A cross-disciplinary, cross-University approach to enhance the Asian student learning experience in the UK
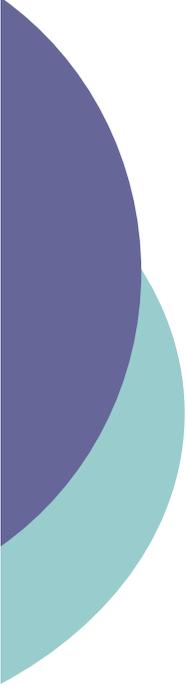
Tim Mulroy, Monika Foster,
& Jayne Stocks
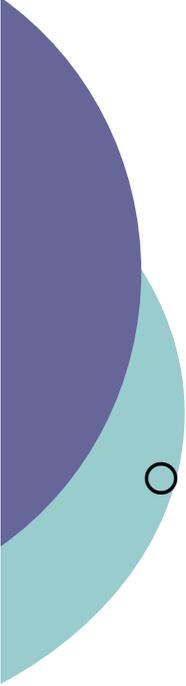
Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

Sheffield
Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

Overview

- The Indian Learner Project at SHU
- Introduction to the Asian Learner Experience Project (ALEP)
- Online survey – methodology and results
- Interviews – methodology and initial findings
- Current support & new ideas
- Discussion

The Indian Learner Project 2006/2007

- Initial research was based on gaining a deeper understanding of the differences in TLA, culture and pressures facing Indian students coming to the UK

- Research was undertaken with student focus groups in Delhi and Bangalore and also in Sheffield - followed up with interviews in UK

- One aspect of the research, was to identify what lecturers and Indian students perceived to be important (based on Fry and Ketteridge, 2003)

Good teaching is	Lectures' Rank	Students' Rank
Making the teaching materials stimulating and interesting	1	2
Using teaching methods and academic tasks that require students to think for themselves	2	11=
Motivate students	3	9
Helping students to engage actively with what is being learned	4	4
Being well prepared for the session	5	11=
Using teaching methods and academic tasks that require students to take responsibility for themselves	6	14
Focus on key concepts	7	5
Using appropriate assessment methods	8	7=
Being available to students at times you have agreed	9	7=
Make it clear what has to be understood, at what level and why	10	1
Promoting students' understanding	11	9
Show Concern for students	12	6
Understand students home countries' culture and show respects	-	13
Using case studies relevant to students' home country	-	3
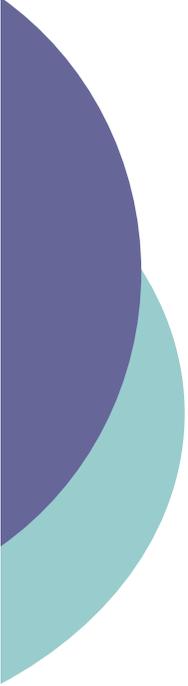
The Asian Learner Experience Project (ALEP)

- Both SHU and Edinburgh Napier attract significant numbers of international students, including **students from the Indian sub-continent on similar programmes in Hospitality and Engineering**
- This project builds on the results of the early research at the two institutions
- Aims to work together in order to enhance the study experience of international students at both institutions.
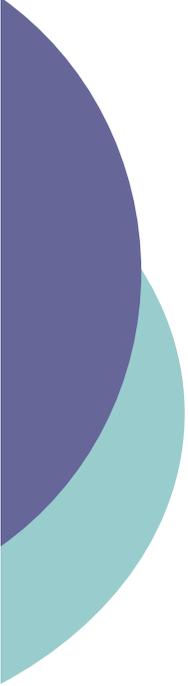
The Asian Learner Experience Project (ALEP) cont'd

Two parallel streams of activity:

1. Sharing good practice

- Meetings with colleagues at both institutions
- International wiki site to showcase examples of good practice http://shuinternational.pbworks.com

