Advantage Initiative: embedding study skills into the curriculum.

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Aim

• To embed study skills provision at each stage to improve retention and performance
• To improve collaboration on study skills provision between academic departments and central services
• To nuance study skills provision at each stage to meet the progression needs of students
Background and Rationale

• Learning and Study skills integral part of a student’s learning
• Widening Participation
• All students
• Help and support with the development of their learning
• Stigma of centralised provision = remedial
• Entitlement and integral part of student’s learning = developmental
• Class setting
Background and Rationale

- Package more attractive to students
- Study skills are subject specific
- Improve the first year experience
- Aimed at second and final year as well
- Male vs female students vs study skills
How does it work?

- Partnership between SLAS and academic departments
- In core modules
- Timetabled sessions
- Study skills embedded and integrated in curriculum
- Study skills tailor-made, subject specific and bespoke
Participating departments

**CANTERBURY**
- Anthropology
- Architecture
- Biosciences
- Certificate in Combined Studies
- Centre for Work and Learning
- Electronics
- French
- KIHMS
- Physical Sciences
- Politics and International Studies
- Psychology
- SECL
- Social Sciences / SSPSSR

**MEDWAY**
- Computing
- Creative Events
- Certificate in Combined Studies
- Kent Law School
- Music Technology
- Social Work
- Social Sciences
- Tizard Centre
Examples

- Biosciences: planning study skills from foundation year to stage 3
- Anthropology: seminar exercises for stage 1 students
Advantages for students

- Students and their perceptions
- Ownership / buying-in
- Quality of Student experience
- Greater level of support and engagement from students
- Enhancement of Student Learning Experience
- Improvement of Student Learning Experience
- Entitlement for all
- Parity of experience
- Developmental and NOT remedial
Advantages for departments

• Partnership with academic departments
• Asset for departments
• Innovation and best practice
• Good practice to share and disseminate
• Shortcut: saves time for departments
• Value for money
Advantages for retention

• Retention programme taking place right at the beginning of a student’s start at university – Bridges the gap.
• Retention programme spanning all years of study
• Innovation and best practice
• Enhancement of First Year Experience
• Good practice to share and disseminate
Advantages for SLAS

- SLAS – outward facing / outreach
- Greater visibility and accessibility
- Sessions well-attended on the whole (part of regular timetabled sessions)
Challenges

• Need for greater preparation time for advisors
• New topic / not advisors’ discipline hence more time is needed to give a good session.
• Peak times when sessions are grouped in one week and therefore impact on advisors’ time
Feedback

• Initial feedback from students and staff has been positive; the timing of sessions has been good.
• Students are more confident in key areas of academic practice such as referencing and interpreting essay questions.
• Students have sought additional one to one advice on particular essay questions.
• Some staff are linking this initiative to the department's PDP provision and encouraging students to see their academic development as a set of skills which can be continually improved to meet the demands of academic study and beyond.
Conclusion

• The Advantage Initiative will help invigorate the SLAS website which has recently been redesigned. We aim to update our information for students and make it more subject specific.

• Initiatives such as this need to be a partnership between the academic department and the academic advice unit

• Although the generic workshops still exist they are likely to be phased out in favour of the embedded model of study skills advice delivery
Questions

- Does embedded study skills provision at each stage improve retention?
- How can collaboration on study skills provision between academic departments and central services be improved? (What makes a good partnership?)
- How can study skills provision be nuanced to meet the needs of students at each stage?
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