Introduction

Over the last five years there has been a significant increase in the number of international students with English as a second language at the York Management School. On the undergraduate programme international numbers have more than doubled in the last three years. In 2004-2005 there were 18 international students whereas in 2006-2007 there were 47. After home students, the largest national group is from the Peoples Republic of China (PRC).

The growth in the number of international students in the last five years at York mirrors what has happened in other UK Management and Business Schools. However, unlike staff in some universities, most of the lecturers at the University of York have had little experience of teaching diverse groups of students. Until five years ago, the School’s typical recruits were nearly all 18 and 19 year olds with good A level grades, typically from schools and Sixth Form colleges in more affluent parts of the UK. As a result of the change, teaching and support staff faced a steep learning curve, as they attempted to adjust what they do to match the altering characteristics of the student population.

The growing number of students from PRC has been a particular feature of the expansion in the numbers of international students. In the last five years, students from the PRC made up around two thirds of all internationals students at York. For that reason, this study of an attempt to support them by providing extra tuition has a particular focus on Chinese students, although the initiative referred to was always intended for all students with English as their second language.

Abstract

The growth in the number of international students taking business and management degrees in the UK has led to a series of new challenges both for the students trying to get the most out of their studies and for academic staff teaching and assessing them. Some of these challenges are felt most acutely by Chinese students and those trying to teach them.

This paper reflects on an attempt to provide English for Academic Purposes support to a group of international students studying for a Degree in Management at the University of York. For a range of reasons highlighted in the discussion, the project failed to achieve its goals. For our own purposes and to assist colleagues considering similar courses, it seems constructive to review the outcome. What went wrong and why?

Keywords: International students; English for academic purposes; Teaching strategies

Philip Warwick joined the University of York in 2000 after a career in NHS Management. He teaches on a range of programmes from 1st year undergraduate to post-experience Masters programmes. His has two main research interests - international business education and healthcare management. In 2005-6 he was awarded a Teaching Fellowship grant to visit universities in New Zealand and Australia to study their approach to teaching international students.
Early in 2003-2004, the Management School conducted an email-based survey of all its international undergraduate students. Up to this point there had been very little discussion about the implications for teaching and learning of the influx of international students. The survey questions asked the participants for their views on their learning experiences. The overwhelming response was that students considered language issues to be the most significant of problem they faced. Without reference to relevant literature or any studies outside the institution, a proposal was put together to offer additional language support in the form of an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme in the first year of undergraduate study. A successful bid was made for a small grant from the University’s Teaching Innovation Committee so that a pilot programme could be developed in 2004-2005.

The project was judged not to be a success for a number of reasons that will be detailed. Rather than dropping the idea of offering support to international learners the following year, it was decided to review the project in the light of recent literature on the international learner and the somewhat limited evaluation data from the project. The focus of the review was to try to develop an understanding of what went wrong and why, in the hope that this might lead to improvements and refinements. The paper ends by reflecting on the experiences gained and by discussing some of the lessons learnt. It is hoped that these reflections and ideas will be of use to others facing similar challenges.

Literature Review

Adjusting to life and learning in the UK

Despite the project’s focus on language, studies of international students suggest that it is only one of many challenges they face. Adjustment to living in the UK and the new educational environment can be equally problematic on arrival (Carroll and Ryan, 2005). International students are often very aware of the status and ranking of their chosen institution. However, few students research the type of teaching and learning they might expect in the UK. Some have very generalised views about what to expect and assume that their successful prior learning experiences will serve them well at their new institution (Ladd and Ruby, 1999). UK universities face significant challenges finding suitable and appropriate pedagogic styles to teach students from a wide range of prior experiences; providing adequate student support systems; and encouraging cohesion among increasingly diverse cohorts (Browne, 2004). At the same time, the international students face significant challenges adjusting to study in the UK.

Chinese, Indian and other Asian students are often used to a very teacher-centred approach to learning and have to develop a much more self-directed approach in the UK (Watkins and Biggs, 2001; Timm, 2005). This adjustment has to take place at the same time as students are suffering from the culture shock of moving to a strange country with different food, domestic arrangements, financial systems, and behavioural norms about social pursuits and alcohol consumption (Cox and Cameron, 2001; Gannon-Leary and Smailes, 2004; Turner, 2006b; Ramsey et al., 2007). The additional pressure resulting from their large financial outlay, and the hopes and expectations of families back home, only add to the problem.

