

Education for mental health case study

Study skills: extended induction/ International Relations

Dr Rebecca Upsher

King's College London



Contents

Context	2
Outcomes of module	3
Development of module	6
Pedagogic approaches to promote student wellbeing	6
Challenges	7
Advice for other academics from module leader:	8
Future plans	8

Context

The 'Study skills: extended induction' is a first-year module for undergraduate students studying BA International Relations, BA War Studies, BA War Studies and History, BA International Relations and History. It was designed to support the transition to university. It is organised around three themes: knowledge building, community building, and skills building. This module has four components to support students: whole cohort lectures, small group seminars, peer mentoring and drop-in sessions.

The War studies programme is a huge cohort (N=300). One rationale for developing the 'Study skills: extended induction' module was to give students a sense of community and enhance peer support and help address gaps in attainment.

"I would like students to see themselves as part of the war studies community, see less of the discourse of difference, really the way they talk about themselves as being part of a community."

Dr Nicholas Michelsen, module leader.

In addition, this new module allowed an opportunity to identify students who are experiencing mental health difficulties earlier, to prevent them disclosing only when they are really struggling. The aim of combining small group seminars and peer mentoring is to encourage students to seek help from personal tutors earlier. A reason for embedding this content within a 'skills-based' framework is to see students worry less about failure in their first year, an observation made in previous cohorts.

"I want students to hear the message that they are doing something new and it's ok for it to be difficult and be less anxious about failing."

Dr Nicholas Michelsen, module leader.

Outcomes of module

Through this integrated programme of activities, all students will be supported in:

- + developing key academic and transferable skills (including wellbeing related skills)
- + better adjusting to the pressures of HE
- + developing a richer sense of community belonging
- + taking ownership of their education as a holistic and life-long trajectory.

Key module information	
Typical intake	N=300
Format*	Whole cohort lectures Small group seminars Peer mentoring Self-study online modules Drop-in sessions
Level of study	Undergraduate first years
Status	Compulsory
Credited	No
Assessment	No
Assessment description	N/A
Assessment feedback	N/A
Location	Lecture hall/classroom
Teaching staff	Lecturers/Graduate Teaching Assistant
Duration/frequency	Weekly over 20 weeks; one lecture (1.5 hour) and one seminar per week (1 hour)

*This extended induction has only been run once, during the covid-19 restrictions, therefore all sessions were online.

Education for mental health case study

Study skills: extended induction/International Relations

Curriculum				
Week	Lecture	Seminars	Peer mentoring	Drop-in sessions
Week 1	Induction		Introductory meetings with peer mentors and personal tutors.	
Week 2	Introduction – Lectures, seminars, taking notes, reading, settling in to UG life.	Academic reading	Introductory meetings with peer mentors and personal tutors.	
Week 3	Plagiarism, Turnitin and marking; UK academic culture, presentation skills, debates, developing arguments	Plagiarism and referencing		
Week 4	What is War Studies?		Check-in with your personal tutor	
Week 5	Leadership, Peer mentoring, managing conflict, mitigating circumstances	Conflict resolution	Second peer mentor meeting	UG careers lounge
Week 6	Independent study and working remotely, time management and organisation, coping with stress, finding support.			
Week 7	Volunteering; London and Service; Careers	Developing effective working and revision strategies and independent study		UG careers lounge

Curriculum				
Week	Lecture	Seminars	Peer mentoring	Drop-in sessions
Week 8	Studying Abroad; Global Opportunities; Networking			
Week 9	Selecting modules for BA2; Planning your degree; External module choice; Exploring different sectors		Third peer mentor meeting	Study Abroad
Week 10	Preparing for term two; consolidating knowledge and learning from term one; critical thinking and research			Q&A with study abroad tutor and students who have been on study abroad in previous year
Week 11	Welcome back – term two introduction.	How to write an essay	Fourth peer mentor meeting	
Week 13				UG careers lounge
Week 15			fifth peer mentor meeting	
Week 17				UG careers lounge
Week 18	Refresher – exam prep; coping with stress	Developing effective working and revision strategies		
Week 19		Coping with stress and time management		
Week 20		How to cope in exams	sixth peer mentor meeting	End of course social and thank you for peer mentors/GTAs.