2. Research into the student experience to

- Establish the key factors shaping the student experience,
- Evaluate the student use of existing support mechanisms
- Explore the support required to meet the students' expectations and cultural values.
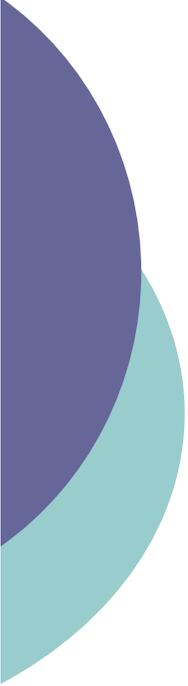
Research methodology

- Cross-university and cross discipline to achieve a rich picture of the student experience and to enable sharing of good practice
- Data collection took place between January – May 09
- Part 1: Quantitative (online survey)
- Part 2: Qualitative (semi-structured interviews)
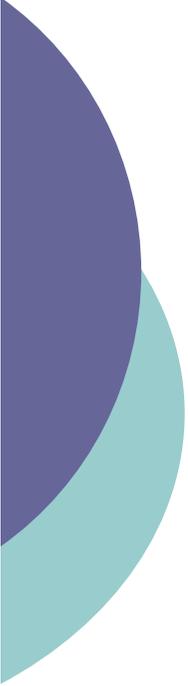
Sharing insights – online survey

- **164 students altogether**
- 100 at Edinburgh Napier (43/57 Hosp/Eng)
- 64 at SHU (11/53 Hosp/Eng)
- 4 parts:
  - Pre-arrival and induction
  - Your programme
  - Study experience on the programme
  - Social integration
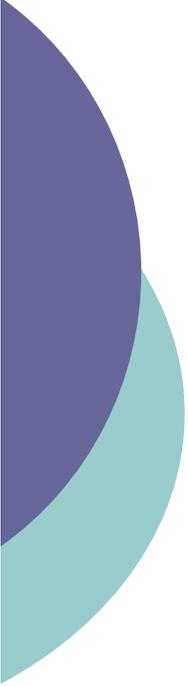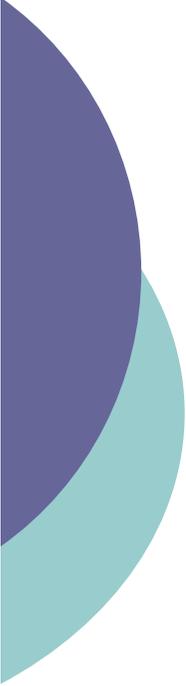
Sharing insights – online survey results

Very positive experience

Pre-arrival and induction:

○ Students would like more accurate and earlier information, students value meet and greet efforts and helping them with a start

○ Students rely on seniors who are already in the UK to provide them with info / support (academic and pastoral)

Your programme:

○ Some students say they don't have time to study, they'd like more information, skills training and regular feedback on how they're doing

Sharing insights – online survey results

Study experience on the programme:

- More attention given to international students by the tutors, career advice, resources for research /books in the library
- Relying on peers, not reaching out with the immediate peer group

Social integration:

- Would like more social / sports activities within the programme and with non-Indian students
- More opportunities to interact with students from other nationalities
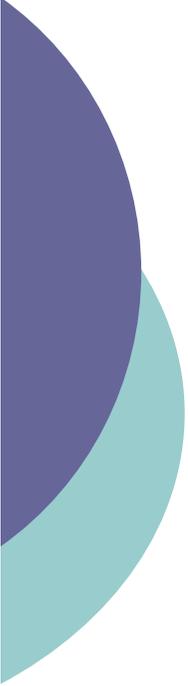
Sharing insights – initial interview results

- Small sample – 5 students from Edinburgh Napier, 8 students from Sheffield Hallam
- A very useful exercise!
- Semi-structured interview format allowed students to introduce different viewpoints on studying in the UK
- Full transcription completed by the end of June.
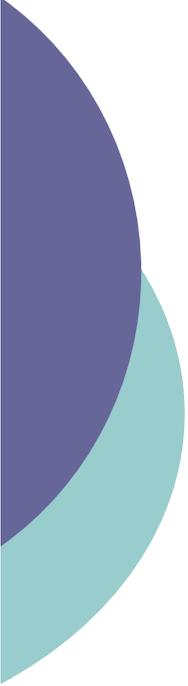
Sharing insights – interview common themes