The adjustment issue is further explored by McCallum (2004). She compared international students to ‘sojourners’ - people who voluntarily work overseas for a limited period of time - and suggests that sojourner is an appropriate label for Chinese students studying in New Zealand. Coates (2005) uses the sojourner label for UK based international students. She borrows the term from studies of migrant workers in the USA. She uses it to describe the survival strategy of many Chinese students studying in the UK. Coates (2005: 5). Like migrant workers, Chinese students study in the UK to achieve a goal associated with improving their social and economic position at home. In the students’ case it is to return home with a degree that will, they hope,
lead to a more lucrative and well-paid career. Rather like migrant workers, they tolerate their temporary surroundings in pursuit of this longer-term goal. Adjustment is therefore not necessarily about adopting a UK approach to their studies but instead involves adopting a coping strategy which allows the student to get by in their new surroundings.

Nevertheless, language remains a problem and barrier for many international students (McNamara and Harris, 1997). A survey by Butcher and McGrath (2004) found that many international students had unrealistic expectations of their language ability. They surveyed international students in New Zealand prior to the start of their first semester. They found that 80 percent of their sample thought they would not have a problem understanding English and 77 percent thought they would be able to express themselves clearly in spoken and/or written contexts. However their experience was very different from their expectations, with only 57 percent understanding and 40 percent being able to express themselves. Smailes and Gannon-Leary (cited in Carroll and Ryan, 2005: 38) found similar results in their UK study.

Bringing these various threads together, it seems likely that many international students arrive in the UK with little grasp of how they will be taught and have great difficulty adjusting to a different approach to teaching and learning. They are likely to face many difficulties adjusting to life in the UK and they may have unrealistic expectations of their language ability. The reality of attending their first lecture, submitting their first assignments and finding that those language skills are not sufficient to deal with conversations with native speakers can cause a confidence dip (Carroll and Ryan, 2005). As a result, it is not at all surprising that many suffer from a form of culture shock and end up adopting what McCallum (2004) and Coates (2005) call a ‘sojourner strategy’.

Working with other students

Even when students have sufficient English language skills to cope with lectures, they can struggle with interactive discussions and group work (Parks and Raymond, 2004; Holmes, 2005; Ramsey and Mason, 2004). Many are happier saving face by remaining silent seeing it as the easiest and safest option (Vasey, 2004).

Home students often do not help the situation. Their use of English and their attitude toward international students can cause problems (Flowerdew, 1998; DeVita, 2001; Jackson, 2002; Carroll and Ryan, 2005; Cathcart et al., 2006). In some cases the attitude and approach of teaching staff can exacerbate the situation. Jackson's 2002 survey of tertiary education business students at an English speaking Hong Kong based management programme found that staff, trying to use case studies as a learning tool, were in despair about how little participation there was from their students. They tended to blame either the students for having a reserved nature or the language barrier. The students apparently supported the idea that case studies were beneficial but were worried about their language ability and/or did not like to ‘show-off’. As a result they did not offer opinions without checking them with their colleagues, did not like to argue against a colleague or member of staff's point of view, or talk in class, because this takes-up class time. These findings are consistent with Scollon (1999), who suggested that in the Hong Kong classroom the Confucian philosophy dominates - one learns in order to gain wisdom so that one may act appropriately - whereas much of modern western education is more Socratic and prefers dialogue to a didactic approach. Many Chinese students in the UK indicate that they value case studies and group work, but teachers can be frustrated at the lack of participation (Warwick and Malpocher, 2006).

Academic conventions

Academic conventions, in particular those concerned with written work, can also compound the problems for many international students. Some of the difficulties with referencing and apparent plagiarism among international students can be attributed to different cultural attitudes.
UK and other western education systems place great value on the importance of independent learning, while in many East Asian institutions, especially those in China, more value is attributed to relating the views of learned writers and the views of the authorities on the subject. The concept of intellectual property is very much rooted in the western culture and is not a significant concern in the Confucian tradition which shapes activities and beliefs in Chinese classrooms (Turner and Acker, 2002; Ryan, 2000; Swain, 2004), “the notion of plagiarism is based on western ideological perspectives and the ownership of texts” (Gannon-Leary and Smailes, 2004: 10).

