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Educational acculturation and academic integrity: Outcomes of an intervention subject for international post-graduate public health students

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This paper discusses a case study of a subject developed and implemented in a post-graduate public health program at the University of Wollongong that aims to foster the development of student academic integrity and related skills as students are introduced to a new educational culture. The subject adopts a formative, task-based approach where written and oral pedagogic tasks focus on various components of a final written assessment task. The subject was collaboratively developed by faculty and learning development staff and, in addition to the subject co-ordinator, its implementation is supported by library and learning development staff, as well as a tutor who is a graduate of the course. The majority of students enrolled in this course are recent health professional graduates from South Asia. In the light of recent arguments for awareness of cultural diversity in universities (e.g., McGowan, 2005a, 2005b; Chanock, 2003; East, 2006) and in the context of program evaluation, we report on the learning outcomes achieved by one group of newly-arrived South Asian students in the communication and academic integrity intervention subject. The paper draws on and aims to extend research into South Asian students' understanding and development of academic integrity in Australian tertiary institutions (e.g., Handa & Power, 2005).

Key Words: academic integrity, task-based learning, formative assessment, South Asian students.

1. Introduction

Difficulties facing international students for whom English is a second (or additional) language (ESL) have been evaluated in research literature from two perspectives. The first is what Chanock (2003) calls an *institutional* perspective, which involves identifying a problem (e.g., student plagiarism), attributing this problem to a lack of skills, and adopting a punitive and/or remedial solution to reduce instances of the problem (cf. Chanock, 2003; McGowan, 2005a; Birrell, 2006).

The second, *educational*, perspective sees the academic discipline as a complex new culture for incoming students (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991), who are in a position similar to *novices* (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986) or *apprentices* (Lemke, 1985, cited in McGowan, 2005a; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Assistance from experts (Vygotsky, 1978; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) and peers (Donato, 1994) in collaborative practice is where individual learning is argued to take place in this perspective.

Within university curricula, it has been argued that learning can be effectively supported by integrating or embedding academic and information literacy instruction into discipline-specific curricula (e.g., Skillen et al., 1999; Wallace et al., 1999). The model of practice for learning support at the University of Wollongong (Percy et al., 2004) highlights the value of collaboration among support staff and teaching staff in scaffolding the experience of learners as they grapple with the requirements of their assessment tasks.

The current project draws on task-based pedagogy (e.g., Long & Crookes, 1992) where a real-world task is analysed into its component sub-tasks, which are then explicitly modelled for and constructed by the students. This is closely linked with *formal* formative assessment (Yorke, 2001), where such sub-tasks may be assessable and may contribute to students' final grades, though the main focus is on the ongoing teaching and learning of skills required for the successful completion of subsequent summative tasks.

In the case study reported in this paper, formative assessment is designed to inform students' development of skills related to the final essay of the intervention subject and other summative assessment tasks in related subjects, which may be taken concurrently or subsequent to the intervention subject.

This paper reports on the academic acculturation and the development of academic literacy and integrity, knowledge, understanding and skills of newly-arrived South Asian (SA) post-graduate public health students. After considering differences in academic culture between SA and Australian universities, we outline the assessment task-based interventions, review student outcomes and present a summary of student feedback on the intervention subject.

2. SA post-graduates in Australian universities: Between academic cultures

A review of the limited available research into SA students in higher education reveals a range of issues which may assist in the development of a culturally-informed, scaffolded pedagogical approach. Some of these issues are common to students from a range of backgrounds (including both native and non-native English speakers), whereas others may be more specific to students who are accustomed to the academic culture of an Indian university. Interest has been expressed in the experience of SA students in Western and SA universities since the 1950s (cf. Lambert & Bressler, 1955) and covering several contexts, including America (ibid.), India (Gitanjali, 2004), and offshore and local Australian universities (Lahur, 2004; and Handa & Power, 2005, respectively).

