Did it work?

Course start date	New International students	Enrolled on insessional	Passed	Pass rate
Oct 06	380	168	33	20%
Oct 07	416	204	56	27%
Oct 08	623	483	167	35%
Oct 09	852			

- Students were failing degree assessments

- Over-reliance on DISSC

Student feedback
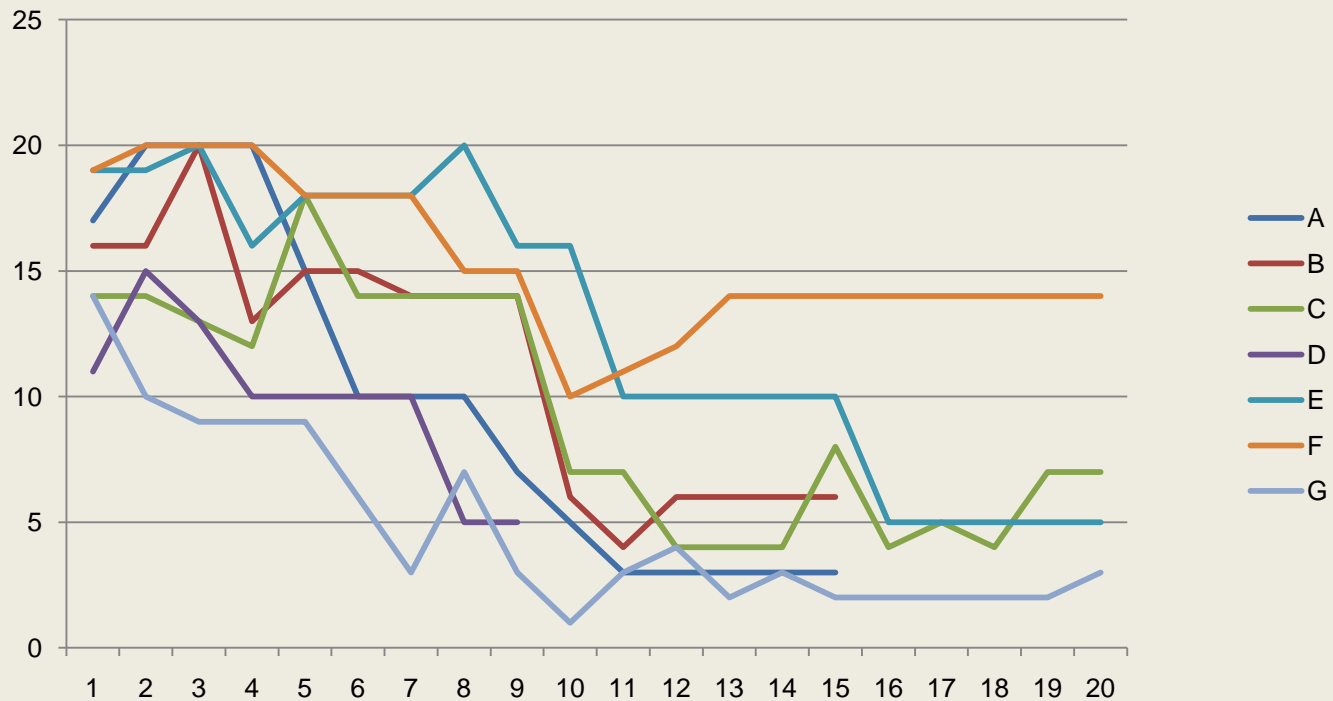
Reasons for attending

1. *Useful content, helps me with assignments*

2. *Opportunity to speak English*

3. *Meet new students from and learn about different countries/disciplines*

Reasons for not attending

1. *No time*

2. *Content is irrelevant*

3. *Not compulsory*

Attendance Patterns 2008-9

Students who didn't engage

– had low-level English

– didn't have experience in autonomous learning

– were in predominantly monolingual classes

– were busy with their degree assignments

Changes made in 2009

- Made testing on arrival a requirement of enrolment
- Made attendance & submission of assessments university/tier 4 requirement
- Attendance monitoring and follow up process
- Mix of nationalities/disciplines in each group
- Changed the name to 'Study Skills'

What happened to attendance?

