



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## How to Succeed at University Workshop

24<sup>th</sup> September 2014

**Presenter:** Abby Shovlin

**Question facilitators:** Liz Dobson-McKittrick and Kristin Hunger

**Attendees:** 48 students registered on MyEd, plus 2 students not on list.

Feedback sheets from 28

### Components of Workshop:

The workshop was structured to answer the questions that were advertised on the promo flyer (see appendix).

- **Looking back and your questions:** students turn to their neighbour to discuss and reflect upon their first few weeks of university

-Look back at the first few weeks of university  
-How has your experience been?  
-How does it compare to your previous learning experiences?  
-Has it met your expectations?  
-What questions would you still like to ask?  
-Write them on a post it. . .

- KH and LDM then gathered questions in and grouped them into categories to answer at the end of the workshop
- **How does university work and how can I achieve success in this new environment?**
  - Introduction to SCQF levels
  - Focus on key SCQF indicators/terminology e.g. dynamic nature of knowledge
  - Activity on dynamic nature of knowledge with partner
  - Study Orientations (discuss differences in personal epistemologies and study success) from: Nieminen, J., Linblom-Yanne, S., Lonka, K. (2004) 'The development of study orientations and study success in students of pharmacy'. *Instructional Science* (32) pp. 387- 417
- **What is Academic Writing?** how 'not really knowing' links into academic language. Students asked to discuss characteristics of academic language in pairs and spot non-academic phrases from extracts
- **I've been told to critically evaluate something, how do I do that properly?**
  - Discussion on what it means to think critically in pairs
  - Guardian Newspaper advert on 'multiple perspectives' (short YouTube clip that highlights the benefit of looking at situations from multiple perspectives. Students are shown the advert and then asked how it relates to critical thinking/evaluation)

-Critical Thinking Checker (explains how to think critically in seven steps-see appendix two)  
from 'Preparing for Study' pages on the New Students' Website

- **Do I have to reference everything?**

- Introduction to Academic Good Practice

- Referencing Ready Reckoner (Learn Better)

- **How will I get everything done?**

- Time management strategies for everyone (Learn Better)

- **Where do I go if I am stuck?**

- students asked to list as many sources of support at the university that they are aware of

- We list sources available and walk them through links

- **We answer your questions**

- Liz answered student questions from beginning of workshop

### **Workshop aims:**

This workshop was designed to address the main academic issues that emerged from the longitudinal study 'Through Your Eyes' carried out by Chris Doye and Abby Shovlin. In direct response to these issues, 'How to Succeed At University' aimed to do the following:

- To prepare students for managing their time and workload effectively.
- To increase students' understanding and awareness of academic expectations and conventions at university
- To encourage students to think about/try out new ways of working that will help them meet these expectations and conventions

'How to Succeed' also aimed to:

- To be useful for new students by addressing the most commonly asked student questions and directing students to sources of support and development
- Give new students the opportunity to ask their own questions in an informal setting
- To 'demystify' academia and its processes by : demonstrating 'how academia works', exploring the SCQF Framework and discussing academic work and conventions.
- To encourage students to begin to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and proactively seek help for any academic issues that they may be experiencing
- To encourage students to enrol onto Learn Better
- To encourage students to sign up for future IAD workshops
- To encourage students to think about academic progression throughout their degree

<b>Key</b>
<b>Green: aims achieved</b>
<b>Orange: negative feedback</b>
<b>Yellow: what we could do differently next time</b>
<b>Blue: subject specific feedback</b>

	Very helpful	Helpful	Neutral	Not very helpful	Not at all helpful
How helpful was this workshop	3	22	3	0	0
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The strategies suggested in the workshop are appropriate and will be useful to me	5	20	3	0	0

### Free Text Comments

<b>The thing that was most helpful was:</b>
Question and answer session-more directed to our problems Writing hints and tips-although, not very in depth
The section on academic writing and critical evaluations
Information regarding the Learn Better website/IAD
Links about the time management
The critical thinking guidelines
Academic writing and referencing
What to reference and cite as well as where to go when I am stuck
Critical writing tips
How to write essays and learnt about IAD
Advice on referencing and advice on time management
Nature of learning/thinking and Learn Better
Academic Writing
Learning about resources within the uni
Critical thinking
Academic Writing
What to reference
How to critically think/timetabling your own time
The dos and don'ts for essays
The introduction of academic writing and links to good online sources
Critical thinking definition helped me understand how I am supposed to think when writing an essay
Time management strategies

