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Internationalisation of an MSc Advanced Occupational Therapy Award

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Introduction

An International MSc Advanced Occupational Therapy Award was validated at Northampton University, England in 2007. An existing award was modified to accommodate International students' needs addressing issues of diversity, inclusion, cross cultural and inter professional learning.

Objectives

Three awards were created; a post graduate certificate, diploma and MSc in Advanced Occupational Therapy to allow study flexibility. Curricula were designed to teach both part and full time students together to facilitate cross practice and cultural experience. All teaching, learning and assessment methods were aligned to contain the content of what students had to learn.

Description

Ten part time UK and seven full time International students enrolled on the MSc in the first year joining an existing part time cohort. Seventeen part time UK and 13 full time International students enrolled in 2008-9. International students displayed poor language skills, reliance on rote learning, passivity and teacher dependence (Biggs, 2003). They expected to practice within the UK as part of the award and their journey warrants exploration as they faced stressful changes such as geographical, social, educational, cultural and hierarchical.

Results

Staff adaptation and reviews of teaching and learning strategies addressed cultural adjustment. Group tutorial support helped students to adapt to new cultural learning environments, constructivist teaching, academic writing, creative thinking and cultural norms. Personal Academic Tutors provided pastoral support to tackle homesickness whilst teaching targeted new learning to develop critical thinking, understanding plagiarism and improving academic writing. Social networks were established to appreciate cultural differences whilst students adapted to new teaching techniques and carried out strategically planned practice visits.

Conclusion

Student and staff evaluations were excellent with award completion demonstrating that teaching and learning strategies are effective in facilitating deeper learning at Masters Level for both UK and International students.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

The majority of International students are now working within the UK and demonstrate that the award has been successful and facilitates cultural mobility, equality and inclusion.

Reference

Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. 2nd ed. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.