

A2: Teach and/or support learning

My student support approach emphasizes flexibility and patience, ensuring students comprehend their roles and responsibilities in the overall academic process. Currently, a significant portion of the university student body consists of mature students, individuals without prior higher education experience, and EAL students.

Based on the findings of Myles (2011), “many university students remain unaware of the implicit guidelines within the hidden curriculum, leading them to encounter awkward situations that may demotivate them from pursuing their education further”. (V3). Therefore, I consider the hidden curriculum in my approach, aiming to foster inclusivity and equality. (V2).

Many of our students struggle with academic terminologies and understanding certain official university communications. For example students who are held back for resits, struggle with the academic verbiage in outcome emails, resulting in frustration.

In handling frustrated students, I simplify email content for them , ensuring that students understand the outcomes and next steps which minimizes complaints. (K3, V2). Additionally, I guide students in interpreting the emails, fostering belonging and confidence, and encouraging them to identify strongly with the university community (Thomas, 2012).

Assessments workshops are aimed at guiding new students through assessment submissions processes.(K1). Responding to feedback from students who were withdrawn without knowledge of the three-attempt policy, I take a proactive approach by including this topic in workshops for new students, ensuring early awareness (K3).This has significantly reduced program withdrawals. (V2, K1). Making students proactive in their own education and giving them the information they need to thrive in university life will help to build a sense of

belonging. “A strong sense of belonging is an important factor for a student’s well-being and increases retention in higher education”. (Velden,etal., 2023)

By implementing an open-door policy, actively listening to students, and maintaining an approachable demeanour, I cultivate a supportive and enriching learning environment. (K2). Initially, when I assumed the position, many students sought assistance with assessments but often ended up discussing personal issues. I recognized the importance of responding effectively and providing support.(V1). In response, I completed the Mental Health First Aider training which equipped me with the valuable skills I needed to assist students.(V3) This has fostered a positive relationship between myself and student.(K1)

In my professional practice, I promote diversity and uphold respect for individual learners. I make an effort to appreciate and comprehend the various cultural and religious festivities observed by students. I achieve this by staying informed about these occasions and inquiring with students about their observance of these events . (V1).

Last year I inquired about a student's Diwali celebration and she not only shared details about her festivities but subsequently brought sweets traditionally consumed during Diwali. This exchange enriched my understanding of her culture but also contributed to a positive environment where the student felt valued and included. (V1)As noted by Velden et al. (2023), “creating an inclusive academic environment is pivotal for ensuring student well-being, fostering a strong sense of belonging, and promoting authenticity”. (V3).

I minimize stress for students with additional needs by providing personalized support. Recognizing the impact of distressing emails, particularly on those with anxiety, I proactively opt for phone calls or one-on-one discussions to supplement emails and prevent panic situations (K2). This approach stems from anticipating students' reactions and calling them before they reach out, aiming to alleviate stress (K2).

Additionally, for students without additional needs, I prioritize one-on-one communication in complex cases or when a phone call or meeting would enhance their understanding of email content. (K2).

During exams, I take proactive measures to implement and manage the support mechanisms for disability students effectively and seamlessly. When making exam announcements, I individually approach students with hearing aids to confirm their understanding, considering they may have turned off devices for focus. Stemming from invigilating an exam where a student with a hearing aid had turned it off and missed an announcement, I remain consistently mindful of such needs, providing necessary support and accommodation during exams to maintain inclusivity and equality.

Due to this students may feel more emotionally supported as they believe that the university have listened and understands their needs and have implemented the necessary behaviours to assist them. This in turn will generate a sense of closeness and students will experience learning more positively.(Morina, 2019)

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A5- Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practice

I have actively participated in numerous CPD sessions, contributing significantly to both my career advancement and overall professional growth. These sessions have played a pivotal role in broadening my understanding of various university departments and enhancing my ability to support students effectively. (K4). (V3)

One noteworthy example is my attendance at sessions focused on explaining the academic misconduct policy. This particular experience has enriched my practice by providing a comprehensive understanding of how academic misconduct outcomes are determined. The knowledge acquired during these sessions has proven invaluable when communicating with students about their outcomes or providing guidance about the process. (K1, K2)

Furthermore, I participated in a session that explained the extenuating circumstances procedure. As an Assessments Officer, I typically do not handle extenuating circumstances, as this falls under the purview of the Principal Assessments Officer. Nevertheless, following this training, I am now better equipped to offer guidance to students facing mitigating circumstances that could affect their exam performance.(V1)

Additionally, I took the initiative to volunteer and support, the Principal Assessments Officer, in evaluating student evidence and making decisions on extenuating circumstance applications. This has led to an enhancement in the approval process turnaround, ensuring that applications are processed within the stipulated 21-day timeframe. (V2)

Another session I completed was on the non-academic misconduct procedure, which has enhanced my understanding. Most staff members are not familiar with the non-academic misconduct process consequently, is often overlooked or not considered. During a disruptive in-class quiz, a lecturer sought guidance when a student persisted despite warnings. I provided valuable information on the non-academic misconduct process, directing the lecturer to necessary forms for an informed response (V1). The OIA report underscores the need for appropriately trained staff in non-academic misconduct procedures, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness among university staff about both academic and non-academic misconduct processes (K3).

In a 2018 study by Bartleton on the impact of continuing professional development (CPD) in further education, the most beneficial forms were found to be sharing best practices and engaging in collaborative activities (V3). To foster my professional growth, I regularly meet with individuals from diverse departments and counterparts in the Birmingham campus to gain insights into my responsibilities.

After joining the university, a team member handling module diets left, leaving no one knowledgeable about the process in my team. Taking initiative, I met with the registry team and counterparts in the Birmingham campus, actively learning and mastering the process. Now, I lead module diets, train new staff, and assist in reviewing diets from the Birmingham campus (K1).

I have also completed many other professional courses that complements my role as an Assessments Officer. I am a trained mental health first aider with MHFA Wales. This course has assisted me when dealing with students who have adverse personal issues or mental health issues.(V1, K3) In an article written by (Schimmel , 2023) it explicitly states that “basic knowledge about how to respond to individuals experiencing mental health crises, including severe depression and suicidal thoughts and intentions, is essential for all university community member”. This course also provides the necessary information and skills to assist me in identifying mental health issues in students and to signpost them to where they can receive the required assistance. (K2)

In addition to my professional development initiatives, I have successfully completed the First Aid in the Workplace course, acquiring essential skills for performing life-saving measures. This training has proven invaluable, especially considering the absence of an active medic at our London campus. As a designated first aider, I play a crucial role in responding to emergencies and contributing to the well-being and safety of individuals on campus.(V2)

Furthermore, I have undergone specialized training in the use of evacuation chairs. This training equips me with the knowledge and expertise necessary to assist students with disabilities in safely exiting the building during emergencies when the regular lift cannot be utilized. This additional certification reflects my commitment to ensuring the safety and inclusivity of our campus community.(V1)

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