

Facilitating the transition to UK academic study

An evaluation of the use of *Prepare for Success* by international students and UK institutions

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Overview

- Feasibility study and needs of international students
- Overview of the PfS website and demo
- Usage stats to date
- Student use and evaluation
- Institutional use and evaluation
- The way forward
- Discussion and questions

Aims of Feasibility Study (2007)

- explore the extent to which interactive pre-arrival online tools were already being used by UK HEIs
- clarify whether or not there was a perceived need to enhance the preparation of international students by developing an online pre-arrival tool
- seek the views of institutions concerning the specific pre-arrival needs of international students
- identify an appropriate format and delivery mechanism

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What is needed?

HEI respondent from 2007 feasibility study:

- *I think it would be useful to have a UKCOSA tool which covered generic issues common to UK HE, but also to have an individual induction tool hosted by our institution.*

International student feedback :

- *I was looking for this before I came but couldn't find it somewhere.*
- *I found information and resources (in PfS) that I've been longing to find. I looked in forums and university web sites but couldn't find the international student point of view.*

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The Prepare for Success website

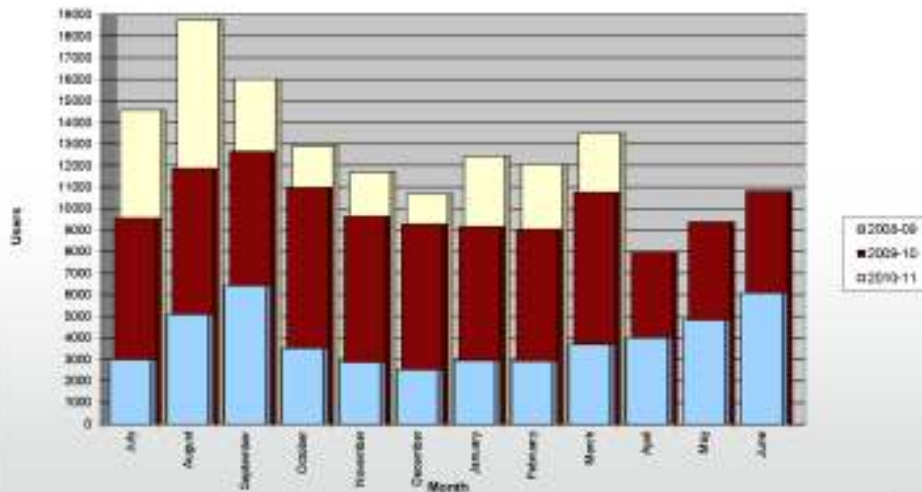
- A web-based 'transition' tool for international students and their UK receiving institutions
- Main menu of 23 interactive multimedia learning resources introducing aspects of academic life, study skills, and teaching and learning styles in the UK
- Study Pathways: interactive choice of routes through the learning resources by skill or by topic
- FAQs: interactive wordle for browsing a bank of simple questions and answers about academic study in the UK
- FAQs for Further Education: interactive spinning globe for browsing a bank of specific questions and answers about FE
- Information/downloads for teachers and institutions
- PfS social sites: Facebook and Twitter

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Prepare for Success: use to date

- Since July 2008 over 300,000 visits
- Student users from 209 countries
- c. 90 UK receiving institutions use it (HE 80%; FE 20%)
- c.205 site feedback forms from student users
- Use by other institutions (UK secondary schools and sixth form colleges, institutions overseas)
- Traffic through 'referrer' websites linking to PfS

Comparison of monthly visits since July 2008 launch



Website stats at 8 month intervals since launch

	July 2008- March 2009	April 2008 – Nov.2009	Dec.2009- July 2010	Aug.2010- March 2011
Site users	33,000	70,000	81,000	109,000
UK hits	18,000	28,000	26,600	40,000
Proportion of UK hits	54%	41%	33%	37%
No. of repeat users	7500	15,600	13,300	31,200
Proportion of new users	75%	68%	70%	61%

A sample of referrers

Education: UK HEIs & FEIs/ schools and institutions overseas

NGOs and commercial sector: UKCISA / British Council: Education UK ; Education UK China etc/ UCAS / BALEAP/ HEA & Subject Centres /Erasmus mundus/ EAP World/ UK Student Life/Student Calculator/ Palgrave Macmillan

Social networking sites: Twitter / Facebook / Blip TV / Digg / Ning / Delicious/ The Student Room (message board) / Plurk (Tw Twitter) / YouTube / Renren (Chin. Facebook) / Wikipedia/ Study skills blog

Portals: Wretch (Tw) / Yam (Tw) / Xici.net (Ch) / Sina (Chin) / Anglie (Czech) / Net.hr (Hung) / Znaniye (Russ)

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A sample of student feedback

Really appreciate it. Everyone that will be going to study in the UK must go through it at least once. Really useful and informative.