Development of module

- + The module started in 2019-20 academic year and ran with a lecture series of five sessions over five weeks. The second time it was run (2020-21 academic year), the lectures were supported with seminars and peer mentoring scheme
 - students aware that is a new programme and feedback is welcome for ongoing development
- + This undergraduate programme was set up with consultation of the students, and every year discussion with students would shape what the next year would look like. Part of this meant programme leads got to know the first couple of intakes well and students were able to share their experiences:
 - eg really high achieving students, who are extremely anxious about a 2:2 or 2:1 essay, as they come in achieving A* grades or abroad 90% for essays.

Pedagogic approaches to promote student wellbeing

- + This programme is specific to War Studies students.
 - “I think this programme is different from others as it is an indigenous exercise to war studies, ie, it was conceptualised in light of the particular challenges that war studies students experience, in terms of the diversity of the intake and the different programmes across the department, and the particular community we are.” Dr Nicholas Michelsen, module leader.
- + Module leaders are approachable in terms of how to engage with students and communicate to students that they care about their wellbeing.
 - Seminars were an experiment in the 2020-21 academic year and are now a permanent fixture in the 2021-22 academic year. King's Academy provided the department with seminar briefs, and they produced clear directive lesson plans and PowerPoints that Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) could deliver. Usually, GTAs are given more freedom in other modules in the department.
- + Peer mentor scheme very structured, clear guidelines on what the peer mentors should do, and each session has a subject and what to discuss.
- + Seminars do not necessarily relate to lectures, often just drawing out one element of lecture eg, mitigating circumstances lecture, followed by seminar on resolving conflict.

Challenges

- + Making an emotional connection with students is an important part of learning and communicating authentic messages through video conferencing is difficult. In order to achieve this, dynamic and engaged academic staff are needed. The department received positive feedback from module evaluations regarding the availability and approachability of the module leader, Dr Nicholas Michelsen.

“Open lectures work better in-person because it’s easier to communicate a certain mood or tone and assess the attitude to learning... A lot of it [blended wellbeing and skills-based messaging] is getting the students to see a senior member of the department saying something in a credible way, it just doesn’t happen in the same way online.”

Dr Nicholas Michelsen, module leader

- + Lecture session length not right, student feedback was that they were too long (2 hours).
- + Getting the order of sessions right
- + Not knowing all students are engaged in sessions, and for those who aren’t engaged is this something to worry about? Do extra steps need to be taken to reach them?
- + Concerns over longevity:

“I worry about institutional embeddedness, it’s technically a programme add-on, it doesn’t change the outline of the programme, so what’s to stop it dying? Does it purely rely on the enthusiasm of the people currently running it? Will it continue long term?”

Dr Nicholas Michelsen, module leader.

Advice for other academics from module leader:

- + Students are very aware of their wellbeing:

“The students we have now are generationally distinct, they are very aware of wellbeing language. You can’t effectively teach these students without speaking about wellbeing in some way.”

Dr Nicholas Michelsen, module leader

- + Important to think about wellbeing strategically at a programme or departmental level, and not necessarily rely on each individual academic to deliver in every module (and not every academic is well equipped to integrate wellness into their teaching).

Future plans

- + More community building and social contact!

Contact us

General enquiries

+44 (0) 3300 416201

enquiries@advance-he.ac.uk

www.advance-he.ac.uk

Media enquiries

+44 (0) 1904 717500

communications@advance-he.ac.uk

www.advance-he.ac.uk/contact-us

   @AdvanceHE

Advance HE enables excellence in higher education, helping it shape its future. Within the UK and globally, Advance HE supports institutions in the areas of excellence in education, transformative leadership, equity and inclusion and effective governance. This is delivered through membership benefits (including accreditation of teaching, equality charters, research, knowledge and resources), programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, consultancy and enhancement services and student surveys.

Advance HE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031. Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607 Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946. The Advance HE logo should not be used without our permission.

Unless stated otherwise, Advance HE is not the copyright owner of these case studies. The details and content of the case studies must not be used in any form without the prior express permission of the relevant author(s).

© 2022 Advance HE. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Advance HE. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright owner. Such permission will normally be granted for non-commercial, educational purposes provided that due acknowledgement is given.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE: +44 (0) 3300 416201 or publications@advance-he.ac.uk