

# **Dissemination Partner Case Study (1)**

**Department of Communication and Electrical Engineering  
University of Plymouth**

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## **Background**

The Engineering Department at the University of Plymouth take in a range of international students onto their BEng degree at levels two and three. The department have been receiving Malaysian students for a number of years now and although very able students they have recognised a number of problems that need to be overcome to ensure good progression. It is often the case that international students have experienced very different learning environments and educational culture. Bridging the gap and raising awareness in these students of what to expect from university life in this country is seen as an important strategy for good progression. This year the Engineering department has had a mixture of students from Malaysia and France entering at levels two and three.

## **Good Practice**

The Department of Engineering have attempted to address these reoccurring problems by producing an informational CD. The CD contains a variety of information on Plymouth, the university and support services. This CD is sent out to prospective students (this year 50 CD's were posted) for them to look at before coming to Plymouth. The CD has information provided by the International Office at Plymouth, a folder with SPAT materials and a variety of academic information from the engineering department.

## **Use of Materials**

Packs used include: Culture Shift, Induction, Modular Schemes, Key Skills, Support Networks and Pre Planning:

The above packs were chosen as they were considered the most appropriate for International students. Staff involved in the production of the CD included admission tutors, FEEL/ESOL support tutor and media services.

The materials were edited down and re-written inserting institution specific info e.g. staff roles & titles and contact tel. numbers or e-mail handles.

The SPAT materials were included in a folder on the CD under the heading 'Making the Transition'. The folder acted as a compliment to other information part of which was academic and part of which was informative. The academic looked at key skills and module outlines, the informative listed flight and travel information and general advice on living in this country and in Plymouth. There was also an outline of an International Orientation Programme. The CD was constructed using word files as it was felt that this was the user-friendliest format. Students were able to access all of the above information prior to joining the University of Plymouth. However, not all students who received the CD decided to come to Plymouth but it was felt that for those that did this was a really useful tool in aiding the transition to HE.

When quizzed on the materials themselves, it was felt that they could be improved in the following ways:

- David Ellery suggested that the language used was *somewhat laboured/long-winded and stilted in parts: it spells out things which must surely be obvious to anyone seriously seeking entry to HE. This could have the opposite of the intended helpful effect; however, recipient feedback may shed further light on this.*
- It was felt the materials would be more appropriate for FE than HE
- HE use of SPAT materials would only be appropriate for a few students
- The materials would be more accessible if they included, *Pictures/humour/sense of fun they is far too much text – particularly for students who have difficulty with textual info.*

#### **Customised resources available on SPAT CD and website:**

- Induction Checklist
- Culture Shift Checklist
- Modular Schemes
- Student Life, Getting Support
- Key skills
- Key Skills Frequently Asked Questions
- Pre planning