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A Critical Evaluation of the Implementation of the Numeracy Strategy in the Faculty of Health at Birmingham City University

Day 1 – Parallel I (11.30-12.00)

The S.U.M.S. report (Carter et al 2010) described a phenomenon they designated the 'Maths Gap' which is defined as a discrepancy between student expectations and capabilities in mathematics and the actual mathematics demands of their chosen course of study. In 2006 both academic and clinical staff allied to the Faculty of Health at Birmingham City University certainly saw evidence of a 'Maths Gap' among the student body. A process was initiated which culminated in 2007 with the implementation of a Numeracy Strategy.

The aim of the Numeracy Strategy was to develop competent and confident use of numeracy so that students' numeracy skills were fit for practice at the point of registration. The strategy focused predominantly on the undergraduate nursing and midwifery programmes, which at the time consisted of BSc (Hons) Nursing / RN, Dip HE Nursing / RN, BSc (Hons) Midwifery / RM and Graduate Diploma Nursing / RN. A key feature of the strategy was to make numeracy a summatively assessed element in each year of these programmes. Hence numeracy teaching and learning support was also incorporated into programmes.

Six years on and the landscape has seen further transformation. Nursing has become an 'all graduate entry' profession and there have been new developments in the Numeracy Strategy. Chief among these developments is the introduction of pre-entry testing of numeracy and the production of a Numeracy Policy which governs many aspects of numeracy teaching and learning in the faculty.

With reference to the S.U.M.S. report and Biggs' discourse on 'Constructive Alignment' (Biggs et al 2007) this presentation will critically evaluate key aspects of the Numeracy Strategy's implementation. It will discuss the model of teaching and learning adopted, showing how the demand for learning support was and is managed. It will discuss how assessment and feedback has been used to enhance student achievement. Finally it will highlight the value of Moodle (the Faculty's virtual learning environment) to student learning and achievement and outline future initiatives.

References

- Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2007) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Carter, T., Priddle, J., Hawkins, D., and McCary, J. (2010). *Students Upgrading Maths Skills*. HEA: London. Available at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/EvidenceNet/SUMS.pdf> (Accessed on 9th June 2013)