With these differences in attitudes and educational and cultural backgrounds, it is perhaps not surprising that some international students (particularly students from PRC) are involved in cases of alleged academic misconduct (Swain, 2004). Hayes (2003) studied the issues of plagiarism on Masters programmes at Lancaster University. Their study focussed on two taught Masters programmes in Management, and Management and IT, with a large proportion of international students from diverse backgrounds. They found that there were substantial variations in attitudes to plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct between national groups; they also found that the practice was surprisingly widespread. Students from Greece, PRC and South-East Asia felt that copying a few sentences unacknowledged here and there was a fairly trivial offence. They also found that many international students perceived that academic misconduct was unlikely to be detected in their home countries and were surprised to see how seriously it was treated in the UK. Hayes’ work does not suggest that plagiarism is more common among international students, but that their plagiarism tends to be more easily detected.

Further language related issues that indirectly impact on international students include: the use of closed exams, which add time constraints to the language difficulty; use of metaphors and contextualised assignments that require background knowledge of the organisation and its products; and the requirement to write in an evaluative and critical style. The latter can be difficult if prior learning experiences have discouraged any form of criticism (Jackson, 2002; Cox and Cameron, 2001).

Providing additional support for international learners

As we have seen, there is a range of reasons for suggesting the provision of additional language support to international learners. This was the trigger for this piece of work. It was felt that additional EAP support would help international students, especially those from China, to perform better in their undergraduate study. But what does the literature say about this type of approach?

A series of articles and conference papers have recorded attempts to research improved teaching and learning for international students. One approach is to provide extra teaching to support them: some have attempted to improve the induction arrangements (Ottewill, 2006) whereas others have looked at ways of developing employability and communication skills (Devlin, 2006; Morgan, 2006), or nurturing critical thinking skills (Turner, 2006c). In New Zealand an impressive attempt was made to develop cross-cultural communication skills (Ramsey et al., 2007). Many, though not all of these, were initiatives targeted at international students to help with their adjustment to studying in western HE, as was the case with the initiative at the University of York. Few seem to have been completely successful. A common difficulty seems to be that most attempts to help the students require them to spend more time studying. Many international students have to work extremely hard to keep up with their coursework, so are unwilling to take on any ‘extra’ study, especially on modules and courses that do not make a direct contribution to the final degree classification or where they are outside the formal taught programme (Morgan, 2006).

For any busy academics pursuing their research careers, and hoping to minimise the time and
energy spent teaching, there is an obvious appeal to having a colleague run an academic writing and study skills module which encourages international students to operate in a similar way to home based students. However, there are potential problems in this type of approach. In particular, it stereotypes international learners as less able students - the focus remains on difference and there is an implied deficiency in the international students’ prior education. Providing extra support places the problem firmly with the student (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). Students who resist assimilation to the UK norm can become or feel even more isolated and disadvantaged (for example their work might come under close scrutiny). Egege and Kutieleh refer to ‘forced assimilation’ as ‘conceptual colonialism’ and unsurprisingly advise against it.

The Deficit model

Carroll and Ryan (2005) suggest that HE should stop identifying problems based on difference arguing that labelling international students in this way and seeing them as different is part of the problem the students face. Instead HE should adapt to reflect the greater diversity in backgrounds, country and culture of origin rather than expecting the students to change to reflect an out-dated HE system, HE should catch-up with the student population.

Some express concern that continuing to ignore the diversity created by accepting larger numbers of international students is morally unacceptable. For instance, Wang (2003) comments that to ignore the cultural make up of the student body is inappropriate and can be avoided by ensuring that programmes with a multi-cultural student intake have a multi-cultural curriculum. Others argue that internationalising is not just a case of enrolling a few overseas students; it requires the institution to develop, change and adapt (Bartell, 2003; Butcher and McGrath, 2004; Welch, 2002). Others suggest commercial reasons for developing programmes that are more responsive to the needs of the international learners (Archer 2006). If HEIs give international students the impression that they are not catered for, and that their needs are not considered or addressed, then enrolments are likely to suffer in due course. ‘Word of mouth’ travels very fast in the age of web-blog (Archer 2006).

