

Empowering International Postgraduates: A Holistic Curriculum Enhancement Approach in Accounting and Finance at the University of York

Dr. Abby Wang

University of York, United Kingdom

Abstract

The author developed an innovative curriculum enhancement approach at the University of York in collaboration with stakeholders, including international student recruitment, departmental academic and support teams, and bilingual peer-assisted learning (BPAL) groups. Together, we try to establish a comprehensive support network for international postgraduates in the accounting and finance suite, proactively addressing language barriers and complex content comprehension challenges. This project involves analysing students' undergraduate backgrounds with the recruitment team before the academic year begins. The academic support team identifies gaps in their prior education, and tailored materials are co-created with module leaders and support teams. These resources are then delivered through workshops by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and BPAL starting from Week 2 of the first semester, focusing on reducing language barriers, interactive problem-solving, and in-depth content understanding while complementing the existing teaching and support system. Additionally, alumni and prospective employers are engaged in the final semester to emphasize networking for career advancement. Piloted in the Autumn semester of 2023, the project involved four BPAL leaders selected from 220 finance suite postgraduates, with two seminar tutors participating in co-creating the teaching materials. Workshops were conducted weekly. Data collection methods included questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. Subsequent quantitative data analysis and thematic analysis yielded positive feedback. This curriculum progression aligns students' transition and academic learning with professional skills development, aiming to foster academic fluency and cultivate a continuous and supportive educational community that facilitates the seamless transition of graduates into roles within the finance industry.

Keywords: bilingual PAL; curriculum strategy; departmental academic and career support; finance PGs