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Submission type: Presentation

Submission title:

Development of a pre-course online resource 'Preparation for Master's level'.

Abstract:

Development of a pre-course online resource 'Preparation for Master's level'.

Why?

The School of Health and Social Care delivers a flexibly managed MSc in Advanced Practice programme offering a variety of routes to accommodate a range of disciplines and professions in health and social care. Post graduate study offers practitioners the opportunity to specialise and work towards a higher degree in their area of practice. However, Keys' (2015) study of Edinburgh Napier students, concluded that whilst confident and experienced in their area of practice, some find the prospect of returning to study and making the transition to Master's Level quite daunting and suggested better preparation may be helpful. Indeed, Tobbell, O'Donnell & Zammit (2010) highlight that the majority of post graduate students return to study as mature students. They raise issues which challenge the assumption that students who have been through an undergraduate programme have the skills required to adapt to the shift in LTA approach at post graduate level where students are expected to take a more active role in their learning and embark on independent study.

What?

A 2015 review of the MSc Advanced Practice programme gave the opportunity for staff who teach across the programme to come together. Evidence from PTES and experience of staff highlighted that students required ongoing support to make the transition from graduate to post-graduate study. Building academic confidence and skills was a key aspect of this. A small working group of staff across the school, who are involved in teaching on the Master's programme, was established and tasked with the development of an online resource. Two of the team will present this work beginning by summarising the rationale then detailing the contents.

With a programme focus in mind, we created an online resource 'Preparation for study at Master's Level' which students had access to as part of the Induction process, four weeks before starting their modules. The resource includes an introduction to the MSc programme and to Moodle. Students are encouraged to interact with others and introduce themselves on a discussion board. Specific academic skills include literature reviewing; an introduction to academic conduct and plagiarism quiz; preparation for study with self-assessment activities; suggestions for further reading and links to broader University academic services. The final section has video contributions from previous students offering their perspectives of what studying at Masters level entailed and the benefits gained.

What difference did it make?

Resource evaluation to date has been via Moodle. Students' posts were very positive, reflecting on how this helped alleviate anxiety, made them feel more prepared, as well as understand that this is the beginning of a process. Others also comment on the value of contact with other students.

Summary – good practice

- Collaborative project involving staff across the school

- Developed in response to the needs of students making the transition to post graduate level study
- Programme focused project
- Student feedback very positive

Where next?

Formal evaluation of the resource which could elicit which aspects student's found most or least helpful and to identify areas for further development.

References

Keys, M., (2015). Evaluating the Impact of Practice of Online Child Protection Education at Master's level. *Social Work Education*, 1-13. doi:10.1080/02615479.2015.1117065

Tobbell, J., O'Donnell, V. & Zammit, M. (2010). Exploring transition to postgraduate study: shifting identities in interaction with communities, practice and participation. *British Educational Research Journal* 36 (2), 2