By continuing to highlight differences between home and international students, teaching staff can exaggerate and exacerbate any difficulties. Egege and Kutielech (2004) argue that Chinese students, for example, should not be stereotyped into one body with a defined set of characteristics because the differences between the various ethnic Chinese cultures make this inappropriate. Also, the differences between many Asian international and western students are often exaggerated and, as a result, the similarities played down. For example, out of perceived necessity, many Asian students will adopt a strategic approach to their studies, focussing solely on assessment tasks and what they have to do to pass (Chan, 1997; Jones, 1999; Parks and Raymond, 2004). Of course this is exactly the same approach that is used by large numbers of home students.

When Jones (1999) notes the tendency among academics to view difference as a problem, she feels it is as much false perception as reality. She quotes a survey of Australian academics, which found that a third of those questioned felt that their Asian students tended to adopt a less adequate learning strategy compared to home students. It seemed that staff valued students who displayed an active learning style much more highly than those who adopted a more passive, typically Chinese approach. She challenges commonly held perceptions and suggests that lecturing staff should learn to work with and value differences, rather than view difference as an onerous and troublesome problem.

Teaching and learning strategies

Ryan (2000), Carroll (2002), Ho et al. (2005), and Carroll and Ryan (2005) have all produced extremely useful guides to teaching international students, offering guidance to hard pressed academics, programme leaders and HEI managers. Some additional ideas are listed below.
Jackson (2002) and De Vita (2001) offer a range of ideas about how to facilitate multi-cultural group working. Gannon-Leary and Smailes (2004) encourage colleagues to reduce the jargon and speed of delivery in lectures. To encourage participation they suggest asking international students to act as group spokesperson, which means that they can express other people’s views with at least some time to think about what to say. Ladd and Ruby (1999) emphasise the need to be explicit about academic conventions and gently introducing new methods, whilst Turner (2006a) suggests that skills needed for assessment should be embedded within the teaching programme.

Turner and Acker (2002) advocate reviewing programmes based on an understanding of prior learning experiences. JISC (2003) suggests that students are taught how to avoid plagiarism, and given opportunities for informal discussion at the end of lectures, when questions can be taken in a less threatening way. It is also suggested that all assessment tasks are reviewed each time a course is taught.

Hayes (2003) advocates reducing the feeling of alienation, by showing understanding; setting meaningful assessment tasks (with realistic word counts) that build knowledge rather than test it; offering ongoing linguistic and academic writing skills support; and being open, honest and frank in discussions about plagiarism. Jones (1999) adds to this by suggesting that all students should be given time to develop competence in the ‘academic genres’ of attending lectures, participating in tutorials, writing essays, literature reviews and theses. She suggests it should be regarded as serving an apprenticeship. International students are much less likely to pick up hints and suggestions about the requirements of these academic conventions. As a result lecturers should be much more explicit about what they expect from students.

Most of these suggestions for teaching and learning strategies do imply that international students need time and support to adjust to studying in the UK although only Hayes in this selection specifically mention on-going language support. However, offering support might not be enough in itself. Several commentators noted that international students can find it very hard to change their learning strategies to cope with a different approaches to teaching and learning, even though the result may be consistently poor performance (Cooper, 2004; Parks and Raymond, 2004; Turner, 2006b).

**Institutional adaptation**

At an institutional level, a difficult balance has to be achieved between encouraging and supporting international learners to adjust to host culture, and institutional adjustment to international learners (Zepke and Leach, 2005).

Instead of expecting international students to transform themselves so they can assimilate into the UK system, an alternative approach is to disregard all assumptions about students’ prior experiences and cultural stereotypes (Carroll and Ryan, 2005; Zepke and Leach, 2005) and adjust the institution, programmes and teaching methods in order to reflect a more diverse international student community. This approach rejects the ‘deficit’ view of international students because the ‘deficit’ view makes the assumption not only that some cultures are in ‘deficit’ to others but also that only the international students and not their teachers carry cultural baggage. Instead it favours a view that acknowledges the value of the different skills and knowledge international students bring into the lecture theatre.