2.1. Teaching and learning

There are a variety of approaches to education across SA. These include differences in providers, curriculum (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005) and methods of teaching and assessment. For example, education in primary and secondary Indian schools is in either the mother tongue of the local community or English (Mallikarjun, 2001). In higher studies English is the language of education (Handa & Power, 2005). This means the learning experiences, knowledge, skills and English proficiency that post-graduate students bring from SA to their Australian public health studies are varied.

Entrance into university is determined by an examination focusing on knowledge of content rather than any aptitude in application of that knowledge (Lambert & Bressler, 1955). Within SA academic traditions, grades and ranks are valued and are an indication of status (Lambert & Bressler, 1955). In addition, didactic methodology (Lahur, 2004) and an emphasis on reproduction of content and rote-learning are common in Indian university pedagogy (Handa & Power, 2005).

2.2. Academic integrity

In some cultures, copying is a valid learning strategy and it is accepted practice to incorporate direct quotations from reading material, without acknowledgment, as this shows that the student has read widely (East, 2006). In fact, the ideas and words of known authors are considered to be knowledge, and students are expected to make use of these words. Such a perspective is supported by research into academic misconduct by SA students in India (Gitanjali, 2004) and Australia (Handa & Power, 2005). Gitanjali (2004) describes academic dishonesty at the undergraduate level, in Indian medical colleges, as consisting of students copying from books and each other in exams.

Language alone cannot explain the cause of academic difficulties, such as plagiarism among SA post-graduate students (Handa & Power, 2005) as most of these students have a good command of English. In addition, the English language proficiency scores that allow international students entry into Australian universities are no guarantee that a student is capable of applying that language to academic assessment tasks (McGowan, 2005b).

2.3. Technology

Another issue for SA students entering Australian universities is their proficiency with information technology. For example, Handa and Power (2005) found that undergraduate students in India typically did not use computers to write their assignments. This causes problems when studying at Australian universities where course management systems are now the norm for communication (and increasingly for assignment submission), and access to information is greatly enhanced through the use of online databases.

The cultural shift from viewing learning as a task of memory and reproduction of others' words and ideas to viewing it as "a constantly evolving process of discovery, questioning and reformulating of hypotheses" can be a challenging experience (Thompson, 1999, p. 1). To address this challenge, several researchers (Handa & Power, 2005; McGowan, 2005a, 2005b) have argued for some kind of orientation or enculturation into the new academic culture.

3. The communication skills subject: Development and structure

Graduates of public health courses are able to work in the broad area of public health where the knowledge, understanding and skills of academic literacy and integrity are integral to performance. Public health professionals work across sectors to promote the health of populations by addressing the underlying social, economic, environmental, biological and governance determinants. Public health is not a pure science where there may be only one answer to a particular problem. There may be a number of interventions that address a particular issue depending on the context, population and available resources. The public health professional may be required to research identified issues, develop plans to address these issues, implement the plans and evaluate the outcomes of these interventions. This means that a high level of academic literacy and integrity is required of both professionals and students of public health.

In 2004, the School of Health Sciences at the University of Wollongong recognised that international post-graduate students were struggling with their studies, resulting in poor grades and distress for students as well as frustration for academics. The significant problems identified were the lack of student academic literacy skills and the differing expectations of students and academics in regard to university education. A number of issues were recognised as contrib.-uting to these problems, including adjustment to life in a foreign country, English language proficiency, and the fact that, although student qualifications were known, there was little known of their educational experience: "How have these students previously learnt?"

To enrol in the public health courses, students are required to have reached a score of 6.5 overall with a score of 6 in each band of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test and have completed a recognised undergraduate degree in the health area. Predominantly

the undergraduate qualifications of the SA students were in the areas of medicine, pharmacy and dentistry, indicating they had demonstrated high levels of academic performance.

A collaborative approach was taken in the redevelopment of the subject with public health and learning development academics. The aims of the subject were to introduce and educate students about the new learning culture as well as the obligations that students and academics were to fulfil in the education process. In addition we aimed to provide the students with the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for them to be competent in all areas of academic communication and literacy necessary for tertiary study and future employment.

