



PTAS Project Report (for SMALL PROJECT GRANTS)

Project Title: Developing pre-entry online Chemistry course for offer holders with widening participation background

Principal Investigator : Anna-Maria Maciejuk
School / Department : Chemistry
Team members : Jennifer Ross, Michael Seery

Brief Report (maximum 500 words)

What did you do?

We have developed a sustainable, pre-entry information package, with an aim to provide support, resources for students undertaking studies at the School of Chemistry to enable successful start of their Chemistry degree. This will lead to reduced concerns about starting the University raise educational culture, pastoral support, and careers aspirations for students from a range of backgrounds. This is compliant with the Widening Participation strategy for the School of Chemistry 2018/20 plan.

We worked on developing two streams of information on (Course 1) Chemistry and Maths basics and (Course 2) 'How to Uni'. While the Course 2 is developed and available, we are in process of developing the content for the Course 1.

The 'How to Uni' part of the course, focuses on introducing students to university cultural capital with a focus on the School of Chemistry (topics on university life, short videos from current chemistry students what studying in the Chemistry Department is like).

What did you find out?

In preparation of the Courses, we have surveyed students in their first year to explore themes that emerge from current students' observations about their first experience with university life and academic preparation, prior to their start of Semester 1, Year 1. Students were asked to comment on their confidence, expectations, and worries prior to starting their degree. As well as were asked to remark on their own academic preparation and any academic challenges they faced during the Semester 1, Year 1.

The questionnaires revealed prevalent concerns about starting university (socialising, time management, workload) hence we prioritised the development of content of 'How to Uni' specific to the students starting at the School of Chemistry.

The answers also revealed the most urgent content for Chemistry and Maths needed to support students' understanding of level and requirements of courses taught at the Chemistry course, specifically Maths (which students found most challenging on their first year of study).



How did you disseminate your findings?

We made the videos and other information on 'How to Uni' widely available on-line, via Student-led website Chemunity (<http://www.chemunity.chem.ed.ac.uk>; <http://www.chemunity.chem.ed.ac.uk/videos>). The offer holders are strongly encouraged to look at these pages in their own interest to prepare them for the upcoming Semester 1, Year 1. We also collaborate with the Chemunity to maintain blogs and social media on student's experiences.

What have been the benefits to student learning?

It addresses unfamiliarity of university life and aims to reduce overwhelming feeling, creating bonds between current students and offer holders prior to their arrival.

How could these benefits be extended to other parts of the university?

This course was made available to all pre-entry offer holders to increase their confidence and familiarity with the cultural environment at the School of Chemistry, University of Edinburgh.

If a student did not take the pre-course prior to the start of Semester 1, Year 1, their personal tutor was asked to advise student to take up such course in order to be on top of the game.

Who can be contacted for further details?

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Financial statement (please delete as appropriate):

This project has utilised the funding awarded to it by the PTAS adjudication committee and the Principal Investigator or School Administrator appropriate can provide financial statements showing the funding usage as and when required by the UoE Development Trusts who may require it for auditing purposes.

Please send an electronic PDF copy of this report to:

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