Writing academically and critical evaluation
The portion on <b>academic writing</b>
<b>Showing the place to go for learning how to prioritise</b>
Learning about time management techniques
The stress on questioning lectures
Direction to time management and referencing and reading resources
References info, where to get help info, <b>Q and A session</b>

<b>As a result of the workshop, name one thing that you will continue to do:</b>
<b>Look out for more workshops to attend for additional help</b>
Prioritise time!
Be critical
Organise my work, go through my obligations often
<b>Attend more workshops</b>
Go through notes after a lecture as well as reading up and <b>look for more workshops</b>
<b>Look out for more workshops</b> to go to to help me, learn how to properly reference books
Question everything I attempt to write an essay on
Think critically
Prepare BEFORE lectures and manage time
Critical thinking
Learn!
<b>Academic Writing</b>
Time manage properly
<b>Look at the link for Learn, Learn Better and IAD</b>
Attempt to critically evaluate information. Stay calm.
Time management
<b>Enrol on Learn Course</b>
Add prioritising method in my time managing skills
To critically think
Reference
Actively time manage, work on critical thinking, be cautious referencing (oops sorry! That's more than one thing!)
Time management

**As a result of the workshop name one thing that you will do differently**

Use the IAD website
Critical Evaluation-I will use the 7 steps
Think about the bigger picture
Try to avoid the 'last minute' working
The way which I approach essays
Use the 7 steps to critical thinking and bring in more outside info from books etc and prioritise!
Try and focus more on regular construction of knowledge, buy a weekly calendar planner, write all in, make priority lists
Be more doubting and use Learn Better
Time Management
Try to evaluate more critically: not hold opinions
Start to think/write more critically
Get a clear weekly plan to manage my time
Write essays!
Try to use the new time management strategies to learn more
More reading
Referencing
Prioritising
I will manage my time more wisely
Perhaps sign up to individual consultations/try attending PALs again and find out how my Student Support Officer is supposed to help
Mange my time (having looked at Learn Better)
References, critical writing

**One suggestion for improvement of the workshop is...**

More subject specific: too generic in places
Socrates stuff was confusing
Focus more on note taking, time management skills (or perhaps no need, I realise you have different sessions for these, probably this was just more helpful for me as I took Critical Thinking as an AS in school)
Sounds boring, but how to get good grades? i.e. info on revision, what to learn, revise, marking schemes
Be more specific
More on organising and more on balancing academia with outside activities
Some courses for international students, such as how to overcome culture shock; different learning styles
Cover how to study effectively
None
None
Maybe have a better look at the referencing chapter
Not an hour and a half long-more publicity
More details about all topics – i.e. possibly more subject-specific talks
Have a bit more time and include a break to allow more time to go in depth
Promised to reveal the shortcuts but still feel I'm going to work really hard for poor results because I don't understand 'the tricks' of how the system works
Perhaps advertise it more broadly-I would've missed out badly if I hadn't come across this workshop
More publicity for it to be better known about

<b>Any other comments?</b>
Thank you for your lecture!
How to sign up for Learn Better?
Excellent!
Feel a lot calmer about essay writing
Good to be told about Learn Better-was not aware of this resource
Q and A session was helpful for me because I have difficulty finding the right person to ask
Informative lecture with plenty of useful information on how to succeed at university
Do more COURSE SPECIFIC session
I realise that it takes a lot to run these workshops but it's be good if there were more than one of each run as sometimes lectures clash making it hard to come along
Thank you😊

#### **Comments from AS:**

This was a successful workshop and the student Q and A activity worked very well-thank you to my colleagues Liz and Kristin for facilitating this.

#### **Following on from this feedback, the following conclusion can de drawn:**

- That 'How to Succeed' at University be run again in 2015 but that the length of the workshop be increased and a break built into the session
- 2015's session could be enhanced by offering more 'hands on' activities, in task based stations (as was successfully piloted with Pamela Docherty and Jenna Mann in Maths 2014)
- 'How to Succeed at University' could also be run in Semester Two, covering the same content but with a new title.
- Subject specific 'How to Succeed' sessions could be piloted with partner schools.



## How to Succeed at University

**An interactive academic skills building lecture for all first year students**

**How to Succeed at University** is a new interactive workshop style lecture that has been specifically designed to build the key academic skills that you need in order to succeed and achieve at University.

Based on research that asked new first year students what they wanted to know, this lecture will offer a variety of skill building activities for new undergraduate students and answer the following questions:

- How does university work and how can I achieve success in this new environment?
- I've been told to critically evaluate something, how do I do that properly?
- What is academic writing?
- Do I have to reference everything?
- How will I get everything done?
- Where do I go if I am stuck?