Tierney (2000) suggests institutions need to adapt to reflect their diverse student population, validate diversity and make difference a normal expectation. He suggests that universities should reject the idea that international students have to assimilate to the UK norm and should instead re-orientate themselves to reflect their student population. There remains much scope
for continued research and debate in this area. As yet, few universities in the UK or elsewhere have completed a re-orientation. As a result, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that this type of approach is successful.

**Literature summary**

To summarise, it is clear from the literature that international students, and especially some Chinese students, face considerable problems if they decide to study at a western university. Studies of student views and experiences, from a range of universities in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, highlight the extent of the difficulties. English Language ability is a particularly difficult issue. Weak language skills can act as a barrier, obstructing the educational development of many international students, and cause students to turn-in on themselves and encourage them to adopt a coping or sojourner approach to their studies.

One way to reduce the barrier and help tackle wider difficulties is to provide additional English language support such as the EAP programme that will be the focus of the second part of this paper. Programmes like this are intended to help international students adjust to studying in the UK by providing them with extra supportive tuition. However, the support for this type of approach is not universal and there is no clear evidence in the literature to suggest that extra language support can improve the performance of international students or help them feel more comfortable in their studies. Hopefully, the next section of the paper can help inform this debate. It reports on what happened in the Management School at the University of York when an EAP programme was introduced for first year undergraduates in 2004-2005.

**Providing additional language support**

Following a survey of international student views, the decision was made to provide a programme of additional language support in the form of a supplementary EAP module. From the survey it was perceived that language was the main barrier these students faced. A grant to develop the programme was made by the University of York Teaching Innovation Committee and put in place for first year undergraduate students during the spring and summer terms in 2004-2005. The aim was to provide targeted support for students with weaker written and spoken English language skills and the funding provided 10 hours of additional tuition.

Specialist staff from the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) unit taught the sessions. The content of the programme was based on material adapted from an academic writing programme already provided by the EFL unit, with some additional management-related case study material. Sessions covered reading and note taking; planning work; structuring assignments; use of sources; writing style; paragraphs; academic conventions; and some grammar. The final session was a one-to-one discussion focussing on an essay assignment.

Up to this point, students had received little in the way of study skills support. In the first term, they had been briefed on academic misconduct; been on a library tour; attended an introductory computer skills module; and received some tuition from module leaders about preparation for specific assessments. However, they did not have any formalised academic writing or academic skills tuition. In preparation for the EAP programme, an optional formative writing test was offered towards the end of the autumn term. The exercise was based on a short video about a football club chairman and two extracts from academic articles about leadership style. In January, the students completed their first pieces of assessed written work. They were then able to judge their ability by measuring their skills against formalised marking criteria in comparison with their fellow students. Using these results, academic supervisors could identify the weaker students in their supervision groups. The hope was that most students would self-refer for the extra session but supervisors were additionally asked to encourage weaker international students to attend.
Several problems were encountered implementing the programme and all may have had an impact on the final outcome. Firstly, some staff were indifferent to the aims of the project and so did not make a point of encouraging students to take part in the formative writing exercise or attend the following extra sessions. Secondly, some staff members did not like the plan to make attendance at the sessions compulsory or completion of any tasks a requirement. A compromise position had to be agreed which meant that although the sessions were targeted at international students, the EAP sessions were optional and open to all students, home and international. Finally, the first assessment of the programme was reviewed and, instead of it being an open essay as it had been in previous years, it became a case study with three short questions. Pleasingly, the results were good with a mean average mark of 59 percent, suggesting that the students’ writing skills were better than the staff perceived. On the other hand, it gave some what was perhaps a false picture of their writing ability and dissuaded them from attending the EAP sessions in the following term. The literature on instrumental approaches to learning suggests that many students are unlikely to be motivated to study subjects that they feel are unlikely to make a direct contribution to their overall grade or career path (Coles, 2003; Johnson and Olekalns, 2002; Warwick and Ottewill, 2004).

Methodology
Once the EAP programme was set-up, plans were put in place to evaluate the results. The aims of the research were:

a) To measure student perceptions of their academic skills before and after the programme
b) To evaluate their views on the success or failure of the skills sessions
c) To obtain some understanding of the impact of the project on academic performance.

