

Title of example of practice: Adjunct model language support system for English-medium masters

Author

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Institution and initiating department/faculty

(i.e. where examples of practice take place):

University of Jyväskylä, in six Faculties: Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Sport and Health Sciences, School of Business and Economics, Information Technology. Initiating department: Language Centre in collaboration with the faculties and programme providers.

Departments/faculties in which initiative implemented:

Compulsory support modules in the following international English-medium Master's programmes: Intercultural Communication; Digital Culture; Music, Mind and Technology; Development and International Cooperation; Educational Leadership; Sport Science and Management; Sport and Exercise Psychology; Gerontology; Entrepreneurship in Family Business; Corporate Environmental Management; and Mobile Technology and Business.
 Present case example: Master's Degree Programme in Educational Leadership

Abstract

(QA question: What are/were you trying to do?)

The support system for students includes three modules, starting with an orientation module on learning through English and on academic practices at the University of Jyväskylä, followed by a research writing module which is integrated with the thesis seminar (i.e. an adjunct CLIL model where language and content courses are synchronized to run simultaneously) during the first year of Master's studies. At the end of the two-year programme there is a module on project and conference skills, also integrated with the subject studies. All assignments serve both language and content requirements. All modules follow a blended approach (using an electronic learning platform called Optima) and are compulsory elements of the Master's programme. Language learning outcomes and assessment follow the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Content assessment usually has the same criteria, but with different weightings. Credits are awarded for both, separately.

The modules are integrated in and tailored for the English-medium Master's programmes, which have a mix of Finnish and international students. The main focuses are on information management and evaluation, conventions of research reporting and academic writing in the disciplines, seminar, meeting, and presentation skills, and academic study skills for learning through English in the Finnish context. The modules usually include collaborative and individual work on the Optima platform, as well as individual supervision and feedback. Due to tailoring, the requirements and main focuses vary between programmes, and some programmes also include a separate course on critical information management. Training is provided by Language Centre English lecturers in collaboration with subject professors and lecturers.

A separate support system is available for staff development (see <http://kielikeskus.jyu.fi/en/welcome-visitors-contact-information/policies-and-approaches/support-for-student-and-staff-mobility>).

Background – contextual issues giving rise to the initiative

(QA questions: Why are/were you trying to do it? / What are/were the aims and objectives?)

The support system was originally set up after an institutional evaluation conducted in 2000 on the English-medium teaching offered at the University of Jyväskylä to exchange students. Through the evaluation some key problem areas for both students and teaching staff were identified and support courses started in academic study skills, writing, and presentation, as well as in pedagogical and communication issues involved in teaching multilingual and multicultural groups in English. When the English-medium Master's programmes were set up – along Bologna – the support system was integrated to serve these programmes because it was evident that the standardized tests (like TOEFL and IELTS) did not address the kinds of academic skills (particularly thesis writing) needed in the two-year Master's programmes, regardless of the high level entry requirement in English that is the prerequisite for admission.

Description of activity or initiative

(QA question: How is/was the activity/initiative implemented?)

The language support modules for developing academic expertise include the following:

Module 1 (1st year, September):

ORIENTATION TO ACADEMIC ASSIGNMENTS (1 ECTS)

The module is composed of 12 hours of contact study and a small independent language learning project to be done on the Optima platform. The focus of the project depends on each student's needs. Tailored in-house materials and special e-learning modules placed in Optima are used as materials. Continuous assessment and self assessment are used. Active participation and successful completion of the individual learning project is required.

Learning Outcomes: After completing the course the students are expected to

- o know the scope of academic competences required when learning through a foreign language;
- o have revised aspects of English language needed for research writing, critical reading, and presenting, and analysed their existing skills in these areas;
- o show understanding of different types of academic assignments and practices; have developed their own skills in using ICT-enhanced materials on an electronic learning platform.

This module may be offered separately or as part of Module 2.

Module 2 (1st year, October-May):

INTEGRATED RESEARCH COMMUNICATION (4 ECTS)

This module is intended to provide support for research writing and the thesis writing process, from the establishment of research focus to synthesising, writing and presenting a research plan in the thesis seminar. It is composed of some 40 hours of contact study in class, as well as individual and small group feedback sessions on the assignments. All assignments – including e.g. an annotated bibliography, a research plan, a literature review, and a seminar abstract and presentation - are integrated with, and timed according to, the subject studies and follow their requirements. Active participation and successful completion of all assignments is required. Modes of study include lectures, workshops, simulations, and academic writing and oral presentation assignments.

