What's on your Mind?
Social Networking for EAP Students

Tim Leigh

Lecturer in EAP @ the University of Bolton

Student profile

- Chinese / Arabic.
- 18-21 years old.
- Pre-Sessional (21 hours of EAP per week) for at least 6 weeks.
- English Language level often less than IELTS 5.5
- Expect to be in UK Higher Education for at least 1 year (often 3 years)

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- Expect to be in UK Higher Education for at least 1 year (often 3 years)
- Own *at least* one smart phone.

The expected questions….

How do I reference…?

What's a lecture…?

What's a more academic word for….?

The unexpected questions…..

What's the difference between a Tier-4 Visa and a Student Visitor Visa?

Do I have to pay council tax if I am a student?

How do I open a bank account?

How can I make English speaking friends?

A new course, a new culture…..

First time using English as the Lingua Franca

First time living away from home

First time without his best friends

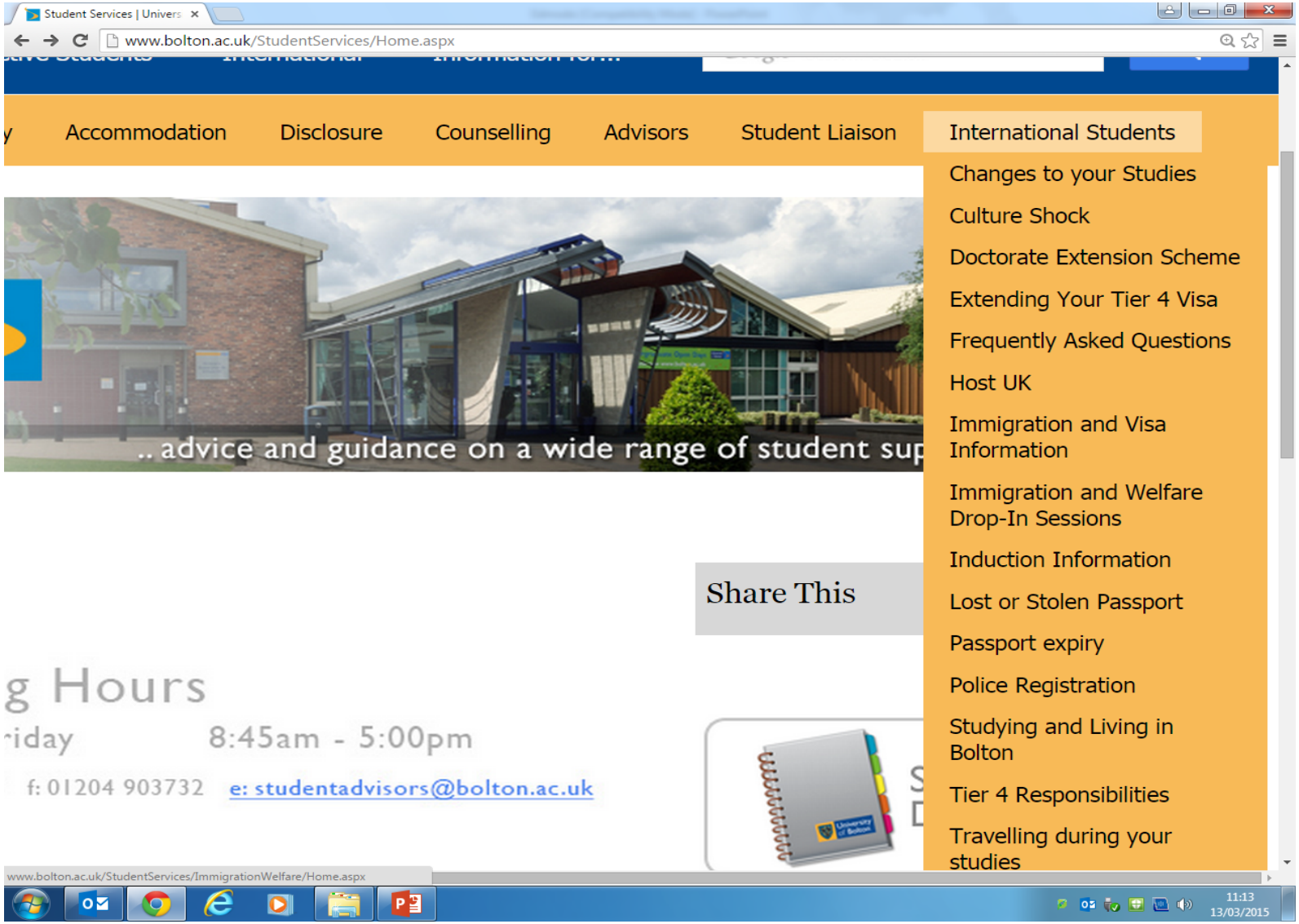
First time in the UK

First time studying English full time (21 hours per week)

First time taking care of himself (cooking, cleaning, etc.)

First time sharing a classroom with students from different countries.

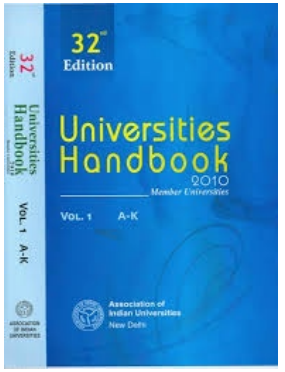
What do UK Universities provide?



