ARE POSTGRADUATES READY FOR RESEARCH?

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Results (continued)
Further analysis, revealed specific areas of weakness and evidence of students over-estimating (and under-estimating) their skills.

Students’ Ability to Find Information
Postgraduate students will already have considerable experience in finding information. However, to do a literature review they will need to be able to search bibliographic databases effectively. Do they have the skills to use Boolean operators?

Students who were asked about their research readiness self-assessment (RRSA) tool, revealed specific areas of weakness and evidence of students over-estimating (and under-estimating) their skills. Students who rated their skills at the lower end (2nd Quartile) actually performed best in this test. None rated themselves in the bottom quartile.

Method
1. The online Research Readiness Self-Assessment (RRSA) tool (created by staff at Central Michigan University) was chosen because:
   1. It measures both the self-perceived and actual level of skill.
   2. It can provide individualised feedback & recommendations for training.
   3. Results are analysed to compare students’ self-perceptions with their actual skill levels.
   4. After four months, students were asked about their training needs.
   5. Records of attendance at IL training sessions for the RRSA group and the non-RRSA group were compared.

Results
Overall the average scores for the group were good.

Students’ Feedback
Survey Monkey was used to conduct a brief evaluation of students’ experience of RRSA. The response rate was 38%. The majority found RRSA had been useful and went on to attend a greater number of IL training sessions.

Conclusion
From these results, it is shown that:
• Students’ self-perception of their Information Literacy skills is not always a reliable basis upon which to determine training needs in this area.
• Student feedback indicates that RRSA is a useful tool in realistically assessing skills and training needs.
• Using RRSA can help to raise awareness of, and attendance at, Information Literacy training sessions for research postgraduates.

The results also support the Research Information Network (RIN) recommendations for more systematic approaches to identifying the information related skills and competencies of researchers.

Swansea University intend to use RRSA again and to further refine and develop it in the light of these results.

Librarians and other training professionals should “... adopt more systematic and innovative approaches to identifying and assessing the needs of researchers to enhance their information-related skills and competencies.”

(Research Information Network, 2008)

References

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