A formative assessment approach was taken in the redevelopment of the subject. The design was one where students were instructed on concepts and phenomena, developed skills to address or utilise these concepts and phenomena and were assessed on their knowledge, skills and abilities in addressing and/or utilising the concepts and phenomena. A number of pedagogic and assessment tasks were designed to develop student knowledge, understanding and skills. These formed the necessary sub-tasks of the final major assessment task.

The subject was divided into the following three modules:

1. Introduction to critical analysis. In public health, critical analysis is seen as an integral part of the scientific process whereby knowledge is challenged and developed. The aim was for students to develop critical thinking skills to carefully analyse/evaluate information and come to a judgment/conclusion regarding this information.
2. Accessing and evaluating information. Public health professionals are required to access the available and current information on an issue from a variety of sources including catalogues, databases and websites. Students were encouraged to develop and use critical thinking skills to analyse and evaluate the information found as well as the source of the material.
3. Structuring reasoned arguments and communicating information. Public health professionals are required to communicate with the general public, communities and health professionals as well as professionals from other sectors, such as education, in the conduct of their work. Students were encouraged to utilise their knowledge of communication and academic literacy and integrity in the development of reasoned and substantiated arguments.

The subject was linked to one other concurrent core subject so that the content the subject was built around could be seen by the students as relevant and useful to their studies. This double exposure to content increased student familiarity and understanding of vocabulary, concepts and topics which meant they had more time to apply to developing their academic literacy skills. The assessment tasks in the concurrent subject were also tailored to build on the skills developed in this subject. More importantly, throughout the subject students were encouraged to raise any problems they had in regard to study in other subjects. These generally related to assessment tasks. The students were directed to speak to the relevant subject teacher regarding the content matter but such things as question analysis, searching the literature and how to go about developing a reasoned argument were discussed. The co-ordinators of the concurrent subject/s and the communication subject co-ordinator regularly discussed issues that arose and decided on appropriate actions to address them.

The subject was taught by two public health academics (one of whom is a past international student) for two hours per week and one learning development academic who provided one hour of academic skills instruction for the first six weeks and was available for consultation for the rest of the session. In addition, the faculty librarian provided training in research skills as well as research advice throughout the session.

Classes involved lectures on academic literacy and integrity as well as exercises to apply the knowledge gained in the development of the related skills. Accepted university practices and policies were also introduced and discussed in the class along with advice about how to go

about seeking help. This involved providing information on support for education and social issues. The learning development classes focussed on academic writing and addressed issues identified by students and staff. In addition to comprehensive feedback on their assessment task performance, students were encouraged to visit the Learning Development Unit for assistance in the form of individual consultations.

The following table identifies and provides the aims of both the assessable and non-assessable tasks. The tasks marked with an asterisk were non-assessable. All tasks were compulsory. Students were required to be successful in all assessable tasks to successfully complete the subject. The assessable tasks were marked and feedback was provided to the students on structure, content, formatting, presentation, substantiation of discussion and referencing, on an individual basis and in class discussions. Those students who were unsuccessful were given the opportunity to resubmit after consultation with the tutor and learning development staff.

Table 1. Subject tasks, assessments and aims.

Task/Assessment	Aim
Referencing skills pre-test (week 1) * A test that assesses referencing skills in both in-text citations and reference lists.	To highlight to the student the importance of referencing and the need to master these skills as well as to provide diagnostic information on student competence. When combined with feedback and class discussion it is seen as one part of the education process whereby the student develops knowledge of the referencing skills required for public health academic writing in a non-threatening and new educational environment.
Email academic (week 1) * Students email their tutor to say they have obtained their email account.	To introduce the student to both electronic communication as well as the expected and accepted manner of interaction with staff across all subjects of study. In response the tutor emails a welcoming message to the students as they commence their studies. The students who failed to email their tutor were shown how to do so the following week in class. Those identified as experiencing difficulties were directed to information technology services for further support.
Project plan (week 3) * Students are required to develop a project plan with the aim of successful completion of the first session of university.	To introduce students to the concepts of project plans and to highlight the need for students to manage their study time effectively across the semester. Completion of the task allows the student to experience the submission of work through one of the required processes (hardcopy through the faculty student centre) in a non-threatening environment as well as providing an opening for the discussion of assessment in the new education culture.
Descriptive writing task (week 3) * Students are asked to research and provide a description on a given topic (250 words) by the end of Week 3. The assignment is submitted online.	To introduce students to academic writing, and on-line submission, a requirement of other subjects. This submission was reviewed in class using the online text-matching tool, Turnitin.com. This class was led by the learning development academic. The public health academics assisted the students with the technological aspects of accessing Turnitin.com but they did not have access to the 'originality reports'. This was done so that the students could see that Turnitin.com is a tool that they can use without the

