

International Law Students in Transition: Challenges and Fears

AHSS Teaching Day 2015
University of Limerick

Dr Kathryn O'Sullivan, School of Law



Introduction

- University of Limerick's Strategic Plan 2011-15: Goal 3
 - To sharpen our 'international focus in all areas of activity'
 - Very competitive market
- Liaised with International Ed Division
 - IED highlighted the insecurity of law students; feelings of lack of preparedness for study in English (or in Ireland)



Legal English Project

- Applied for AHSS funding to run dual focused project
 - Part I: Workshop on Legal English and the Legal Databases
 - Part II: Empirical Research
- Aims
 - Quite broad, student-centred learning environment for current cohort
 - Capture students' views, fears, expectations



Detail of the Project

- **Full-day programme: Week 1**
- Morning: Seminar/Workshop
 - Introduced students to the Irish legal system
 - Key legal terminology in English
 - The main sources of law in Ireland
 - Introduced students to important Irish terms which they would need to understand the operation of law in Ireland (Oireachtas, Gardaí etc)
 - Detailed workbook (TAs designed)
 - Activity-based sessions



Detail of the Project

- Afternoon: E-learning Workshop
 - Moved to a computer laboratory
 - Introduced the students to the key legal databases
 - Highlighted key features of library website
 - Built student confidence in navigating the key law resources
 - For example: finding cases, legislation, academic articles
 - Activity-based again





Detail of the Project

- Gave them opportunities through to get to know each other, the various nationalities represented and the different legal systems
 - Took an inclusive comparative approach to delivering the programme
- Brought the students to lunch in the Pavilion



Detail of the Project

- **Exam Preparation Seminar: Week 11**
- Not in the original plan – Supported by School of Law (2 hour session)
- Held in response to student feedback and concerns
- Was one of most enlightening parts of the project
- Serious issues with assessment literacy – major cause of stress



Detail of the Project

- **Empirical Research**
- Asked the students to complete a questionnaire at three points in the project
 - To gain a deeper appreciation of the difficulties encountered by the visiting law students
 - To measure the effectiveness of the programme
 - Obtained Ethics Approval



Attendance & Feedback

- Attendance:
 - Almost complete attendance of Law students (17)
 - Non-law link students? Source of tension
- Feedback:
 - 100% of students who completed the exit survey at the end of intervention in week 1 stated that it “definitely” helped them feel more prepared to study law in English
 - Desire for more interventions across term if possible



Feedback

- Students felt the interventions enriched their international education experience
 - *'[M]ore than just a number'*
- Institutional recognition of their specific needs was appreciated by the students
 - *'The staff really tried to identify the challenges which exist for International/Erasmus students and were always helpful... The workshops were ... greatly appreciated and extremely helpful'*



Look to the future

- Results of the empirical research highlighted often low confidence levels of incoming international students and their desire for greater assistance at both the early stages of their study and, notably, as they approach exams – ‘assessment literacy’
- Integration with domestic students...
 - Incorporate IED Buddy System in future iterations



Look to the future

- Worthwhile project which could be replicated across other programmes...
- Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, *Learning and Teaching Across Cultures* (2013) 'Good Practice Principles'
 - Principle 3: 'Good teaching across cultures will provide context-specific information and support'
 - Discipline specific assessment information (terminology, style, seminar/workshop)



Conclusion

- Positive student experience (supported by AHSS) which reflected on wider UL community...
- IED support for workshops to run again in 2015/16!



GRACIAS
THANK
YOU
MERCI

DANKSCHEEN
 SPASSIBO
 SNACHALHYVA
 NUHUN
 CHALTY
 YAQHANYELAY
 TASHAKKUR ATU
 WAREEJA
 MATTEKA
 HUI
 SUKSAMA
 EKHMET
 UNALCHEESH
 HATUR
 GUI
 TINGKI
BIYAN
SHUKRIA
 YUSPAGARATAM
 DHANNYABAAD
 ANIHA
 ATTO
 MERISI
 DENKAUJA
 NEHACHALHYVA
 HATUR
 GUI
 EKOJU
 SIKOMO
ARIGATO
 MERASTAWHY
 GAEJTHO
 MAAKE
 LAH
GRAZIE
MEHRBANI
 PALDIES
 MANKETAI
SHUKURIA
 TAVTAPUCH
 MEDAWAGSE
 GOZAIMASHITA
 EFCHARISTO
 AGUYJE
 FAKAAUE
 KOMAPSUMNIDA
 SAHCO
 MINMONCHAR
JUSPAXAR
 BABIKA

