



Should an academic skills course be compulsory - a debate

School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh



What should be in an academic skills course?



Academic Skills in the School of Divinity

- Aim is to ensure all our UGs have the skills they need for their studies
- Level 7 course
- All students in a School degree programme are enrolled
- Non-credit
- Two years to complete
- Non-compulsory – just now!



How does it work?

- Timetabling issue – can not do face-to-face sessions
- Online, work at own pace but with a suggested timetable
- Have five 30minute lectures at start each module



Format

- WebCT
- Series of resources to work through – varying levels depending on what the students need
- Use of ECDL training materials
- Use of various internal (e.g. ISIS (Information Skills and IT skills) and external resources



How know doing?

- WebCT tracking – what does that show?
- Small multi-choice questions end each module



What does it include

- Library –
 - Use online catalogue
 - Use databases
 - Online resources
 - Paper resources

Includes what need now and also more advanced studies



- IT
 - Looking after “own” machine
 - Basic IT terms explained and practical implication
 - IT systems of University that students must interact with



- Essay writing –
 - Preparation
 - Styles (footnotes)
 - Plagiarism



- Presentations

- Creating
- Presenting

Not need in 1st or 2nd years generally but is required for Hons



Uptake

- Third time been run

- 1st time was called “IT skills” and for 1 semester only; 75 enrolled, over half visited it at some point; 20 completed
- 2nd time re-named and called “Academic Skills” most visited; 80 enrolled, about 12 completed but deadline for completion still to come
- 3rd time; most visited and todate none completed



Feedback

- Students:-

- Don’t need; know from School
- Useful as ensures all at the same level

- Staff

- Skills are very poor and students generally weak in number of core skills



Where now?

- Make 1 year course?
- Make requirement for entry to Hons; failure means only graduate with an Ordinary degree?



Should it be compulsory

- Yes
- No
- Unsure



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