Table 1. cont'd

Task/Assessment	Aim
	threat of it being used against them by their tutors. Each student viewed their paper only. Plagiarism was discussed and exemplified. This class provoked much discussion as the students raised questions about their work and how they could improve future submissions. It allowed for further discussion on what substantiation of argument actually means and why referencing is required. That is, to empower the students' argument, acknowledge the ideas and words of others and provide a source for this material. The public health academics marked the paper and provided feedback to the students on structure, content, formatting, presentation, substantiation of discussion and referencing. Students were encouraged to resubmit their paper to build on their knowledge and skills in these areas.
Critical analysis (week 4) Students are required to submit a written critical analysis on a given topic (750 words).	To develop an understanding of the students' knowledge and the skills developed of critical analysis, the synthesis of information and academic writing skills. Prior to this submission, students learnt about critical analysis, and literature analysis, academic writing and referencing via lectures and their online course management system. Practical exercises were undertaken in all areas including writing the introduction for the task.
END OF PART 1	
Website critique (week 7) Students are required to critically review a health-related website (2 pages in length)	To develop an understanding of the students' ability to apply the knowledge and skills of critical analysis and the synthesis of information in the development of a substantiated discussion as well as academic writing. This assessment highlights the need for students to analyse and synthesise information as well as evaluate the source of the information. These are necessary skills required across all public health subjects and work. Websites allocated included those appropriate to the students' course of study and their future public health work, such as The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, as well as those websites that would not be considered reliable sources of information, such as Wikipedia.
Literature search report (week 9) Students are required to report on their research process and the outcomes of their literature search for the final assignment (3 pages in length).	To develop an understanding of the students' knowledge of and competence in searching for the literature, literature analysis and report writing. This assessment task highlights the need for students to search for relevant literature, analyse and synthesise it and develop a report explaining the process used. These are necessary skills for public health students across their course of study and public health professionals in strategic and operational planning.
END OF PART 2	

Table 1. cont'd

Task/Assessment	Aim
Referencing skills post-test (week 13) * Students are required to repeat the referencing test.	To assess the changes in student referencing knowledge and skills and to determine what further education needs to be provided on the technical aspect of referencing.
Final Assessment (week 13) Part A: The students are required to research and submit a 1200 word essay on a given topic Part B: The students are required to write a critique of Part A covering the structure, format & presentation and substantiation of discussion.	Part A: To assess student knowledge, understanding and skills related to question interpretation, critical analysis, and research, as well as the development of a reasoned and substantiated argument that addresses the given task. Part B: To assess student knowledge and understanding of academic writing components and form. The papers are marked and feedback is provided on the structure, content, formatting, presentation, argument development and substantiation, and referencing.
END OF SUBJECT	

4. Methodology

The impact of the intervention subject on student learning outcomes has been analysed from three perspectives. The first involves simple descriptive statistical analysis and comparison of the referencing skills pre-test and post-test. The second involves a preliminary qualitative analysis of the work of two students. This involves analysis of the first and last assessments utilising common marking criteria of both assignments to determine qualitative changes in the students' writing over time. The students provided the third perspective on the relevance and usefulness of the intervention subject through structured feedback.