I really liked it, especially the videos. It was helpful to have the UK learning style explained, together with the differences between tutorials, seminars etc.

A very good tool that gave me the answer to a lot of questions.

Prepare for Success is a brilliant resource for international students who want to study in UK. I think everyone who has a desire to study here should click on this website.

It has been really helpful and I think it made me physically and mentally ready for my study in the UK.

It has been extremely useful in getting prepared for studies in UK. It has highlighted topics that are usually not thought about and ignored.

10 most viewed learning resources (LOs)

- Differences in university study
- The language challenge
- (Study Pathways page)
- (About Prepare for Success)
- Academic writing at university
- Critical thinking
- Adapting to a new life
- Ways of being taught on your course
- Listening to lectures
- Using study time effectively

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10 most viewed FAQs

- What do 1st, 2:1, 2:2 etc mean as grades for assignments?
- Will all course hand-outs be paper-based?
- What is the difference between a 'dissertation' and a 'thesis'?
- What holidays are there in the UK academic year?
- How many other international students will there be on my course?
- What is 'plagiarism'?
- Will academic study in a UK college or university be similar to how it is in my country?
- Are UK lecturers and tutors formal or informal in the way they relate to their students?
- What is a 'tutorial'?
- What is an induction day?

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Survey of UK institutional use (2009)

...it's used on a pre-sessional course to familiarise students with living and studying in Britain. It's used both in the classroom and is accessed by students independently.

...available on VLE for students to access as they wish for independent study.

Some of the (web) pages are embedded into year long full-time Web CT (VLE) areas.

There is a link to PFS from the front page of our VLE (Desire2Learn) which is accessed by all of our college staff and 2000 students (up to 1000 are international or have English as a second language)

I use links to parts of it during our pre-sessional course as part of our Guided Independent Learning Programme

In a course wiki - this year we had over 100 mainly Chinese (students)

(PFS) is included in our VLE for international students before they arrive, but the site is currently being piloted and hasn't gone fully live. Student feedback so far is very positive.

How is UK HE using it?

Pre-arrival links: [University of Stirling](#); [Kingston University](#); [University of Exeter](#); [Keele University](#); [Kent University](#); [Manchester University](#); [Birmingham City University](#)

Careers: [Glasgow Caledonian University](#); [University of Cambridge](#)

Student Services: [De Montfort University Leicester](#)

International Office: [Goldsmith's University of London](#)

[Heriot Watt University](#); [University of Aberdeen](#)

Departmental: [University of London](#) (School of Pharmacy)

[University of Warwick](#) (Module support in Institute of Education)

[University of Warwick](#) (Computer Science)

[University of Southampton](#) (Chemistry)

In pre and post-arrival induction

[Durham University](#) (pre-arrival resource)

[Imperial College London](#) (post-arrival checklist)

[University of Nottingham](#) (Pathways – a pre-arrival resource)

[University of Portsmouth](#) (PrepUP: a pre-arrival course)

[University of Reading](#) (Get Prep@red; pre-arrival resource for International Foundation Programme)

[University of Exeter](#) (Pre-sessional Independent Study Programme)

[University of Glamorgan](#) (Self directed study)

[University of Edinburgh](#) (Reading, Writing & IT)

[Newcastle University](#) [University of Leicester](#) (In-sessional)

Pedagogic design

- Separable building blocks for induction course/resource set inclusion
- Activity-based approach ‘ learning by doing’
- Engage students in reflection
- Enhanced with feedback, help, extra resources
- Make use of different media (audio, video, text, flash)
- Flexible modes of delivery/ use
- Consistently designed, styled and sized (bite-sized chunks for learning)
- LOC authoring tool (www.llas.ac.uk/loc)

The way forward?

- PfS website sponsorship to sustain further development?
- Creation of a PfS social site e.g. a 'student room' type bulletin board?
- Adaptation of PfS learning resources for access on mobile devices?
- Adaptation of demo video for YouTube?
- Other Web 2.0 features?

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Thank you

prepare for success

www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk

Watson, J. (2011) Designing a Self-Access Website of Pre-arrival Learning Resources to Support International Student Mobility. Ed-Media (AACE) (*Forthcoming*)