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### Review of Academic Skill Programs at Post Secondary Institutions & Designing Impactful Academic Supports for International Students

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**Review of Academic Skill Programs at Post Secondary Institutions  
&  
Designing Impactful Academic Supports for International Students**

April 2021

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## Executive Summary

This review was informed by the Academic Preparedness Plan prepared by Joan Sweeney Marsh, Marian Traynor and Danielle Palombi.

### Goals

- Design inclusive, student-centred learning supports for international students that aim to help students adapt to their new learning environment. Supports can be designed with the global make-up of the Sheridan student community in mind
- Aim to “even the playing field” with respect to academic skills and, at the same time, avoid a deficit-centred approach
- Understand through literature research and data what International students want in academic supports
- Create a student-centred approach by leveraging past experiences to identify skills development programs and resources
- Explore incentives that would encourage student to develop new skills and utilize academic supports
- Utilize academic supports to build engagement and motivate students to become more connected to the Sheridan community

### Incentives

- Cost reimbursed towards tuition
- Co-curricular record to help with employment on and off campus (resume development, interviews)
  - Reference letter
- Academic Skills Certificate or Statement of Achievement
- Gift card draws
- Summer prep program online link to CCR
- In alignment to the 4P model, design academic success programs for specific groups of students (e.g. varsity athletes, Indigenous students, and academically at-risk students (Wilfred Laurier)).

### Common Delivery Modes

- Inserting a module into a course
  - Anticipate limited student interaction with this
  - Anticipate limited faculty interaction with this due to time constraints and competing interests with curriculum delivery
- Workshops (in class, in residence, online) that include activities with Peer Tutors, staff or other students
- Webinars
- One-on-one appointments with a Learning Coach/Advisor or Learning Strategist
- Faculty mentor program (Laurier) & Peer Language Support Program for Multilingual learners (Laurier)

Table 1 summarizes Academic skills programs offered at post-secondary institutions. Effort was made to provide an overview of programs offered at Canadian universities and colleges. One American program was also reviewed. Whenever possible, the model of delivery is identified and an incentive, if applicable, was noted. This research was completed using information provided in Appendix C: Successful Models for Enhancing International Students' Academic Success (Marsh & Oakey, 2020) in Academic Preparedness (Sweeney Marsh, Palombi & Trayner, 2020) as a starting point.

Table 1 Post Secondary Academic Skills Development Programs

BrockU	<p>Passport to Success by ESL services created a game that has students complete various important tasks throughout the semester and submit completion of the tasks for a chance to win a gift card</p> <p>Workshop series by International Services-academic and language workshops, and a variety of other topics including immigration</p>	<p><b>Incentive:</b> none</p> <p>This relies on the initiative of the student to want to complete the challenges. Once the academic term starts it may be challenging to motivate students to complete these tasks when there are no “marks” awarded</p> <p>Division of supports by different departments</p>
UWindsor	International student centre-Academic support for international students	<p><b>Incentive:</b> None-Relies on the student’s initiative to seek out the supports and attend workshops</p>
CAPP	<p>Canadian Academic Preparedness Program</p> <p>Used by Niagara College  <a href="https://international.niagaracollege.ca/student-services/capp/">https://international.niagaracollege.ca/student-services/capp/</a>  <a href="https://www.mycapp.ca/">https://www.mycapp.ca/</a></p> <p>6-day program includes applied learning, academic integrity, classroom expectations, use of Niagara College’s LMS</p> <p>Delivered 6 hours/day in India  Curriculum is developed by University of the Fraser Valley</p> <p>From the www.mycapp.ca website:  Day 1-introduction to Canada and its post secondary system  Day2-Learn to navigate Canadian social norms and legal systems  Day 3-students apply their learning to a project and make their first in-class presentation  Day 4-Develop strategies to find friends, career opportunities, and engage in a new community  Day 5-Learn how to ask questions and get the information needed  Day 6-Develop a personal “toolkit” that contains resources &amp; strategies for living away from home and thriving in a new country.</p>	<p><b>Incentive:</b> Mandatory requirement-so this will motivate students to complete the course because it is part of their acceptance package-required to attend CAPP</p> <p>Cost associated with this program</p> <p>Does not allow students to experience a typical course delivery during the semester.</p> <p>Culmination of 3 institutions  -University of the Fraser Valley  -Fraser Valley India  -Niagara College Canada</p>