Course start date	New International students	Enrolled on insessional	Passed	Pass rate
Oct 06	380	168	33	20%
Oct 07	416	204	56	27%
Oct 08	623	483	167	35%
Oct 09	852	733	448	61%

- 93% satisfaction rate for English support in ISB

- Significant drop in appointments at DISSC

Was this a fluke?

Course start date	New International students	Enrolled on insessional	Passed	Pass rate
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Oct 08	623	483	167	35%
Oct 09	852	733	448	61%
Oct 10	946	817 (642)	(466)	(73%)

Why are students engaging?
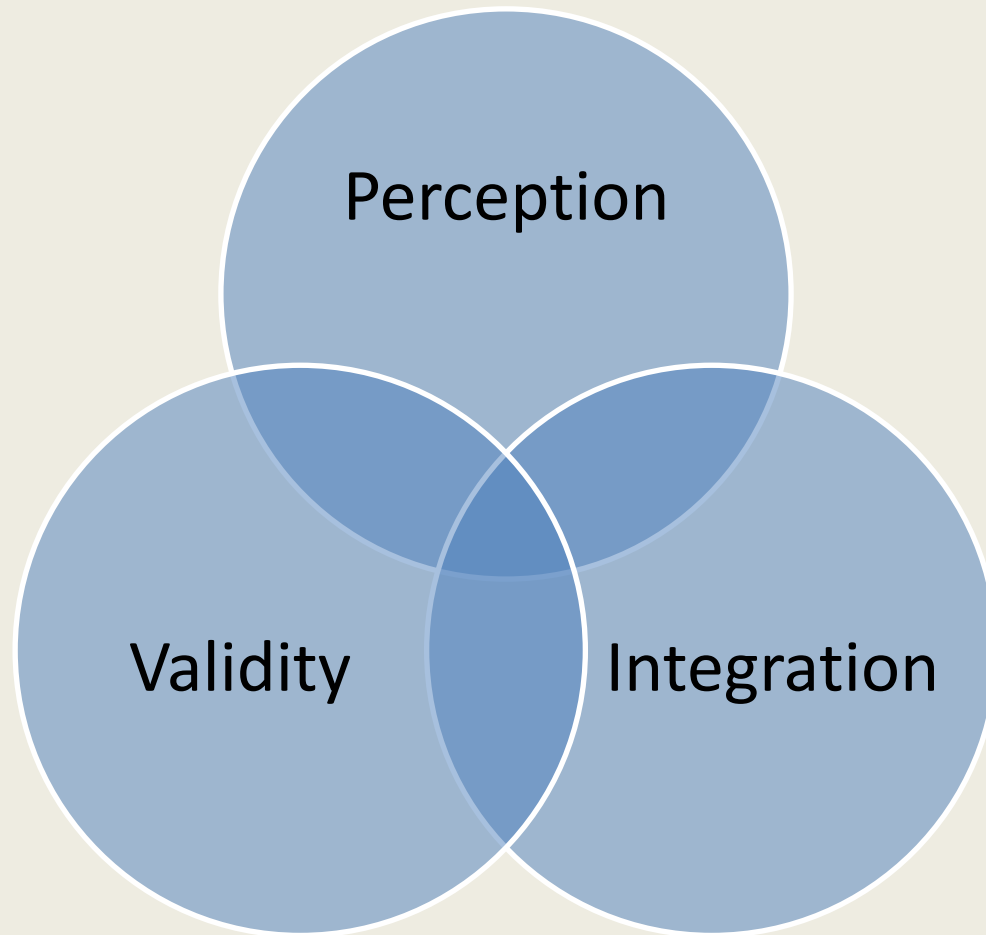
Student evaluation from insessional

