Induction
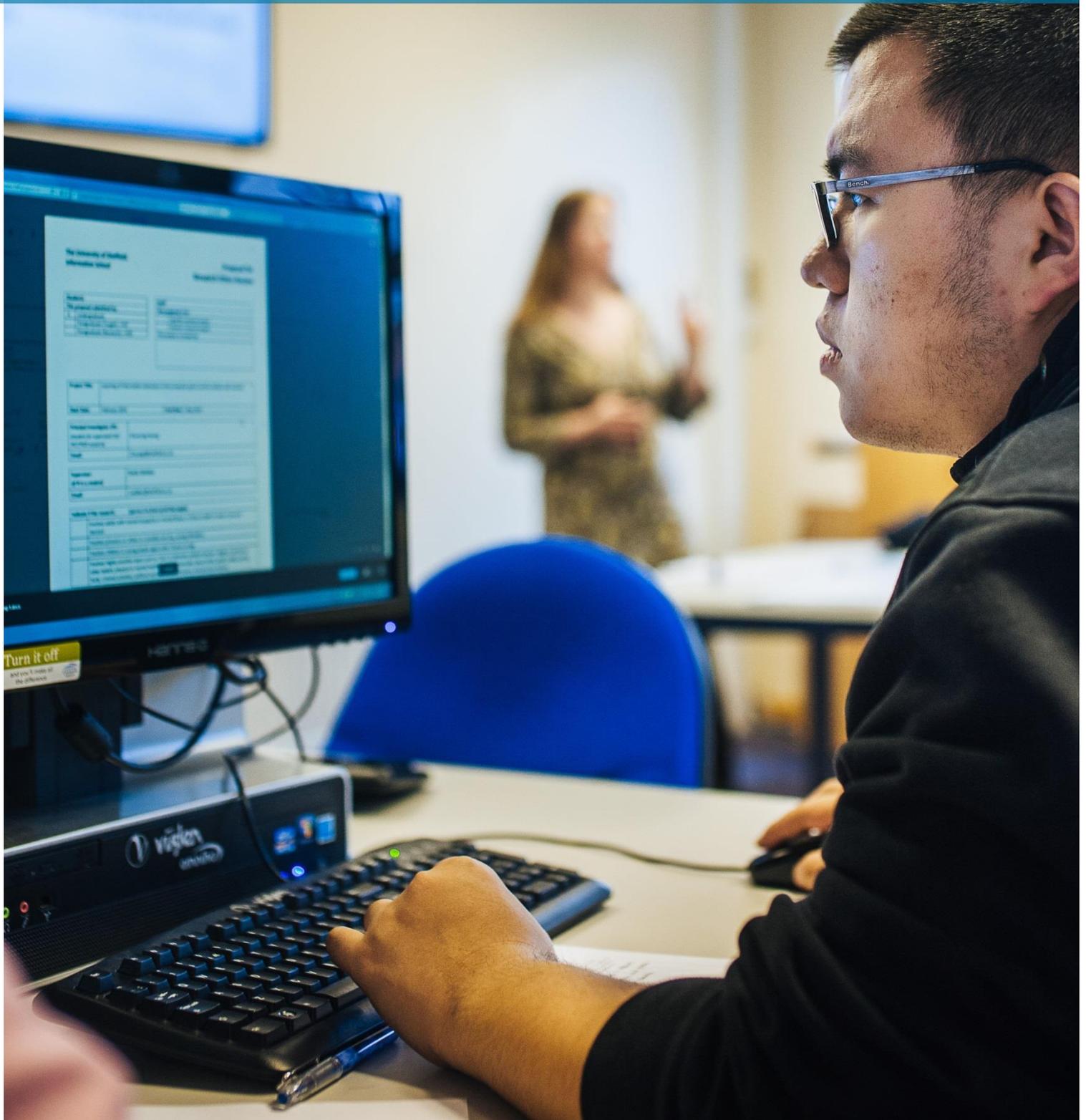
The information on these pages has been developed as part of the Teaching International Students project

Contents

1. Introduction

All higher education institutions (HEIs) work hard to provide effective induction programmes for all their students. For newly-arrived international students, almost everything they encounter may be new and unfamiliar and they are away from their usual coping and support systems such as family and friends.

