

PROMOTING ACADEMIC STUDY SKILLS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KUOPIO

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Background

The students beginning their university studies are often assumed to have such study skills and abilities which most of them actually do not have. The students' sufficient knowledge of academic studying positively affects the launch and progression of the studies, and promotes their motivation to learn. Insufficient study skills may result in decreased studying ability which may be linked to problems in well-being.

The smooth start of the students' academic studies at the University of Kuopio has been promoted by different study skills study modules offered by the Learning Centre in collaboration with the "Five Years, Two Degrees" project. The study modules have been organised in collaboration with the academic departments, and also the University Library, International Student Services, and Career Services have been involved in the organisation.

Study modules

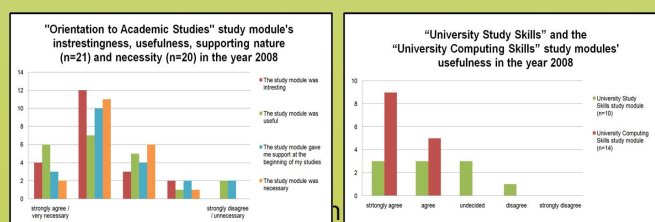
The study modules addressing study skills have been organised for the Finnish basic degree students and the students in the international Master's degree programmes alike:

- Orientation to Academic Studies study module (2 ECTS, for Finnish students) introduces different learning strategies and techniques, academic studying and community as well as technical studying environment (library, technical tools). The students learn about study planning, evaluation, stress management, internationalisation and future working life
- University Study Skills study module (1 ECTS, for international students) introduces the Finnish system of higher education. It gives an overview of studying at the University of Kuopio, and information on the available study counselling and using the library. It introduces different learning strategies and academic studying. The students learn about study planning, stress management, Finnish working life and development of their own learning
- University Computing Skills study module (1 ECTS, for international student) covers the following topics: intranet web-based tools in University of Kuopio, graphical user interface of the Windows operating system, file management, use of Internet browser, transferring files online and introduction to text processing.

In addition to contact lectures, some of the teaching has been offered as online studies. Online assignments have involved both individual working and group efforts and the students have been given feedback on their assignments. Different teaching methods like interviews and practice learning have been used to promote the learning outcomes of the study modules.

Student feedback

The study modules have attracted some 150 students so far, and student feedback has been gathered. The feedback in the year 2008 indicates that the study modules have enhanced the students' academic study skills. The feedback has been encouraging: the students have experienced the study modules as useful and supportive at the beginning of their study path (Fig. 1.). According to the Finnish students, working on the study module has helped them to get to know their fellow students. The international Master's degree students' study modules were experienced as interesting and challenging, and the atmosphere as supporting.



academic study skills study modules.

The students also had the opportunity to give open-ended feedback using their own words. Feedback has been encouraging, like:

- *The best parts of the study module involved identifying and utilising my own study style and getting motivation for international student exchange, as well as considering career orientation in the study planning. Now I know the different instances available for the students at the university. I learned to use new studying tools.* (Orientation to Academic Studies student)
- *I did proof my knowledge of computer inadequate, the study module did give me more options at using computer, I did discover the indispensability of computer skills in the university setting.* (University Computing Skills student)

In 2009, academic study skills training will continue to be organised in collaboration with the Learning Centre, the "Five Years, Two Degrees" project, and the University of Kuopio Evaluation and Development Council of Teaching. Furthermore, work to establish a model for academic study skills training will continue in the University of Eastern Finland.