The approach was thus partly descriptive and partly exploratory (Saunders et al., 2003) seeking to get a picture of perceived needs and, in part, trying to test whether there were any links between academic skills tuition and overall performance. A mix of research approaches was followed, the primary aim being to get some useful data from the students rather than put them off by asking them to spend a lot of time taking part in interviews or filling-in detailed evaluation forms. One unforeseen consequence of relying on a series of short surveys was that because fewer students attended the sessions than had been anticipated, there was insufficient data to provide meaningful information about the outcomes. In retrospect, it would have been useful to extend the survey to those students who did not attend to find out why they chose not to do so.

The first student survey was a simple one page perceptual survey designed in conjunction with the EAP teaching staff. Students were asked to rate their perceived academic strengths and weaknesses. The plan was to repeat this questionnaire at the end of the programme. Secondly, students were asked to complete a standard course evaluation survey. Finally, anonymous data on student performance was assessed. Colour coding was used to identify the numbers of students who had attended one, two or more EAP sessions. The marks were then scrutinised to determine how these groups of students had performed compared with the average for whole year group.

Research results
The results of the project are described in sequential order below.

1. Formative writing exercise
Students were shown a short documentary video about a Football Club Chairman, given two article extracts about emotional intelligence and then given a week to write 500 - 600 words, about the applicability of the concept of emotional intelligence to the leadership situation portrayed in the film. Out of a year group of 80 students, 28 (including 10 out of 18 international students) attended the first session when the exercise was introduced and the video shown.
However one week later, only 14 scripts were returned for feedback from volunteer markers. All the submissions were from home students, most of whom had above average writing skills. The exercise completely failed to attract the international student target group.

2. Attendance at the academic writing skills sessions
A total of 22 different students attended the 6 skills sessions. Of these 11 attended just one session, and only 2 attended 3 or more sessions. The first session had only one participant. Of the 18 international students, only 7 attended one or more sessions (three Chinese students, one Middle Eastern student and 3 from EU countries).

3. Survey of perceptions
The student perception data, collected at the beginning of the EAP programme from all 22 attendees presents a picture of how this small group rated their ability against 6 different academic skills.

- Getting through the required reading (Reading)
- Note taking while reading textbooks or articles (Note taking)
- Writing in an academic style (Writing)
- Structuring assignments (Structure)
- Analysing rather than describing (Analysis)
- Referencing source material (Referencing)

The feedback was then weighted according to the position each student placed each skill on their response sheet so that the scores could be aggregated. The plan was that the EAP tutors would design the later part of the programme to deal with the most significant perceived weaknesses. Figure 1 shows the data collected from all 22 students, while Figure 2 shows the same data for the 7 who identified English as their second language.

It can be seen that getting the appropriate analytical writing style ('Analysis') seems to be the biggest issue for both home and international students. The international students perceived that essay structure and note taking were slightly more of a problem than for home based participants but given the small sample size this difference is not significant. It is often assumed that getting through the required reading is more of a problem for international participants than home students. However, in this small sample this was not supported.

Given that only 2 students attended 3 or more of the sessions, very few students had not made any progress developing these skills. Plans to repeat the survey at the end of the programme...
were therefore abandoned and at that stage there was not an opportunity to approach non-attenders.

4. Evaluation of the extra skills sessions
As the programme was optional and attendance varied significantly from session to session, an email was sent to everyone who had attended the sessions to ask them for freeform comments on the usefulness or otherwise of the programme. The comments were generally supportive, and mentioned the benefit of the instruction on writing style, structure, referencing and the usefulness of the one-to-one session at the end. Unfortunately the response rate was poor, with only 5 out of 22 responding to the request. To add to the poor evaluation data, only three students completed the standard course evaluation sheets. As with the email survey, the comments were positive but so limited in number that they are not deemed to be significant.

5. Analysis of academic performance
By analysing the end of year results, it was possible to determine that the 22 students who attended one or more EAP session performed marginally better than the year group average in their essay based assignments, although the difference was an average advantage of only 1.5 percent. The marks for the 7 international students who attended one or more sessions were all lower than class average marks for all three of their first year 3000 word essays. There was no noticeable improvement in performance after the EAP session. Their results tend to confirm that essay writing remains a major obstacle for many international students, however, given the sample size, it would be inappropriate to make any further inferences from the results.

