5E   Embedding information literacy skills in the psychology curriculum: supporting students in their transition to independent researchers

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The first year university experience is a time of substantial transition and adjustment which can be difficult for students who move from a supported school/college environment to HE which requires them to be independent and autonomous (Beaumont, O'Doherty, Shannon, 2014). Whilst incoming students report that they expect to work independently they are often slow to develop appropriate study skills and can find the experience disorientating (e.g. Rowley, Hartley, & Larkin, 2008). Many universities rely on central services to support students in developing appropriate skills such as in information literacy. However, Wingate (2006) argues that 'bolt-on' study skill courses merely encourage shallow learning approaches. Kitching and Hulme (2013), therefore, argue that support is best embedded within the curriculum.

Here we report on a new initiative which aims to support first year psychology undergraduates in developing their information literacy skills. These skills were taught in a small-group tutorial setting with tutor guidance and peer-supported activities. Learning activities were explicitly linked to coursework. Utilising a mixed-methods approach, combining questionnaires and focus groups, this research investigated information skills development in first year psychology students. Student data pre- and post-intervention was collected from 280 students. The questionnaires collected information on student's development as independent learners through the use of an autonomy measure and also their development of research self-efficacy. Further, experience based questions investigated their thoughts on the tutorial as a whole and its perceived usefulness to skills development in psychology and other subject areas. This was complemented by focus groups with 20 students.

This paper will discuss the key findings which have emerged and will focus on the development of students through the process. This concept of teaching information literacy as an integrated part of the tutorial course is novel but could have significant practical implications for higher education.

References

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