- Combining work and study
- Adapting to the language
- Recognising plagiarism
- Awareness of University support mechanisms available
- Peer support
- Social networking sites - Orkut & Facebook
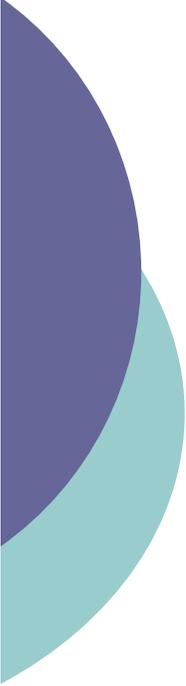
Quotes from students

- **Induction**
  - It was very intense. What I felt was, you know, if this induction was just based on overview of the university, of giving all the information about regarding the help, the things that's. This one week is dedicated just for, you know, awareness of the university and Sheffield itself would have helped me a little bit better. And then moving to the second week when we are made aware of the different courses that we are going to have would have slowed down the process and made us a little bit, think about the processes of the course, study areas that we have to focus on.
  - It was interesting. We got lots and lots of information from Mr (John …?) We have got all the knowledge about our projects and assignments, how we gonna to do that projects, how to do and to learn, how to face the plagiarisms.

- **Plagiarism**
  - Yeah, learning about the plagiarism. Because most of the students are planning, I mean they are copying the same thing what the others have done. So that's a… in what shall I say? About the plagiarism, they are changing their minds and thoughts to study. Because if they caught in the plagiarism, they will not get the good score.
  - For the plagiarism thing, we would like, like, the people who are back in India, they should get some more information, and how, like, the referencing, how this is done. We should know, like, the people who are back, they should know something more about that because it still, sometime, I have problem for the referencings still today.

- **Accents & Language**
  - …People here just speak Scottish (…). They eat words in from between. Example, if you want to say "What", they say "Vot". And, like, for "Yes", they used to say "Aye".
  - The problem we have is the accent British people use, that's the main difficulty we face, otherwise I think am, if I talk about me, have some knowledge of English, the main problem was the accent.

Current support and ideas from colleagues at Edinburgh Napier workshop - 10th June

Current support	Ideas for new support
Pre-arrival	Direct contact by phone / email
Prog Leader talks to students	Consider mini certificates for participation
In year 1 and 2	
Letters to sts /info sent out	Use attendance monitoring
Teaching in partner institutions	Target specific groups
SPICE pre-arrival induction/Get Ready	An incentive to complete SPICE
Staff dev in partner institutions	Use of informal student networks
Induction	
Induction at college / univ level	Engage students in upper years to design induction activities for year 1
Rolling induction	
Open access to academic st advisors	Employ more student coordinators
1-1 guidance in subject areas	Virtual enquiries / guidance
Student helpers	Incentivise – marks for attendance
Buddying /mentoring of students	Specialised workshops
Social events in halls /on site	

Current support and ideas from colleagues at Edinburgh Napier workshop - 10th June

Current support

Half way through trimester 1
1 to 1 tutorials / group interviews
Confident Futures / employability
Come to tutorials as Prog Leader
**Just before assessments**
Workshops
Drop in support
Embedded work of Academic Advisors
Assessment workshops
Start of trimester 2
Week 1 induction
Commissioned workshops by tutors

Ideas for new support

Using current international sts
who arrived a trim earlier to inform
new ones as student ambassadors
Strengthen staff support
mechanisms
Self formed peer support group vs
More structured and possibly paid
mentors introduced
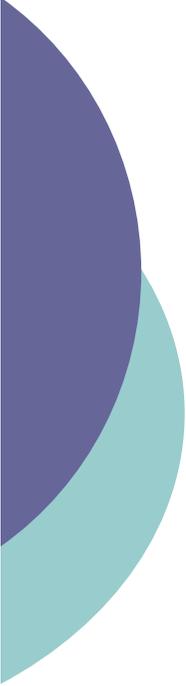
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