According to Evans et al. (2009):

"For domestic students, the transition to university can be exciting, unfamiliar and challenging. For international students it is all that and more. Much is unfamiliar to a new international student: the culture, the environment, the climate, and usually the language. The challenges are numerous and the learning curve is steep. Most universities recognise this and offer a variety of support services, the most common of which is new student orientation."

The better these induction services and programmes, the more likely that students will choose to remain on their courses until graduation and have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and support to undertake their studies successfully.

2. The main issues: getting started

This section provides some useful resources for staff to consider as they look to develop and improve their short- or longer-term induction or orientation programmes. For information about pre-sessional support services and programmes see the 'Pre-arrival and pre-sessional support' section in this resource bank.

Induction and transition are complex areas; a student from a non-traditional UK background may experience as much 'culture shock' as someone with an international background, so many of these resources are suitable for all kinds of students. Although much of the academic support focuses on English Language provision, an international student from for example, Australia or America may need as much support as an EU non-native English speaker, and stereotypical judgements about individuals can often be unhelpful (Louie, 2005). Research by Hou, Montgomery and McDowell (2011) suggests that the 'gap' experienced by Chinese students on arrival in the UK, for example, is lessening as radical social and education reforms in China mean that these students are becoming more 'Westernised' and often even more 'internationalised' than their UK peers.

There are huge individual differences which is why so many institutions are setting up peer-mentoring schemes in addition to the traditional support provided by tutors and other support services. Many international students report that having a one-to-one 'buddy' relationship with a local student in the early stages of their study is especially helpful.

Most HEIs run a range of induction or orientation programmes that are designed to ease the transition of international students into their new learning environment. These include a range of social and academic activities and often include sessions on how to use the university library as well as other language and learning support services. Many universities also have a range of information available online that students can access prior to arrival that can help to reduce 'information overload' upon arrival or be accessible later when the student is more able to take the information in (or when it is actually needed). Many international students report, however, that they also value face-to-face sessions that allow them to ask individual questions. It is also important that orientation events include both international and local students so that they have opportunities to make friends and develop a social support network.

Some universities have longer-term transition programmes that recognise that international students' support needs may last much longer than the initial first few weeks and may involve not just 'culture shock' (different physical environment, customs and practices), and 'language shock' (realising that their mastery of formal English doesn't prepare them for fast-paced, colloquial or disciplinary language and vocabulary) but also

'academic shock' (different teaching and learning approaches such as relationships between teacher and students, forms of assessment and even what counts as 'knowledge'). The affects of 'academic shock' can persist much longer than the affects of culture and language shock (Ryan, 2005).

Good induction and transition programmes include explicit information about the types of teaching and learning approaches that international students are likely to encounter. The Prepare for Success PMI project developed by the University of Southampton is a very useful online tool for international students to explore issues such as what they can expect regarding relationships with tutors, listening to lectures and academic writing etc.

If you are looking for inspiration for induction within a particular discipline the 'Disciplinary approaches: resources from the Subject Centres' section may be helpful.

A range of PMI-funded pilot projects have focused on orientation/induction/transition.

The QAA issued guidance materials in January 2012 on International students studying in the UK – Guidance for UK higher education institutions.

The document sets out benchmarks for good practice in supporting international students across their 'lifecycle' (following the TIS model) and stresses that responsibility for international students lies with all staff across universities and should not be separately seen as academic or support staff responsibilities. The document outlines overarching principles when discussing international students, including:

- An inclusive environment

- Student engagement

- Shared responsibility

- Staff development

Another useful resource by UKCISA is their guide to 'Planning and running orientation programmes for international students'.

3. Induction needs of students on transnational programmes - Dr Dave Burnapp, University of Northampton

Dr Dave Burnapp considers the needs of students who do not leave their 'home' country but study on transnational programmes. Many of the issues and suggestions discussed also apply to induction programmes more generally.

