

DMU Education Academy

Decolonising DMU Toolkit

Developing Good Academic Practices interventions for a diverse student body

What is the issue/ problem this resource will help to address?

Students are often expected to enrol on a university course with a range of pre-developed academic skills, including awareness and effective application of Good Academic Practices. However, one well-documented consequence of Widening Participation and internationalisation of Higher Education worldwide is that increasing numbers of students are joining their courses via non-traditional routes, and with more diverse academic backgrounds and experiences, which may render them less equipped to engage effectively with these practices. In particular, recent research indicates that international students in UK HE are over-represented in academic misconduct referrals (Davies, 2023), with key reasons stemming from cross-cultural variation in forms of assessment and academic practice (Mittelmeier *et al.*, 2022). This category of student is well represented in DMU's multifarious student body.

The Academic Literacies approach

When planning pedagogic interventions to develop diverse students' Good Academic Practices, a particularly useful approach is the Academic Literacies model (Lea and Street, 2006), which moves away from a 'deficit' model of skills development, towards an inclusive, contextualised approach to student Induction and re-induction to HE (Wallbank and Hen, 2023).

Rather than positioning learners as deficient, lacking in skills or knowledge, this approach starts by recognizing and validating learners' prior experiences and diversity of backgrounds, aiming to empower them to adjust their practices to a new context.

In my role as Senior Lecturer in Learning Development, I have incorporated elements of the AcLits approach in a series of GAP workshops aimed at international students as well as other categories of student new to DMU. These sessions were delivered as part of the university's International Student Welcome Week, the in-year programme for International Students in BAL, as well as the Library's Open Programme of workshops.

Practical strategies used:

- **Peer learning** by inviting current International student volunteers to co-deliver the 'Learning in a UK university' session for International Student Welcome Week
- Sharing **highlights of individual background** via 5-minute pairwork as warm-up at the start of various sessions
- Anonymous online quizzes (Microsoft Forms, Slido) to gauge students' **prior academic experiences** were integrated in a range of sessions

- As a follow-up from activities highlighting the diversity of student backgrounds, I often led an open discussion of differences in Good Academic Practices across cultures, which often integrated my own positionality-acknowledging personal experiences of cultural diversity, transition and adaptation to different academic environments
- **Introduction** to the [DMU Academic Integrity and Misconduct policy](#) by placing it in the context of UK Higher Education (Sample resources here: [Introduction to Good Academic Practices - Academic Integrity](#))
- Open, non-judgmental **application of DMU's Good Academic Practice policy** to a range of scenarios (Sample scenarios here: [Developing Good Academic Practices - Overview](#))
- **Checking understanding** of concepts through hands-on activities:
 - Some examples of concept definition and practical application here: [Introduction to Good Academic Practices - Don't vs. Do](#);
 - Sample effective/ineffective paraphrasing here: [Using Evidence in Your Writing - Paraphrasing](#)
- Multiple options for **Q and A** were made available for each session- via audience engagement software such as Microsoft Forms, via chat/ in person, and a point of contact was offered for follow-up queries after the session

Sample Hands-on GAP Activity for small group, in-person sessions

Warm up discussion: What do we mean by Good Academic Practices at university? How about Bad Academic Practices?

Practical activity: Checking and applying understanding of GAP

Resources: LEGO or Play dough

10 Minute Activity

- How can Good Academic Practices help you succeed at university? Use the Play-Dough to represent your ideas
- Share your model with the person next to you and explain briefly what it means



Follow up whole group discussion reinforcing Good Academic Practices at DMU, with reference to key resources: DMU Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy and [Good Academic Practices](#) resource

Feedback highlights (LS Feedback survey)

“ It was an interactive session where we were able to ask and feedback was prompt.

(PG Business)

“ Knowledgeable presenter and effective facilitator - good tips - a great refresher for my return to academic study/writing.

(PG Criminology)

“ Session was really useful and included all information I needed.

(Year 1 Business)

“ [Presenter] was so engaging and balanced answering everyone's individual questions while delivering a great session...The content was concise and clear, and having examples and interactive content was really good.

(PG Business)

“ This session is very helpful.

(PG Film studies)

Resources for teaching staff

To support staff who are interested in using similar interventions with their students, DMU's Library Learning Services team have created a range of resources aimed to support the development of Good Academic Practices for students at different stages of their academic journey. These can be signposted to students for independent study, but would be more effective when incorporated in module teaching, for example through flipped sessions or self-paced activities in seminars:

- *Good Academic Practices:* <https://library.dmu.ac.uk/navlss/academic-practice>
- *Referencing guides and resources (including citation management tools)* <https://library.dmu.ac.uk/refguide>
- *Using evidence (including paraphrasing) guide:* <https://www2.library.dmu.ac.uk/DOLORES/87872/evidencewriting/content/index.html#/>
- *Ethical and critical use of AI Tools at university AI guides - Using Generative Artificial Intelligence - LibGuides at De Montfort University*

Further support for students

LLS provides a student-centred, self-selecting service which does not operate by referral, but to which students can be signposted at any point in their academic journey. LLS can assist students with developing Good Academic Practices through workshops and one-to-one support:

- i) **GAP workshops** (online) are available to all DMU students:

<https://library.dmu.ac.uk/workshop>

In particular, we recommend the following workshops, which are offered regularly (monthly term-time):

Using evidence in your writing: How to cite and reference using the Harvard referencing system

Pre-recorded videos can be accessed here:

<https://library.dmu.ac.uk/workshop/video-and-resources>

- ii) **One-to-one support** on the topics listed above is available via tutorials and drop-in services: [LibCal - De Montfort University](#)

References

Davis, M. (2023) *Over-represented students in Academic Misconduct Problems*. [Academic Integrity Webinar series]. FMC Learning Development in collaboration with ALDinHE. 8 February

Lea, M.R. and Street, B.V. (2006) 'The 'Academic Literacies model': Theories and Applications'. *Theory into Practice* 45 (6), pp. 368-377

Mittelmeier et al. (2022) *Internationalisation and students' outcomes or experiences: a review of the literature 2011-2022*. AdvanceHE. Available at: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/new-literature-review-internationalisation> (Accessed: 10 December 2024)

Wallbank, A., & Le Hen, P (2023) 'The Politics of Integration: The Opportunities, Challenges and Successes of Embedding Academic Skills and Literacies Development into an Interdisciplinary, 'Integrated' Foundation Year Programme'. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 20(4). Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol20/iss4/05/> (Accessed: 12 December 2024)