

'Part of the Community?'

First Year International Students and Their Engineering Teams

What did/do you do?

A mixed-method research design was used to establish whether the experience of international students working in teams differs in any way from that of their UK and non-UK EU team mates.

Who is involved?

Thomas Joyce and Clare Hopkins were the academics involved, and the students were studying first year Mechanical Engineering

How do you do it?

A mixture of quantitative approaches (surveys) and qualitative approaches (focus groups) were used, with an emphasis on the discursive and generative which were analysed ontemporaneously. All 22 international students in Stage 1 were invited to complete 10 additional questions related to their team experience as part of an online survey used annually with all first year students since Engineering Teams were introduced in 2009/2010. This additional section asked for details of their home country and their previous educational experience including whether they had worked in teams. It also questioned them about their attitudes to group working and, more generally, their hopes for their studies in the School. Although the survey was completed anonymously, as it asked for information on gender, age and whether the student was a home, EU or international student, it was also possible to make comparisons between the responses of international and non-international (UK/other EU) students.

Why do you do it?

In the School of Mechanical and Systems Engineering at Newcastle University the number of non-EU new entrants has risen from 11.8% in 2008/2009 to 23.7% in 2012/2013.

Does it work?

For many of the international participants in this research, being part of an Engineering Team represented a positive and productive experience. For others team working signified a series of challenges to be overcome and for a very few students, the difficulties persisted until the end of the year.

Teaching and Learning Case Study

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Tom Joyce

Mechanical & Systems Engineering
(Bioengineering)

Coherent Curriculum themes:

- Student induction

Other keywords:

International Students, team-working, involuntary 'free-riding', language difficulties