



# Learning to study and learning for life

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Integrating skills training into a  
foundation year curriculum.

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# Introduction and outline of discussion

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- Foundation Years & the Keele program
- Skills, employability and citizenship



# Foundation Years

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- The transition to HE
- Types of student
- Pastoral support and pedagogy
- Preparation for level one or whole degree and beyond?
- Balance of skills and subject knowledge
- Administrative constraints



# Skills module structure for Humanities and Social Sciences

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- Learning Skills
- Writing for the Humanities
- Seminar Skills
- Critical thinking
- Information Technology



# Skills module structure - Science

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- Learning Skills
- Communication Skills
- Numeracy



# Skills module structure - Health

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- Learning Skills
- Communication Skills
- Numeracy
- Personal Development

# Example module combination

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## ○ Core modules

- Learning Skills
- Writing for the Social Sciences
- Handling Data
- Seminar Skills
- Critical Thinking
- Communicating Information

## ○ Elective subject modules

- Introduction to Law
- First Steps in Counselling Skills
- Sociology across the life-course
- Crime, Science and Investigation
- Introduction to Sociology, Media and Cultural Studies
- The Employment Lifecycle

# Learning skills in the Keele FY

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- Mandatory Learning Skills module
  - Semester 1 – series of lectures and weekly tutorials:
    - time management
    - note taking
    - reflective writing
    - exam revision and exam technique
    - learning styles
    - employability skills
    - reading and memory techniques
  - Semester 2 – inquiry based learning project