"The needs relating to academic adaptation of international students who physically move across borders have prompted the development of induction and support systems to ease their transition. However the matching needs of students on transnational programmes (TNE) have received less attention. In these programmes the students follow UK programmes whilst staying in their own country, and this can include a large array of different forms of provision, including amongst others joint and dual awards, e-learning or 'flexible and distributed learning' (FDL) programmes, 'flying faculty' delivery, or off-shore campuses. Sometimes TNE students may subsequently move from being transnational students to being international students, for example, those involved in 2+2 and 3 + 1 articulations. Although transnational students do not experience the same social adaptation process as international students, they still need to negotiate several transitions related

to epistemology, as they are moving from one culture of learning to the new culture of education of the transnational programme.

The following suggestions are not based on a deficit model of figuring transnational students as in any way lacking any particular skills or attributes. Instead they recognise that all activities are influenced by assumptions and expectations from the situation they originate from, and so – as with any form of intercultural activity – the assumptions underpinning educational activities included in transnational programmes need to be clearly unpackaged. Students need to understand why any activity is expected, not just what is expected.

3.1 Suggestion One: Group engagement, for example researching and reporting group projects

This form of activity is extremely common within UK style higher education, but it may be a novel type of activity for some students in some situations where individual learning is the norm. If, therefore, a TNE programme is going to include group work then the designers of the programme need to make certain that the students (and also any local academic staff who have contact with the programme) have a thorough induction to this type of learning. This requires an explanation of the belief that knowledge is (or at least can sometimes be) socially constructed, and also that a key transferable skill – which most programmes validated in the UK system probably have as stated learning outcomes – includes the ability to work in groups. The induction programme should therefore involve some form of group activity, and then the debriefing of that activity should include reflection on the issues the students encountered in the group research: 'How did you get on'? 'How did you feel'?

3.2 Suggestion Two: Reflective learning

The previous suggestion mentioned 'reflection on the issues the students encountered in the group research', and hence this introduced another feature which is increasingly common in UK higher education programmes, for example the use of reflective logs in portfolios. The idea of some forms of learning being subjective, of being about personal changes, and the ensuing belief that reflection can facilitate such changes, is an assumption which might not have arisen in TNE students' previous educational experiences (although the notion of self-reflection in learning is quite common in some education systems such as in China). Again, therefore, if a TNE programme expects (and crucially will assess) student reflection, then this is another aspect of the programme which needs 'unpacking'. This might be hard for students to grasp initially if their previous education has been about the acquisition of a canon of (objective) facts. It is not hard to see that if students only understand what is expected (for example to be given a list of the items they need to include in a portfolio) without understanding why reflection is expected, then their engagement in the activity will be at best confused. The induction programme should therefore model and unpack reflective activities.

3.3 Suggestion Three: Critical learning

The previous suggestion contrasted acquisition of objective facts with subjective evaluation: this involvement of self (my opinion, my evaluation, my recommendations) is again an expectation which not all students may have previously experienced. Burnapp and Zhao (2009) describing transnational education suggested that cultures of education are likely to reflect to some extent the prevalent ideologies which are exhibited daily in such things as how the news is reported (for example whether several views are presented or just one official view), or how decisions are made in workplaces (using either horizontal or vertical decision making structures), or expectations of whose voices have the right to be heard in certain scenarios. Some students may therefore need encouragement to recognise that the highest marks are reserved for critical thinking, that is for those whose voices come through clearly in an assignment, and again this is an issue which induction courses for TNE students must address.

Further fundamental assumptions which might need to be addressed could include the need for application activities in many assignments, for a demonstration of autonomous learning, and for a wide range of assessment methods going far beyond end of course examinations. The total package of assumptions

underpinning the programme needs to be identified, and the induction programme needs to justify, to model, and to allow development of the approaches used.

Hence it is essential that transnational education programmes have built into them several layers of induction activities which will enable all stakeholders to identify the principles underlying the surface behaviours contained in the teaching approaches which the courses use. This will require staff development both for the UK academics so that they can recognise how to unpack assumptions for students previously unused to these approaches. This will also require staff development for overseas academics involved in delivery or support in partner institutions, as well as in-depth interventions with students during their induction. These steps must go beyond surface description of learning activities and move on to explore the underlying educational beliefs which demand these approaches."