5. Analysis

5.1. Performance on referencing skills pre-test and post-test

The referencing skills test was used to assess the ability of students to accurately use in-text and reference list citations at both the start and end of the session. The same test was utilized on both occasions for the 44 students and the score was out of 28 marks. The distribution of the marks on the referencing skills pre-test and post-test for the 44 students is shown in Figure 1. In week 1, the mean score was 8 out of 28 and this had increased to 21 out of 28 by week 12. The median for the pre-test was 6 with a standard deviation of 5.2. The median for the post-test was 21.5 with a standard deviation of 3.9.

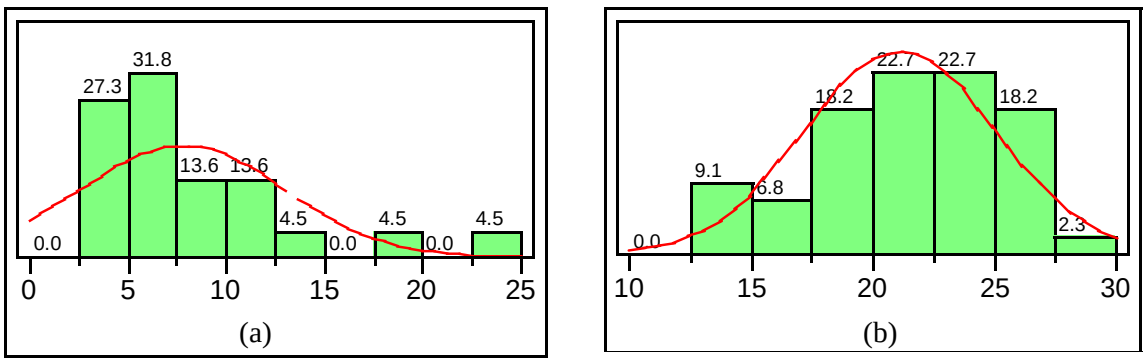

Figure 1. (a) Referencing skills pre-test showing score distribution. (b) Referencing skills post-test showing score distribution. In both charts, the horizontal axis shows student marks and the vertical axis shows the number of students. A normal distribution curve has been shown to illustrate the shift of the curve to a higher mean. The values on top of each column are the percentage of students achieving marks in each range.

5.2. Preliminary qualitative data analysis

The work of two students was chosen for closer qualitative analysis based on referencing test scores. S1 (female) and S2 (male) both improved markedly between the pre-test (week 1) and post-test (week 13), as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. S1 and S2's pre-test and post-test scores.

	Pre-test score (/28)	Post-test score (/28)
S1	6	21.5
S2	7	24.5

The purpose of this preliminary analysis is to investigate whether there were any qualitative changes in the students' work between their critical review (submitted in week four) and the final essay (submitted in week 13). The critical review, a formative assessment, was submitted after the students had received instruction, but before they had received any formative feedback on their writing. The final essay, the only summative written assignment in the subject, would, it was hoped, show a marked improvement in the students' ability to present a logically structured critical argument, drawing on the academic writing conventions of the discipline. Based on assessment criteria common to the assignments, and loosely drawing on Bonanno and Jones's (1997; cf. also Skillen et al., 1999) tool for measuring academic skills, the students' writing was evaluated according to the following categories:

1. structure and development of answer;
2. academic writing conventions;
3. referencing and use of source material; and
4. sentence-level grammar.

5.2.1. Structure and development of answer

Both the critical review and the final essay required students to critically analyse research published in scholarly journals. S1 and S2 both had difficulty with critical analysis in both assignments. S1's critical analysis was mostly descriptive, with one or two sentences evaluating the research. S2's provided more criticism, but this was often superficial. When the criticism was more substantial, it was not supported by evidence from the original source material. In the final essay, neither student systematically evaluated the research. S1 preferred to present a summary of the original authors' results, while S2 asserted the effectiveness of the original authors' research without explicating its limitations. The structure of S1's critical review was unclear, with no observable separation of ideas into paragraphs. This improved markedly in the final essay. In contrast, both S2's assignments were clearly structured and coherent.