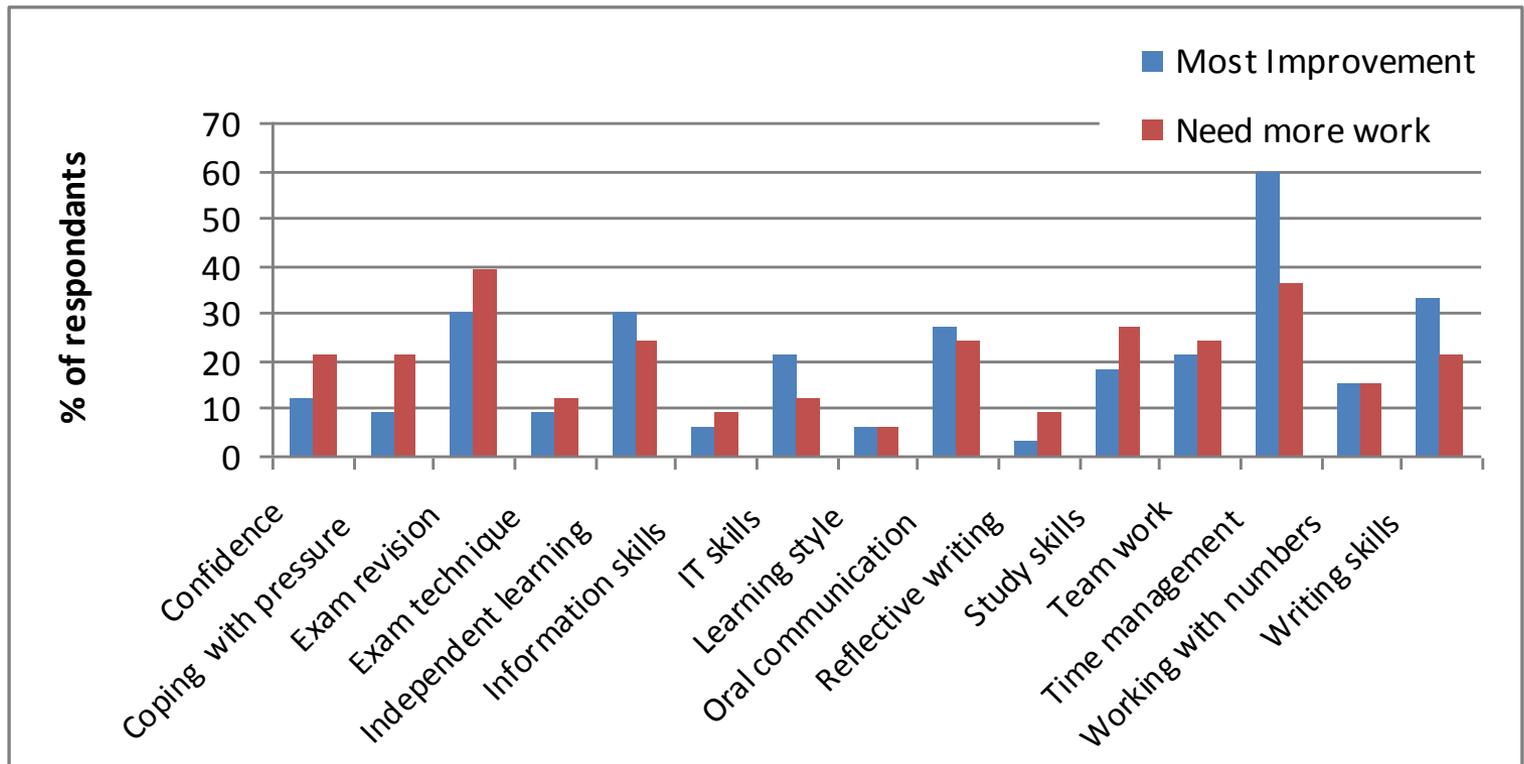


# Feedback

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- Students liked the tutorial sessions
- They liked the group project
- They were less keen on the lectures
- Overall many students found the module helpful in developing skills
- Some also commented on how it helped studying in other modules
- Some said that the module was pointless

# Feedback





# Employability and/or citizenship

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- The context for skills provision in HE
- Embeddedness and disciplinarity
- Prioritisation of skills
- Instrumental and reflective conceptions of the skills agenda



# Skills and the knowledge economy

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- Employability and graduate attributes
- Approaches to learning
- Generic skills and disciplinary 'literacies' – a false dichotomy?
- Doing away with study skills?

# Beyond a deficit/remedial approach

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- External diagnosis
  - Teacher centred
  - Unreflective
  - 'Tricks and techniques'
- Self diagnosis
  - Student centred and experiential
  - Requires on-going *and critical* reflection (see Kolb & Fry, 1975)
  - Students embed skills in and through their own disciplines (inquiry based group project)

# Critical reflection...

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- Not simply 'what I did and why'
  - How did I learn?
  - How have I changed?
  - How will I benefit?
- Assessment of reflection?
  - Self assessment
  - Peer assessment
  - Reflection and assessment become entwined

# From techniques to understanding

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- Academic skills as a means to an end
  - What ends?
  - Discipline specific or trans-disciplinary?
  - If the ends are specific, how far can the skills be generic?
  - Technical skills need to be linked to higher purpose of reliable and effective knowledge creation.

Stages in writing Academic texts	Levels of learning	
	Techniques	Understanding
1. Selecting/evaluating information sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding information in library and on internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making meaning with unfamiliar discourse</li> <li>Understanding which information is relevant</li> </ul>
2. Synthesising the ideas/arguments of others with one's own ideas/arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referencing: conventions of citation</li> <li>Avoiding plagiarism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing why when and whom to reference</li> <li>Understanding referencing as a method of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing evidence</li> <li>acknowledging the work of others in the field</li> <li>giving greater authority to one's own ideas</li> <li>constructing knowledge</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
3. Writing ideas/arguments up into a structured coherent text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structuring/organisation</li> <li>Language skills (spelling, grammar, rhetorical strategies, cohesion)</li> <li>Using appropriate terminology/style/convention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participating in specialist discourse</li> <li>Understanding rhetorical processes needed for the construction of knowledge</li> </ul>



# Conclusions

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- HE is about *creation* of knowledge
- Students are more responsive when creating knowledge
- Skills development needs to be reflective, not just instrumental



# Acknowledgements

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- Jonathan Cope – Social science tutor
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