Burnapp, D. and Zhao W. (2009) Voices from the chat rooms: Research into the experiences of Chinese students participating in transnational education programmes as reported on internet social networks. Enhancing the Learner Experience in Higher Education, Vol. 1, No 1

4. Additional induction resources:

The Student Room a popular online student community with several fora, one of which is the 'International Lounge'

UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) (2008) 'Mentoring schemes for international students: A practical guide' includes considerations of budget, staffing and sustainability as well as an extensive Appendices section with examples of mentor and mentee contracts, application forms and evaluations.

University of Glasgow College of Social Sciences has a good range of induction activities including a quiz

Northumbria University offers an online induction programme for EU and international students

University of Oxford has a useful website explaining what students can expect from different types of learning.

Monash University: Working with Students from China. In addition to practical suggestions there is a comprehensive reference section broken into categories such as 'Learning in a second language' and 'Education in China'.

The University of Melbourne Student Union runs a buddy scheme during Orientation Week.

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Toolkit
The EAP Toolkit is a set of commercial online learning resources in study skills and English for Academic Purposes for international students, developed by the University of Southampton. It contains over 100 interactive items designed as 'learning objects', and provides over 80 hours of learning activity. It is licensed for use to UK institutions as an independent learning resource for international students and/or for blended use in pre-sessional and in-sessional courses. It can be web-hosted or delivered through a platform such as Blackboard or Moodle.

Joining up agendas: internationalisation and equality and diversity in HE (2011) Equality Challenge Unit [Senior management briefing on the benefits of developing joined-up working between equality and diversity and internationalisation]

5. What's the evidence?

Burnapp, D. (2009) Getting ahead as an international student. London: Open University Press.

Challis, H. (2011) The Provision of Induction Activities for Imperial College London's Collaborative PhD Students in *Enhancing the Learner Experience in Higher Education* Vol. 3, (1).

Evans, N., Wilson, F., Housley, H., Kimoto, L., Silver, T., Rhodes, G., Cox, L., Ebner, J. & Kessler, G. (2009) 'Orientation', in M. Andrade & N. Evans (Eds) International students: Strengthening a critical resource. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Education

Foster, K. (2013) Engaging students in academic transitions: A case of two projects using student voice and technology to personalise the experience. In J. Ryan (Ed.), *Cross-cultural teaching and learning for home and international students: Internationalisation of Pedagogy and Curriculum in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.

Hou, J., Montgomery, C. & McDowell, L. (2011) Transition in Chinese – British higher education articulation programmes: Closing the gap between East and West? in J. Ryan (Ed.) China's higher education reform and internationalisation. London: Routledge.

See Supporting International Students facilitators pack - Section 3: Supporting international students in new cultures of learning which includes
Lord, P. A. and Dawson, C. (2002) The Induction Needs of International Students at Postgraduate Level

Louie, K. (2005) 'Gathering cultural knowledge: Useful or handle with care?', in J. Carroll & J. Ryan (Eds), Teaching international students: Improving learning for all. London: Routledge.

Macrae, M. (1997), 'The Induction of International Students to Academic Life in the United Kingdom', in D. McNamara and R. Harris (eds.), Overseas Students in Higher Education: Issues in Teaching and Learning (London: Routledge)

Ryan, J. (2005) 'The student experience', in J. Carroll & J. Ryan (Eds), Teaching international students: Improving learning for all. London: Routledge.

Shannon-Little, T. (2013) Developing the multicultural community of practice: Starting at Induction. In J. Ryan (Ed) *Cross-cultural teaching and learning for home and international students: Internationalisation of pedagogy and curriculum in higher education*. London: Routledge.

Watson, J. (2008) Enhancing the experience of the international student: a pre-arrival online preparatory course, blending technologies and introducing life and study in the UK Proceedings of the Third International Blended Learning Conference Hatfield, UK. University of Hertfordshire

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