<p>Georgian</p>	<p><a href="https://www.georgiancollege.ca/international/programs/#EAP">https://www.georgiancollege.ca/international/programs/#EAP</a> English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program</p> <p>Is connected with ILAC-International Language Academy of Canada. Called Georgian@ILAC. Launches January 2021. Provides 3 programs (1 business diploma program and 2 graduate certificates in business)</p> <p>International Workforce Development (IWD)-provides programs at institutions or online including customized training that includes mentorship with Cdn faculty, language training – English for.....(computer science), faculty training and vocational education leadership training</p>	<p>Fee associated with this program (\$100 + supplies (up to \$250)</p> <p>External program; not focused on academic preparedness</p> <p>External program</p>
<p>Ohio State University (US)</p>	<p><a href="https://oia.osu.edu/units/international-students/pre-arrival-and-orientation/language-excellence-and-academic-preparedness/">https://oia.osu.edu/units/international-students/pre-arrival-and-orientation/language-excellence-and-academic-preparedness/</a></p> <p>Program length-24 days? (cost covers 23 nights of accommodation).</p> <p>Language Excellence and Academic Preparedness Program (LEAP)-pre-first semester, non-credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-goal is English language skills and culture adjustment</li> <li>-36 classroom hours of curriculum</li> <li>- “During classes, students ask and answer questions aloud, complete tasks as a group, present in front of their peers and follow strict academic guidelines”.</li> </ul> <p>-“The Office of International Affairs believes language and culture are best learned with a combination of study and experience, thus students participate in a number of field trips that are designed to complement the classroom learning objectives and prepare students for life at Ohio State and in Columbus, Ohio”.</p> <p>Curriculum-language excellence including speaking English, giving presentations, acting in plays, talking with native speakers. Academic preparedness including writing standards, test taking, assignment standards including how to read scholarly articles, critique/paraphrasing, collaborative projects, group discussions, speaking and asking questions in class, professor office hours, plagiarism, citation styles, TurnItIn, rubrics, grading scale, note-taking techniques, permission if recording lectures, summarizing/paraphrasing notes, introduction to the Writing Center. Exploring resources</p>	<p><b>Incentive:</b> Fees-\$700 up front which is reimbursed as a scholarship when the course is completed</p> <p>Taught by ESL Instructors</p>

	including library services, college culture/social interactions, campus & community involvement	
Humber	Passport to Success: Offered through international centre; goal is to become more engaged at the institution (inclusion); complete activities to develop skills, experiences and attitudes	<b>Incentive:</b> entered into gift card draws; statement of achievement, reference letter <b>Model:</b> workshops (i.e. learning skills)and activities
York U	Global Connections: summer prep online workshops, student run workshops; academic life at York-webinar run by students	<b>Model:</b> <u>summer</u> prep online workshops & webinars
U Regina	Workshops on academic skills/study skills/exam prep AVOIDING PLAGIARISM & OTHER ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT-workshop with activities.	<b>Incentive</b> -none, relies on student's motivation to <b>Model:</b> workshops and webinars
Laurier	<p>No academic supports identified specifically for international students. Study skills-individual and small group available.</p> <p>New Faculty Mentorship Program: “The Faculty Mentorship Program is a new initiative to provide additional support for the 2020/21 academic year. By participating in this program, you will be paired with a faculty member who will act as your mentor throughout your first year and provide you with support as you adjust to university life. Whether you want to chat about career goals, study tips or your favorite Netflix documentaries, this program is a great opportunity to connect with a faculty member in an informal setting.” <a href="https://students.wlu.ca/academics/support-and-advising/study-skills-and-course-support/academic-success-programs.html">https://students.wlu.ca/academics/support-and-advising/study-skills-and-course-support/academic-success-programs.html</a></p> <p>Peer language support program for multilingual learners: “Multilingual learners who would like language support in one of their courses can request to be matched with a peer through the Peer Language Support Program. The purpose of this program is to connect multilingual learners with classmates in order to receive course-specific support. Students meet once per week to discuss lectures, readings, and assignments.”</p>	<p><b>Incentive:</b> Academic Skills Certificate program-entry in Laurier Experience Record (curricular and co-curricular record). Website identifies importance of building the LER and connects importance to employment (used on resumes &amp; during interviews) and for future education.</p> <p><b>Model:</b> on campus, in-class, in residence, and online workshops; offer “Academic success programs for varsity athletes, Indigenous students, and academically at-risk students”</p>

Based on the findings above, 3 options for designing academic supports for international students from India are proposed below. General design ideas a long with recognizing the need for incentives and challenges associated with each design have been discussed.