Summary of research findings
Overall, the project’s results were very disappointing. It was especially disappointing that the plan to survey academic skills before and after the project had to be abandoned due to the lack of participants. As a result it is only possible to draw very broad-brush conclusions from the outcome data.

Even though the EAP sessions were made available to all students, three-quarters of the year group and nearly two-thirds of the international students did not attend any sessions. They either felt that they would not benefit sufficiently from time spent attending, or perhaps they did not get a sufficiently strong message about the benefits of attending. Only 7 of the main target audience (the international students new to studying in the UK) took any part in the formative exercise or attended at the EAP sessions. Students from PRC were particularly notable for their absence.

Discussion
It would be inappropriate to argue that the provision of supplementary EAP tuition in 2004-2005 was a success. Instead, the project is perhaps best summed-up by the title of this paper, ‘well-meant but misguided’. The most constructive way to discuss the outcome of the project is to use the literature to shed some light on the difficulties experienced in the hope that developing an understanding of what went wrong and why it went wrong might be helpful to colleagues considering similar initiatives in the future. So what can be learnt from the results?

The formative writing exercise was timed so that it did not clash with the submission of other pieces of work and was arranged away from the end of term, but sufficiently close to the submission date of the first assignment for some students to have started work and others to have at least started thinking about it. All students in the year group were invited to attend although they were told that attendance was optional. In retrospect, making the sessions optional and additional to existing commitments was an error. For many students there was no direct link between the sessions and the need for essay preparation towards the end of term. It
cannot be assumed that first year undergraduates will make connections between skill development and subsequent success. It is apparent that most students, especially newly arrived Chinese learners, are not adjusted to independent learning (Watkins and Biggs, 2001) and many are not prepared to invest time in supplementary study at this early stage of their degree. The English football club context for the exercise was inappropriate. One Chinese student observed that she did not know anything about football and therefore decided not to write the formative essay. At the time the author felt this illustrated that she did not perceive the benefits of completing the exercise. However with hindsight, that view places the problem with the student (Egege and Kutieleh, 2004). A better approach would have been to provide a less contextualised and more inclusive case study (Carroll and Ryan, 2005; Zepke and Leach, 2005).

Attendance at the EAP programme was promoted as being particularly helpful for international students. Despite this, attendance was poor throughout. This can partly be attributed to the optional nature of the sessions and the lack of connection between skills development and success (Morgan, 2006) but also partly because far from validating diversity (Tierney, 2000) the programme was highlighting and labelling difference (Jones, 1999) and placing extra demands on international students.

At this stage, it is more likely that international students would wish to emphasise their affinity for student life in the UK by not being seen to be trying too hard and not resorting to extra tuition. When the project took place in 2004-2005 it was particularly noticeable among the home students that they considered it ‘cool’ not to try too hard. Perhaps, for international students wishing to fit-in, these sessions were too obviously not ‘cool’. We have had an opportunity to email non-attendees in subsequent year groups. Those that responded mostly stated lack of time as the main reason for their non-attendance.

So, providing extra sessions on top of the existing curriculum is best avoided where possible. A more appropriate approach would be to incorporate the sessions into a compulsory research and study skills module (Peelo and Luxon, 2005); in other words improving the learning for all not just targeting the international learners (Carroll and Ryan, 2005). This approach has now been taken up by the Management School. A compulsory, credit bearing module has been introduced meaning that all students cover a range of academic skills and research skills in their first year and although much of the content was developed with international students in mind, it is also designed to benefit the many home students not used to independent adult learning.

Beyond the scope of the initial EAP project, the literature review has also been used to identify other obstacles and barriers to international students that had inadvertently developed in the undergraduate programme at York.

**Further findings from the literature review**

**Induction**

The importance of induction is referred to in the literature (Turner and Acker, 2002; Gannon-Leary and Smailes, 2004; Jackson, 2002). In particular, the guidance seems to be to drip feed the most important elements at appropriate moments in the first year and not to overload the students with information at the start of the year. Until 2004-2005, in York, all the induction for undergraduates was contained in a few days at the beginning of the first term; just when international students might be experiencing the most acute culture shock. A new ‘Academic and Research Skills for Management’ (ARM) module allows briefing on academic misconduct; use of the library and electronic sources; referencing; and many other skills, to be taught over a term rather than two or three days at the beginning of term.