Where? : David Hume Lecture Theatre B (George Square)

When? : Wednesday 24th September 1330 - 1500

The session will also offer you the opportunity to have your own questions answered.

**Book your place now on MyEd**

<https://www.myed.ed.ac.uk/>

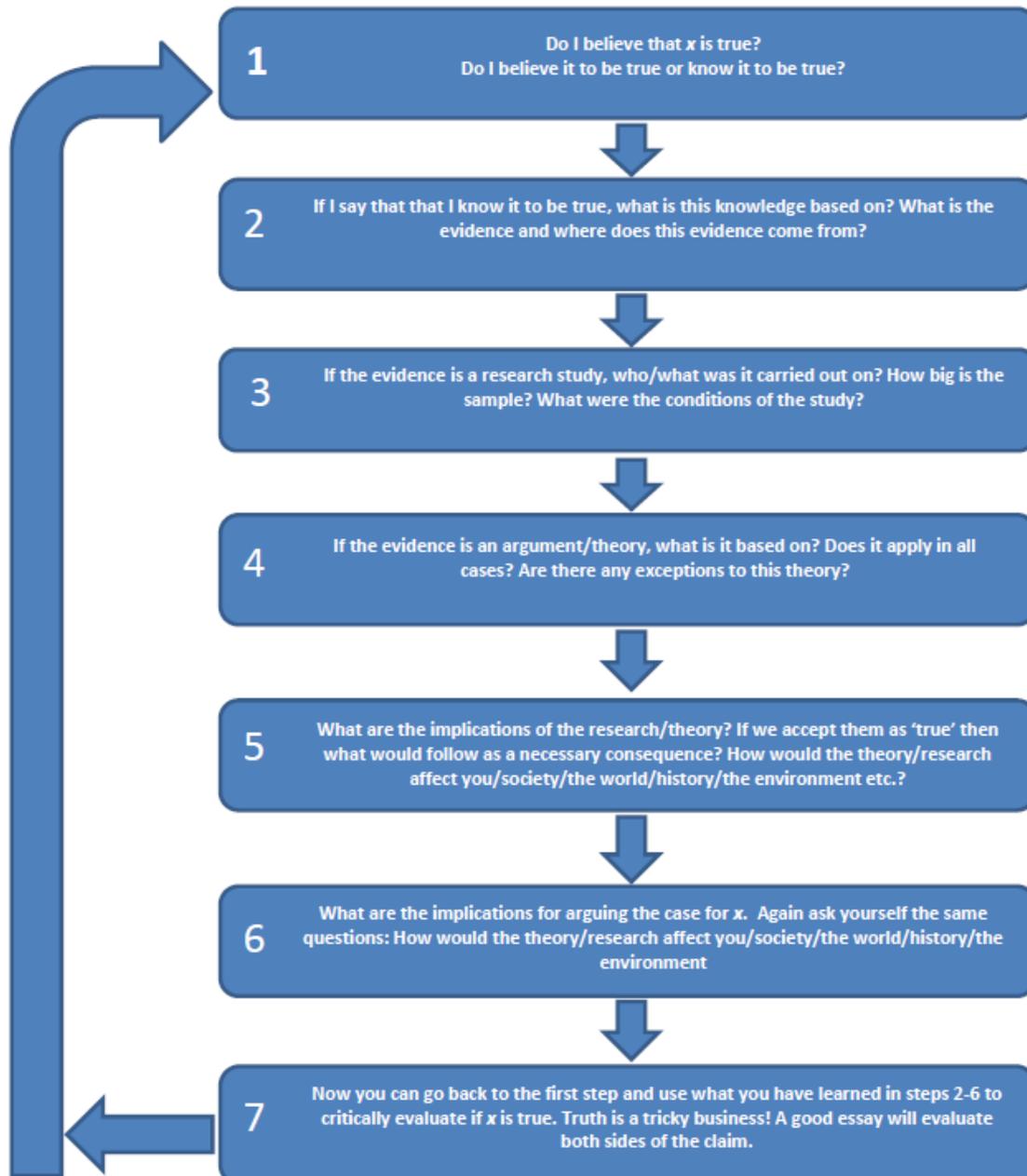
Log on with your Ease Password

**How to Succeed at University** listed under Event Booking tab

Or email: [Abby.Shovlin@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Abby.Shovlin@ed.ac.uk)



### Critical Thinking Checker



<http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff-students/students/new-students/student-support/preparing-for-study/school-and-college-leavers/looking-back/critical-thinking/how>