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# Crynoldebau / abstracts

Improving the Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Undergraduate Students: Concerns, Initiatives and Proposals

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This presentation is based upon a project implemented in SELL during 2013/14. The overarching aim of this project was to improve the numeracy and literacy skills of undergraduate students. It is apparent that there is a distinct gap in the initiatives relating to the numeracy and literacy skills in Higher Education generally. This is despite the Minister for Education and Skills stating that the priorities for education are “improving standards of literacy and numeracy” (Welsh Government, 2012). In schools in Wales, numeracy and literacy skills are at the forefront of the educational agenda (see the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, for example). The Literacy and Numeracy Framework was launched at the beginning of 2013 and aims to support teachers in developing and monitoring pupils’ progress from ages 5 to 14. The Framework is supported by a £7 million National Support Programme (Welsh Government, 2013). Schools will use the Literacy and Numeracy Framework as a planning tool to ensure literacy and numeracy are embedded throughout the curriculum (Welsh Government, 2013). Similarly in Further Education, the importance of these skills is acknowledged (ESTYN, 2012). However, there is little evidence of initiatives, developments or even awareness at undergraduate level.

At postgraduate level, the importance of the skills for trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers again takes hold (Welsh Government, 2012). This therefore illustrates that the poor literacy and numeracy skills of pupils is a crisis that is being addressed at a national level. In addition, the literature on graduate employability emphasises the significance of numeracy and literacy skills for graduates (see Archer & Davison, 2008, for example). However, there is a lacuna in enhancing these skills in undergraduates.

The pilot project implemented in SELL began to bridge this worrying gap in numeracy and literacy initiatives at Higher Education. Based upon the pilot study feedback, there is the feasibility to explore the option of delivering literacy and numeracy programmes across the University. This presentation will present the details of the pilot project and suggest possible ways forward on a larger scale.