5.2.2. Academic writing conventions

Both students had difficulty with the objective, formal and systematic nature of academic writing required by the discipline. In the critical review, both used subjective language (e.g., "painstakingly measured;" "… interesting …"); informal language (e.g., "It also talks about …;" "there isn't any duplication …;" "Besides, …"); and used a variety of verb tenses unsystematically. These all improved for both students in the final essay, to varying extents. For example, although S2 is able to effectively integrate sources to create a coherent paragraph, he often relies on an inconsistent mix of formal and informal cohesive devices (e.g., "At the same time …;" "The last one consisted of …"). S1 has a similar informal approach in presenting her own ideas (e.g., "By the above essay, we can agree to the fact that …").

5.2.3. Referencing and use of source material

The critical review required the students to use only one reference – the journal article to be reviewed – whereas the final essay required twelve or more sources. This may explain the fact that there were more referencing errors in the final essay than in the critical review. S1 used block quotes without referencing from the original source in her critical review, but not in her final essay. Issues related to the students' final essays included the following:

- sources missing from (or incorrectly formatted in) the reference list (both students);
- in-text references incorrect (both students) or missing (S1); and
- inclusion of source material of questionable quality (S1).

S1 consistently made the same two errors: those of including authors' initials in in-text references (e.g., "(Meron. D et al, 2005)") and including the title of a source, rather than its author (e.g., "(Obesity Project Report, 2006a)"). She failed to reference material from sources ten times, and, ignoring typographical errors, her in-text referencing was successful four times. S1's in-text referencing also included several typographical errors as exemplified above. S2 had several minor inconsistencies in in-text referencing. These included incorrect placement of parentheses (e.g., "WHO (2006)" where "(WHO, 2006)" was more appropriate), incorrect punctuation and incomplete references ("(Fruhbeck 2000, p.)"). Except for inaccuracies outlined above, S1 was successful in writing her reference lists according to discipline conventions, whereas S2 made minor and consistent errors (e.g., unnecessary inclusion of numbering and missing parentheses).

5.2.4. Sentence-level grammar

Apart from inconsistencies in the use of verb tenses (e.g., "[in this essay,] programs … are being investigated and discussed" [S2]) and prepositions (e.g., "the analysis for 1681 children" [S1]), there was little in common between the two students' writing in terms of English grammar. S1 had difficulty with the use of pronouns in anaphoric reference ("this," "that" and "it"), subject-verb agreement (e.g., "this settings has been reported"), and inconsistent use of verb tense and punctuation. In her final essay, although the use of prepositions had improved, the other issues remained. S2's writing had fewer grammatical errors, which were relatively consistent across both assignments. These included minor errors of agreement (e.g., "there have been recent introduction") and some inconsistencies in the use of singular or plural possessive forms (e.g., "other person's work") and confusion between the possessive pronoun "its" and the contraction "it's".

5.2.5. Summary

This preliminary analysis has revealed both common issues between the students as well as issues related to their individual experience and performance. It also reflects development of the students' writing across the two tasks, as well as challenges to this development arising from changes in task complexity. Both students experienced difficulties in critically analysing research, resulting in mainly descriptive writing, including the original authors' self-critiques, or superficial analysis of source material. Both students were similarly challenged by the objective, formal and systematic nature of academic writing, including acknowledgement practice. They dealt with these in different ways with some success across the two assignments. There appeared to be some minor changes in grammatical accuracy of at least one of the students' work, and this area revealed few common issues in the individual students' writing.

5.3. Student feedback

At the completion of the semester students freely and anonymously provided feedback on the relevance and usefulness of the subject content and activities via a questionnaire that contained both structured and open-ended questions. This feedback informed refinement of the subject. The structured questions asked students to rate aspects of the subject, their usefulness in developing student skills and their applicability to other subjects. Students were required to

choose whether they *strongly agree*, *agree*, *slightly agree*, *slightly disagree*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree* with statements about the subject using a six-point Likert scale. Open-ended questions requested students to comment on the most and least valuable aspects of the course.

