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‘Narrowing the Gap’–Supplementary Chemistry Tutorials for non A-level students of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Bioscience

As student cohorts become larger and more diverse, there is a need to comprehend how to engage and support all students. MPharm and MSci students entering on the non-traditional route of A levels, i.e. Leaving certificate, Access Courses, BTEC or an international qualification can struggle with the Chemistry content in the first semester of first year. This has been reflected in the exam results and feedback from students.

The aim of this work was to implement supplementary Chemistry Tutorials for students struggling with the Chemistry component of a first semester first year module

Subject areas within the A level syllabus were identified and aligned with the first year, first semester module chemistry components. A questionnaire was devised to determine what the needs were and distributed to all first-year students at the start of semester. A PhD student with a strong background in Chemistry took the tutorials. The academic staff member met with the PhD student twice a week to discuss material to be covered and any feedback from students. The academic also worked closely with students to understand the problem areas through informal discussions, minute papers at the end of each of the tutorials and teaching assessment questionnaires at the end of semester.

Based on the feedback from students, the PhD tutor and the exam results, the extra Chemistry Tutorials were deemed a success. The fail rate for the Module exam decreased significantly from 21.3% to 6.1% in the academic year after implementation. Due to the success of the tutorials, they have become part of the practice within the first-year cohort. This practice is transferrable as Chemistry in another School or as a different subject area such as Mathematics which is frequently seen as a challenge in teaching first year students across numerous disciplines.

Key words

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