**Option A – Modules/Workshops**

- Can be used independently, as needed and built into workshops for specific topics
- Can be individualized-based on a survey about learning experiences-information is then extrapolated to identify key modules that may be of benefit for the student. Results from the survey connect the student with people at Sheridan
- Contains resources and contact information students can use
- Actively connected to a person (i.e., faculty, faculty librarians, etc.; important)

-Benefit-content can be designed to meet the needs of different groups of students

-Incentive –need to have an incentive associated with completing workshops/modules

-**Challenge** with this idea-difficult to engulf into a course – low participation, low interest to do “work” outside of the course structure, limited faculty time to promote/oversee completion of the modules, “plop and drop” attitude (we imbed the resources into course that end up rarely being look at/used by students)

Therefore-packaging the delivery mode for modules and workshops needs to be closely explored to maximize use by students. Further, how to promote the modules and workshops with faculty should also be closely explored.

### **Option B- General Elective Course**

This option has multiple advantages. It will provide a strong incentive to complete the course since the majority of programs require completion of general elective courses as a component of the diploma/degree completion. Through the design of the course, it will help students transition academic skills to a new learning environment; it will also provide the opportunity to work on tasks such as resume development which is critical for finding a job or participating in a field practicum course as a component of their program of study.

**Challenge**-make the course inclusive, open to a diversity of students, and not limited to international students

- Designing this as a course for academic credit- elective
  - What is involved in achieving a credit course?
  - Can this be completed in their country of origin online in a synchronous format before first semester?
  - Leveraging that students are generally mark-motivated. International students from India in particular originate from a learning environment where they are teacher-directed.
  - Modules designed with a focus on adult learning and built on existing strengths of the learner (i.e., international students from India).
- Key skills student require for academic success at Sheridan
  - Practicing English including, verbal and written; opportunity to communicate with others, both IN students and domestic students. Learning to ask questions in class and expectation of participation.
  - Understanding Sheridan’s writing standards.
  - Understand test taking strategies, how to study, differences in format.
  - Understand assignment standards including grading scales and use of rubrics.
  - Understanding what constitutes plagiarism and how to reference sources properly using common formats such as APA and MLA. Understand what TurnItIn is and why it is used at Sheridan.
  - Learning how to read scholarly articles and prepare a critique/paraphrasing thoughts expressed in the article. Developing note-taking techniques.
  - Exploring academic support resources available at Sheridan including library and learning services, career services, groups and opportunities for social interactions, different ways to become involved on campus & within the community.

**What would the learning outcomes of a General Elective Course might look like?**

### **Key modules**

#### **Campus life**

- Exploring resources including library services, college culture/social interactions, campus & community involvement
- How to contact people-faculty, learning support services, etc.

## Running head: ACADEMIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM INDIA

- Where to go for help
- Available academic supports at Sheridan and where to find them/how to contact people
- Speaking and asking questions in class
- Professor office hours

### Becoming a Self-Directed Learner

- What does this mean and how do we accomplish this?
- Asking questions and the importance of class participation
- Time management
- School-work life balance

### Academic integrity & referencing styles

- Plagiarism
- TurnItIn
- Rubrics
- Grading Scale
- Permission to record lectures
- APA, MLA – provide opportunities to practice by doing

### Academic writing expectations

- Program-specific language-what terms are important for students to know in preparation for the course
- Writing in your own word-how and knowing when to reference
- Successful note taking strategies-what constitutes “taking notes” vs plagiarism
- Understanding applied learning and how to answer applied-type questions in your own words
- Learning how to read how to read scholarly articles,
- Critique/paraphrasing
- Note-taking techniques
- Practice with applied learning/case studies/problem solving

### Basics of group work

- Understanding group work
- How to work in a group
- How to navigate challenges

### Technology in the classroom and beyond

- What personal technology you may require and learning about different options (laptop vs tablet)
- Sheridan’s SMART classrooms
- Introduction to SLATE (can practice using SLATE)- navigating SLATE-where to find your course materials, grades, online quizzes/tests, virtual community
- Who to contact for problems with your device, SLATE, internet
- Incorporation of social media as a way to connect with students in different time zones? Instagram, Snap chat?



Practicum/finding a job preparation

- Introduction to the Career Center
- Finding a job/placement
- Time-management
- Interview skills
- Resume writing & how to position your international experiences
- Optimal Resume
- Understanding professionalism and professional expectations
- Working as part of a team

Program-specific topics

- Designed in collaboration with faculty
- Purpose-to identify and provide support(s) for academic skills identified at critical for success by faculty teaching in the program.

**Option C: Mixed Model Solution**

Flexible Design Model: Design individual modules to meet the learning outcomes for an elective course but also offer the individual modules through a variety of delivery methods for those that don't take the elective course e.g., faculty embed a specific module in a course, a pre-arrival workshop online, webinar, recommend by a Learning Services staff member to meet a specific student's learning need etc.

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