

How can we best support our final year students?

Clare Langman
Information Specialist
Aston University



A final year student can have many variables

- ▶ Subject specific
- ▶ Have they done a placement?
- ▶ What sort of learner are they?
- ▶ Have they got any additional needs?
- ▶ Home or international student?



Some students may need “re-integration”

- ▶ Returning from placement can feel like starting over again
- ▶ Different friendship group, changes to facilities and resources
- ▶ Feeling out of practice with studying and assessments



What can we do to support the transition to final year?

- ▶ Improve the **transition** from 2nd/placement year to final year
 - ▶ Engage with them over the long Summer break – offer skype appts
 - ▶ Monthly email with latest news and developments
 - ▶ Highlight key resources (remind them they have access to everything off-campus), make slides available for those who want to start projects early
 - ▶ Use social media to help them feel part of the Library
 - ▶ Photos, videos, case studies



When I started final year I wish I had known.....

the importance of getting all the information and research before writing

how to use 'web of science' and the referencing tool effectively (so no need to manually reference)

how to create and stick to a time frame - planning what you're going to do and when, so you don't panic

how to plan a dissertation and write it – what to include and what is the purpose

how to find clinical trials and how to perform critical appraisal

Depends on what IL input they have had previously

Engineering students

From

- ▶ Refining searches
- ▶ Improving the use of filtering tools
- ▶ Help evaluating information found elsewhere

To

- ▶ Defining keywords and building a search
- ▶ Running a search and narrowing results
- ▶ Difference between academic journal article and other types of articles

Huge variation in the type of help students need

Language and Social
Sciences students

- ▶ Literature reviews (defining what one is, how to structure it and what needs to go in there)
- ▶ Using specialist databases rather than just using Smartsearch and Google Scholar.
- ▶ Grey literature (defining what it was, where to find it and how to reference/use it)
- ▶ Advanced search techniques
- ▶ Time management
- ▶ Explanation of what peer review means and the importance of journal articles (!)

Building on what they have done previously

Business & Law students

- ▶ *“My opinion is that I see students that seem to have “got by” in the their first two years and now the module set up has changed and they need to go beyond book and Library SmartSearch. The assessments they are being asked to undertake require a wider knowledge of business sources”*
- ▶ *“For the dissertation side is more about finding information on their chosen topics and pushing students away from their “favourite” law database and smart search and thinking about using other types of legal databases and even business sources”*

From a personal perspective they need to know about...

Life & Health Sciences

- ▶ Advanced searching techniques
- ▶ Reference Management Software
- ▶ Critical Appraisal skills
- ▶ Finding and using Grey Literature
- ▶ How to undertake a Systematic Review
- ▶ How to access articles not available through the institution

What can we do to support them?

- ▶ Reassurance (give feedback)
- ▶ Promote 1 to 1 support (ongoing)
- ▶ Encouragement
- ▶ Pastoral support – “check in” on them
- ▶ Wellbeing initiatives



My plans going forward

Provide students with more information in advance of starting final year to help them prepare

Send a personalised email to all final years in my groups at the beginning of the year to highlight the range of support available to them

Follow up after every 1 to 1 to check how students are progressing

Have you done anything different to support your final years?

Initiatives or projects?

What do you think we can do to improve our support for final years?