The **10 four-hour workshop sessions** cover the following main topics:

1. **ORIENTATION:** Types of knowledge needed in academic writing (AWR), The research and thesis writing process, Research reporting conventions
2. **ACADEMIC WRITING AND CRITICAL READING:** General about academic writing, Critical reading strategies, Evaluating research information, Basics of citation and referencing – paraphrasing, quoting, summarising, and synthesising
3. **THE WRITING PROCESS 1:** Organising writing according to conventions, Citation and referencing –

incorporating source materials, Avoiding plagiarism, Writing an Annotated Bibliography

4. **THE WRITING PROCESS 2:** Review of annotated bibliographies, Focussing the Research Plan
5. **THE WRITING PROCESS 3:** Pragmatic appropriateness, Formal style, argumentation, and hedging, Linking for “flow”, Writing a Literature Review
6. **THE WRITING PROCESS 4:** Empirical and argumentative writing, Outlining and data commentary
7. **THE WRITING PROCESS 5:** Writing introductions, conclusions & definitions, Organising writing according to conventions, Writing a Research Proposal
8. **THE WRITING PROCESS 6:** Writing abstracts
9. **ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS:** Preparing professional powerpoint presentations
10. **ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS** Presentation practice for the Thesis Seminar

The remaining 10 hours of contact teaching are reserved for individual feedback on each assignment.

For assessment criteria, see <http://kielikeskus.jyu.fi/opetus/englanti/international-students-and-masters-programmes/international-masters-programmes>

Learning Outcomes: On completion, the students are expected to be able to

- demonstrate their understanding of the types of knowledge and information management needed for research writing
- be familiar with, and able to use conventions, language, and formats of academic writing in their field;
- show understanding of intercultural differences in research writing and presentation;
- know how to report quantitative and qualitative research and how to use references and citation without plagiarism;
- demonstrate skills in synthesising and evaluating research information in various formats of written and oral academic communication and presentation;
- know how to assess and edit their own writing and how to do peer evaluation and provide constructive feedback.

Module 3 (2nd year, April):

PROJECT AND CONFERENCE SKILLS (2 ECTS)

This is a simulation of a project meeting and research dissemination conference. A project and conference website is established in Optima for typical documentation and communication by participant teams. Collaborative assignments are used to cover meeting documentation. Abstracts and presentation skills are peer-reviewed for feedback and video-recorded for self-assessment and teacher assessment.

Learning Outcomes: After completing the course the students are expected to

- be familiar with documentation and proceedings related to international projects
- be familiar with conference-related communication, presentation, and conventions
- know how to prepare a conference website and the documentation related to it
- know how to write a conference abstract and conference CV (biodata)
- know how to prepare documents related to meetings and conferences
- be able to demonstrate skills in acting as a presenter, active participant, and chair in an international network and dissemination conference.

In the Educational Leadership (EDLS) programme, the expected learning outcomes from the research seminars and Master’s Thesis coincide with what is expected in the CLIL modules:

EDLS900: Research seminars (4 ECTS) and Master’s Thesis (30 ECTS), Learning Outcomes:

Upon completing the research seminars and thesis, learners are expected to be able to

- independently assess educational phenomena and identify researchable problems;
- **formulate appropriate research questions** and define research methods that fit the problem;
- **demonstrate their ability to use academic references and various knowledge sources;**
- compose and conduct an independent research project from proposal to final report;
- collaborate in a research group, share information, and develop a supportive academic culture;

- demonstrate both oral and written academic communication skills;
- demonstrate skills in giving presentations and presenting posters in international conferences.

Evaluative comments

(QA questions: What are/were the outcomes? What is/was the impact? Is/was the activity/ initiative successful? How do you know whether or not it works/worked?)

On the basis of the feedback from both students and programme staff the support system works well and contributes greatly to the discourse competence that students demonstrate in their writing and presentation assignments for the subject studies. Also, a collaborative institutional evaluation was done in 2007 to review all international Master's programmes. On the basis of its findings, new areas of development were also identified and are now being addressed. This kind of work is never completed, but through systematic reviewing it is possible to enhance the quality of these programmes continuously.

Advice to others

Setting up a CLIL course requires much time for collaborative planning between subject teachers and language teachers, as well as negotiation over roles and responsibilities. The instructions given to students on e.g. assignments should be clear and consistently the same for both teachers. There has to be mutual respect for the areas of expertise of the actors, general willingness to cross disciplinary boundaries, and institutional support for the system adopted. It is important that concepts and approaches of CLIL are understood well, and that staff development is provided. Careful follow-up and feedback systems are also necessary.

Reflection/any other comments

QA question: Is/was that the best way to do it? Why/why not? What improvements or adjustments are needed?

This kind of an approach is time-consuming for the teachers because of the collaboration in planning, instructional design, subject-specific information, criteria of assessment, and adjustment of timetables needed. It is, however, quite rewarding when it works well, because students really appreciate its direct relevance to their other studies and many subject teachers feel that they would not be able to guide their students in the development of academic writing and communication skills in the way that language teachers can. Adjustments, however, are always needed because each student group is different.