**Academic misconduct**

In recent years the Department has spent a great deal of time investigating academic miscon-
duct and going through Departmental and University procedures with students suspected of and often proven to have used sources inappropriately. The majority of investigations relate to first year students, but cases have been detected with second and third year. International students with weaker writing skills undoubtedly have come under closer scrutiny than home students (Egege and Kuitieleh, 2004). All first years now undertake a formal and mandatory formative essay in their first term. They are given briefings on academic misconduct during induction, in preparation for the formative writing exercise and in the new ARM module. It is too early to evaluate the impact on the number of cases but there is no doubt they receive more instruction than ever before.

Assessment
The Management School has built into the assessment process a peer review mechanism, one of the aims of which is to get colleagues to review questions for any language or contextual understanding that would inadvertently penalise international students (Hayes, 2003).

Access to staff
Staff can create the aura of being too busy to make themselves available for informal discussions in their office or at the end of lectures, so time appears unavailable for international students (who might be reluctant to speak out in class) to ask questions at these times (Turner and Acker, 2002; JISC, 2003). An office hours system might mitigate some of the access problems and was introduced at the start of the 2006-2007 academic year.

Group work
Students are required to take part in assessed group work towards the end of the second year. Since 2005-2006 students have been required to do non-assessed group work in mixed multicultural groups at the start of the year. This gives them a formative introduction to group work advocated by Gannon-Leary and Smailes (2004), Ladd and Ruby (1999) and Jones (1999). The tasks assigned have emphasised international business and globalisation issues, requiring home students to take an international perspective and giving international students a potential advantage over their home country colleagues (De Vita, 2001).

English for academic purposes
Rather than scrapping the idea of running an EAP programme, the opportunity was taken to review and reorganise the way these sessions were offered. In 2005-2006 a University wide voucher system was introduced for international students, giving them the opportunity to get ‘free’ EAP tuition, when it suited them best (not necessarily in their first term or first year).

Although the sessions are still not compulsory, international students now view the sessions as part of their international tuition fee and seem to want to take advantage of them. Also, home students do not attend arguably making it easier for international students to learn in a less threatening environment.

Conclusions
The attempt by the Management School at York to support the growing number of international students, particularly the many Chinese students on the undergraduate programme, by providing an EAP programme was unsuccessful. With hindsight, the approach taken was misguided. Unfortunately it may have inadvertently highlighted the differences between UK and other education systems. Some students may have got the impression that their prior learning was in some way deficient.

Three years on, some progress has been made. Partly in response to the experience of running this EAP programme, the School was forced to spend some time reflecting on what went wrong. A series of changes have been made to the undergraduate programmes, which although they
have not yet been evaluated, reflect good practice elsewhere (Jones, 1999; De Vita, 2001; Jackson, 2002) and address some of the previous failings. Extra EAP sessions are still provided for international students but a clear explanation of the purpose and likely benefits of the sessions is now given to the students in their induction period and reinforced later in their programme. Explaining the benefits seems to be particularly important for Chinese students, whose focus is likely to be almost exclusively on formal curriculum and trying to understand the material covered in their taught modules (Morgan, 2006). It seems to be very important that all staff give the same messages about the academic skills at regular intervals throughout the programme.

The approach that seems most likely to succeed is to embed study skills sessions, and academic and assessment skills sessions, within a compulsory credit-bearing module early in the programme (Peelo and Luxton, 2005; Turner, 2006c). In this way all students, regardless of background and prior learning receive guidance on what is considered to be good practice in academic genres, including group work, presenting seminars and academic writing (Carroll and Ryan, 2005). At York, the new ARM module has been developed to fill this perceived need.

Three years on from the initial disappointment of the poorly attended EAP some progress has been made. The School is now much more aware of the needs of a diverse student population with a significant number of international students many from China. Nevertheless, there remains much scope for further work and research in this area. There needs to be an on-going evaluation of the impact of the incremental changes made to the undergraduate Management Studies programme at the University. More generally there is scope for continued research and debate to identify the most appropriate and successful way to support international learners, and facilitate the adjustment of Chinese and other international learners to study in the UK.

References