What do UK Universities provide?

International Student Support Teams

University Handbook



International Societies

Why do they keep ~~pestering~~ asking me these questions?

Issues for EAP **pre-sessional** students:

- Lower level of English
- Lower level of confidence
- Full time, intensive study schedule

My idea….

Share
Like
Laundry

Laundry
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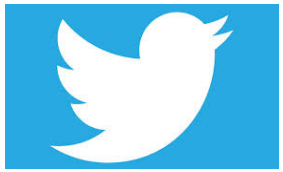
My Research Question

Can a social networking site help pre-sessional EAP students integrate into living and studying in the UK?

From the Literature...

- Are you (the teacher) going to be active or passive?
- Are you going to give students the chance to 'opt out'?
- Are you going to allow students to use L1?
- Which social networking site are you going to use?

Which SNS to use?



Using Edmodo

- “Facebook for schools”
- 48m users and based in the US
- closed groups
- little publicised controversy
- no private messaging between students allowed
- teacher led/controlled – can open and close groups

https://www.edmodo.com

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Stage C Students in Bolton!
Group

Group Code | Join URL

LOCKED

Posts

Folders

Members 17 joined

We are all new to the University of Bolton and would like to share our ideas and experiences!

Small Groups

Create a Small Group

Other Groups

English Foundation Stage D

Show All

Note | Alert | Assignment | Quiz | Poll

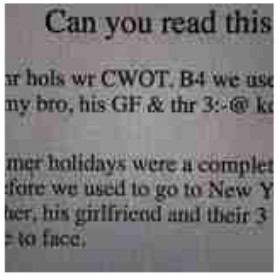
Type your note here...

Group Posts

Filter posts by

Mack S. to Stage C Students in Bolton!

Can u read first 2 lines?? This language call sns... I think :p



2 Replies | Share | Feb 14, 2015

Oyesola B. said Feb 20, 2015
I can read it

Mack S. said Feb 21, 2015
Because you are sick, kid..

Type a reply...

Oyesola B. to Stage C Students in Bolton!

How have u guys been

Reply | Share | Feb 12, 2015

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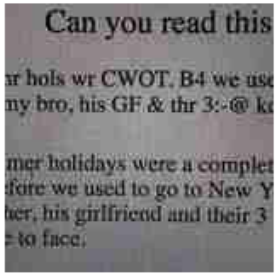

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Methodology

- Students signed up at the start of their course.
- Encouraged to edit profile, upload a profile picture, and download the App.
- At the end of their course, students were interviewed about their usage/opinions.
- Posts and comments were analysed.

Key Findings

1. Students took some time to warm to it.

- Preferred existing social media (WeChat / Whatsapp)
- Reluctance to use English.
- Preferred communicating to friends from their home countries rather than new classmates.

Key Findings

2. Student involvement did pick up...

-Approximately 50 active users (85% of pre-sessional students)

-Approximately 400 posts/comments made over a 3 month period.

Key Findings

3. Students used English to talk about 'settling in' issues.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF POSTS (approx)
Entertainment	120
Visa/immigration	70
Housing	40
Transport	20

Search posts, groups, users, apps and more

Unnati A. to Stage C Students in Bolton!

Which most important shopping mall in Bolton?

5 Replies Share

Muhammad S. said Feb 3, 2015

I don't know in bolton but in manchester there is Trafford centre for shopping.

Mack S. said Feb 3, 2015

Haha are u serious??

Muhammad S. said Feb 3, 2015

Obviously I am.

Mack S. said Feb 3, 2015

No no, I didn't meant about you pal, I said to unnati

Muhammad S. said Feb 3, 2015

Ok ok.

Type a reply...

13:41
19/03/20

Key Findings

4. The majority of active users believed the site was useful.

- More ‘fun’ than the VLE
- Could use humour and informal language
- Closed group

Conclusion

- “Have you asked on Edmodo?”
- “Someone on Edmodo said you have to pay council tax”
- “Hi everyone, what did you do on the weekend?”
- “We went out with some friends in the other class”

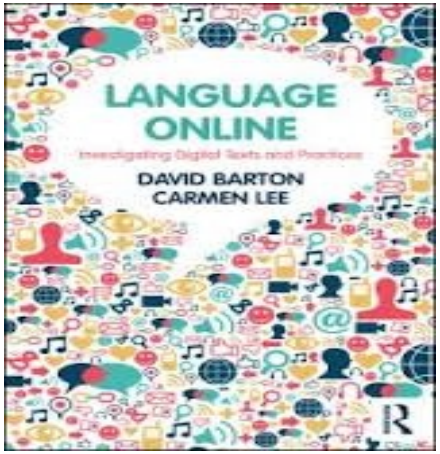
Implications

Could students connect with each other before they arrive to the UK?

Could the sites be student led; assigning different roles to various students (e.g. Administrator / moderator) to ensure information and language is accurate?

Could the sites allow pre-sessional students to communicate with existing degree students?

Reading



Barton, D and Lee, C (2013) **Language Online**

Page, R Barton, D, Unger, J and Zappavigna, M (2014) **Researching Language and Social Media**

Thank you

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