Positives

- Chance to meet other students

- Group work, discussing in English

- Feedback on assessments

- Examples, guidance on writing assignments /presentations

Suggestions

- More challenging tasks/source material for higher levels

- More grammar exercises

- More speaking practice - discussions

Social and Academic Integration

- Integration

- I-CH@T

- Research

Integration

Research suggests that there is a lack of integration **in the classroom...**

- Home students often perceive international students to have a negative effect on their learning experience (Beaver & Tuck, 1999; Harrison & Peacock, 2007)

- International students also have same experience, for example home students may not take course seriously (Montgomery, 2010)

...and outside the classroom

Broadening Our Horizons, UKCOSA report (Merrick,2004) highlighted:

- 59% international students said most of their friendships were with same nationality or other international students
- 32% were friends with a mixture of UK and international students
- 7% were friends mainly with UK students.
- UK students cite poor English as grounds for not wanting to integrate with international students (Harrison and Peacock, 2007)
- Students who participated in sport, a club or society were more likely to have UK friends

- Home and international student friendships can be more superficial due to different motivations and transient nature (Montgomery, 2010)

- Same nationality or international-international relationships provide a close support network - Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998, cited in Montgomery, 2010)

- Home students are missing this opportunity to experience cultural exchange and intercultural learning – preparing students for global future (Forland, 2006)

I-CH@T

"Learning takes a great number of shapes and forms and often takes place in contexts beyond the classroom and beyond university walls" (Montgomery, 2010, xiii)

I-CH@T project promotes this as it aims to:

- set up, facilitate and mediate face-to-face informal settings for home and foreign students to meet to promote international integration on campus, develop language skills and share world and cultural knowledge.

- improve foreign students' satisfaction with their engagement with native English speakers, but also help to develop cultural awareness and international communication skills in **all** students.

1. The Language Café

- Informal setting for conversations / language exchange

- Connected to the mentoring scheme to ensure attendance

- Spanish / French / German is successful

- Mutually beneficial to home and foreign students

- Aims:

    - To raise confidence when speaking in another language

    - To encourage intercultural integration

2. A mentoring / buddying scheme

- Mentoring can support international students academically and socially (Kingston & Forland, 2004; Beaver & Tuck,1999; Partridge, UKCISA, 2008)

- 29% of institutions in the UK (out of 154) had mentoring schemes, 52% said they were successful (Partridge, UKCISA, 2008)

2. A mentoring / buddying scheme

At Teesside University:

- Credit-bearing mentoring / communication skills modules (links to schools throughout the university)

- Voluntees (TU volunteering unit)

- Social activities programmes, e.g film club, sports

- Enthusiastic, committed students to run it. (Saca, 2009)

- Highlight the mutual benefits to both home and foreign students

3. An online repository of multi-media contributions from foreign students.

- Videos and sound bytes of international students' stories about their educational backgrounds, their experiences of studying in Britain, the highs and challenges and advice.

Aims:

- to raise the profile of the foreign students, their backgrounds and cultures in order to help break down barriers,

- to inform staff and students about their different educational backgrounds to raise awareness and help inform approaches to learning and teaching

- promote them as an asset to Teesside University's learning community.

Research

- To evaluate international students' use of spoken English outside of the classroom and to examine their social interactions and language development outside the classroom and how this impacts on their academic experience

- Qualitative study using focus groups (studying on a range of different English courses and different length of stay)

- Later focus groups will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of I-CH@T (including both home and international students)

" Helping international students integrate with their UK peers should not mean asking them to compromise their own culture or values, but instead **help them to get over the barriers to getting to know British people as individuals and forming friendships across cultures**.

This is equally important for British students who need to **be encouraged to benefit from this unique opportunity in their life** to mix within this "world of microcosm" and to develop the cross-cultural awareness and knowledge of other countries which will stand them in good stead for future employment, as well as building their awareness as global citizens."
(Merrick, UKCOSA, 2004, 71)

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Discussion

- Is the need for basic writing and presenting and research skills more common in newer universities?

- Any similar programmes or suggestions on next stages?

- Areas to consider for combining mentoring and language cafes?

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