

## SWAP Projects

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**TITLE OF PROJECT:** Writing in the Disciplines E-Pack: IFP Business Pathway – Essay Writing

**INSTITUTION:** London Metropolitan University

**PROJECT LEADERS:** David Clubb (with Chris O'Reilly, Susan Davenport, Richard Payne & Marie Turner)

**DISCIPLINE/DEPARTMENT:** International Foundation Programme in HALE

**YEAR/LEVEL OF STUDENTS:** Pre-Degree

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### CONTEXT:

The International Foundation Programme (IFP) is a one-year programme for EU and international students who need an extra year of study for entry to UK undergraduate study. The IFP offers eight subject pathways for students to choose from. Our students want to learn about the specific written conventions of their particular discipline or subject area, but are not aware of the way in which knowledge is constructed through writing or the epistemological culture of their particular discipline. Subject specific e-packs enable us to put together a significant range of discipline-specific materials, e.g. reading resources, examples of coursework, short writing activities and tasks analyzing style and register that can be used either by the student independently or as a teaching resource in class. The business pathway was chosen as the pilot as it currently has the highest recruitment rate.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The aim of this project is to develop a 'writing in the disciplines' e-pack for the business pathway of the International Foundation Programme (IFP), focussing on essay writing. The mid-term aim is to further develop this e-pack to include report writing. The long-term aim is to develop a writing in the disciplines e-pack for each of the core academic writing modules in the other seven pathways of the IFP (architecture, art & design, biology & chemistry, computing, electronics, humanities, legal and social studies).

### METHODOLOGY:

This was a joint collaboration between the IFP team and Chris O'Reilly (Educational Technologist, Epacks Manager). We also consulted Peter O'Neill (CETL Writing Specialist) on writing in the disciplines.

The Business Pathway essay writing e-pack was based around a model economics essay. Economics is one of the core subjects on the IFP Business Pathway. The model essay was assessed by an economics tutor who confirmed that it is a realistic 'good' essay for a student at this level. The e-pack activities were then developed around this essay in separate units in line with the general e-pack template. The units were organised into possible stages of the essay writing process: 1) Getting started: understanding and selecting essay questions, thinking about what essay writing involves, activating your own knowledge; 2) Finding and understanding relevant information: researching and reading skills; 3) Writing the essay: organising ideas into paragraphs and 4) a separate section on specialist vocabulary.

Chris helped the IFP team to develop content in a way that hopefully exploits the online medium as fully as possible with a variety of short audio visual interactive activities with maximum feedback provision. The IFP team and Chris also explored the challenges of creating an effective resource on the topic of academic reading and writing (traditionally based on long and complex reading and writing tasks and individual feedback) using this very immediate, visual medium.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:**

##### *Stage 1:*

- Consultation with LMBS module leaders
- Consultation with IFP cohort
- Consultation with Peter O'Neill (CETL Writing Specialist)
- Staff development sessions with Chris O'Reilly for IFP teaching team on e-packs.

##### *Stage 2:*

- Content development
- Technical development and uploading onto London Met e-pack website: <http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/epacks> (see 'Projects currently under development: English (IFP)) – this should be completed by September 2010.

##### *Stage 3:*

(Planned for autumn semester 2010)

- Pilot e-pack with IFP Business students – we plan to have one workshop early in the semester to introduce the e-pack with a Business class and then we will send an online questionnaire later in the semester to obtain feedback once they have used it to support their essay writing in the module.
- The e-pack units will be included in the programme outline to ensure that students will do the work as part of the module.
- Feedback from Business pathway tutors both from IF0003N tutors and for the Business modules tutors – this will also measure how they would use this e-pack in their teaching. (

Explanation of delay in piloting: Initially we realised that we could not use existing student material as we had supposed but we had to write a tailor-made 'model' essay and have this approved by the Business Department. We added units and expanded sections of the e-pack so it took longer to complete and put online than we had expected. This meant that there was not enough downloaded in time for the summer semester students. So we decided to do this in autumn semester instead.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROJECT:**

The e-pack will be piloted with IFP students in autumn semester (see above) and we will make changes accordingly. Looking at staff and student feedback and at the essays produced by the students at the end of the semester, we will be focusing on writing improvement, quality of learning, staff attitude to teaching/embedding writing, student motivation and grades.

So far with unit 1 fully uploaded, and units 2-4 partly uploaded, we have had very positive feedback from Chris O'Reilly commenting on the amount we have been able to achieve together in the time given, and on the quality, clarity and coherence of the content. We have also had encouraging comments from Cecile Tschirhart (Associate Dean of HALE) remarking on the appropriateness of the level and the tasks for this group of students.

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#### **DISSEMINATION:**

The e-pack will be fully uploaded on to London Met e-pack website in September 2010. We will be presenting the e-pack in seminars and workshops at London Met in the autumn or spring semesters (HERS and Blended Learning workshops) and receiving feedback from staff through these. We also intend to present the e-pack together with the feedback and the assessment of the impact it has had

on the IFP Business pathways students at the Learning and Teaching Conference in July 2011. Finally we will write an article for London Met's *Investigations*. With further funding it could be taken to other conferences.

**AVAILABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES:**

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<http://learning.londonmet.ac.uk/epacks> see: 'Projects currently under development: English (IFP).

**FUTURE PLANS FOR PROMOTING PROJECT WORK/OUTCOMES:**

We hope to incorporate the e-pack into IFP Business pathway teaching and further develop the project as detailed in 'Project Objectives'. We would like to present an evaluation of the pilot at the London Met Learning and Teaching conference (see above). It also provides an ideal opportunity for a research project on the effectiveness of both the writing in the disciplines model and the use of blended learning on pre-degree courses if adequate funding were available.