5.3.1. Response to structured questions

Overall student response to the structured questions on the content of the subject and its usefulness in the study of other subjects was positive. Students strongly agreed/agreed that the information on critical analysis was useful in understanding what is required in academic learning (39/45) and addressing assignments in other subjects (34/45). Most students strongly agreed/agreed that the class provided by the faculty librarian on research skills had been useful for their studies (41/45) and that practical exercises helped to develop question analysis skills (40/45), writing introductions (35/45) and referencing skills (41/45).

5.3.2. Responses to open-ended questions

a. What were the most valuable aspects of this subject? Why?

Generally students showed appreciation of the educational concepts taught, the delivery of the subject and its relevance to success in their course of study in the Australian education environment. Ten students commented on how the subject helped them adjust to learning in Australian universities. Thirty-two students identified the development of specific skills related to academic literacy as the most valuable aspect, with four students linking this to other subjects. Seven students identified the manner in which the subject was taught as supportive and non-threatening and four students noted that the subject helped develop their English language skills.

b. What was the least valuable aspect of this subject? Why?

Generally the responses to this question were supportive of the subject and the manner in which it was taught. Eight students replied “none” (i.e., that they had no negative comments), nine students explained that it was all useful and 13 students did not respond. Negative comments included complaints from four students about the time of the class (10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.), and from two students who commented that the focus on skills was too repetitive.

6. Discussion

Teaching this cohort of students was a challenge. Students came from a number of countries in South Asia: predominantly India, with others from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The educational culture in South Asian countries is different from that of Australia. Significant differences include the delivery of information, use of technology, forms of assessment, perception of academic integrity and expectations of students and academics.

Utilisation of formative assessment in the subject allowed the students to become familiar with their new educational culture. The qualitative analysis of the two students’ work supports this statement. It showed that the students gained an understanding of the significant components of academic writing and academic integrity and that they are now developing the skills to apply that knowledge. Some improvement was shown across all four areas analysed: structure and development of answer; academic writing conventions; referencing and use of source material; and sentence-level grammar. Throughout the remainder of their course students will be provided with feedback on academic literacy and integrity with continuing support in this area provided by the relevant subject and learning development academics.

The referencing pre-test was introduced to the subject in week one with this cohort of students. The aims were to highlight to the students the importance of referencing and to determine student skills in this area. The fact that the repeat test used the same test paper may skew the results in a positive direction but nonetheless the repeat test shows great improvement in student skill. This is supported to some extent by the qualitative analysis mentioned above, though

increasing task complexity in the context of writing an assessed essay reveals challenges that cannot be seen in the decontextualised referencing tests.

The student feedback supported the notion that the subject provides a constructive pathway and a process for educational enculturation, though the degree of uptake of the new culture may vary, reflecting the students' starting point and motivation. Student feedback, both formal and informal, has been instrumental in subject development. For example, since this student cohort has completed the subject, the website critique has been changed from a written assessment to an oral presentation as students had protested that they had not had enough practice in developing formal oral communication skills.

Initially the assessments in this subject were graded as successful and unsuccessful with students being asked to resubmit their assessment tasks to obtain a successful grade after both written and verbal feedback had been given. Student feedback brought to light the high regard that students hold for marks and the lack of appreciation of being able to resubmit. Resubmission of work was seen as an extra burden rather than an opportunity to succeed or learn. Hence these tasks are now allocated marks with students required to obtain fifty out of a possible hundred marks to pass the subject.

7. Conclusion

This paper reports on a case study into an intervention subject that aims to address differences in educational cultures of South Asian and Australian universities. The development and running of the subject has gone some way to addressing the educational acculturation needs of South Asian students in the post-graduate public health courses at the University of Wollongong. The subject continues to be redeveloped as more is learnt about the students and their educational needs and experiences. As can be seen from the analysis, students generally develop the skills to be able to progress in the subject, though challenges arise as assessment tasks increase in complexity. It is intended that this preliminary research will inform a planned course-wide project into how students may apply and further develop academic literacy and understanding of academic integrity and skills in other subjects.

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