

Taking the LEAP (online)

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One of the distinctive features of the courses at the University of Bolton is that the experiences of the newly arrived student is considered a key part of producing a world class graduate. Bringing people together from all over the world with differing educational experiences and expecting them to be at the same level of understanding about degree courses can pose a significant first hurdle at the start of undergraduate studies. Knowing what is expected of you and rapidly learning the etiquette of being a university student needs to be communicated quickly. This is so that the subject matter of your course - which attracted you to want to spend the next few years of your life studying it - can be the main focus. The vital skills that support that process 'oil the wheels' and facilitate more of the good stuff.

So how do we do this? As you'd expect, Medical Biology students are taught in class and given handouts and links to support the process. But this isn't easy to take on board when there are lots of other pressing things on your mind as a new student. So, this is where the tutoring process and LEAP comes in!



Students are allocated a personal tutor who is there to signpost and support students. Personal tutors allocate time to see students face to face (or online) and have office hours when students can call in to see them. There is also e-mail and 'chat' on moodle. Students complete a LEAP Ahead questionnaire within the first week of starting the course and from that a personalised action plan is generated for each student. The action plan has links to short and often animated courses on moodle that give students bite-sized guidance on a number of important topics. Most students are aware of the need to cite sources of information in essays and reports, but the fine detail of how to do this can be lacking. Doing a LEAP exercise earns a 'badge' that has value beyond giving you a skill.

LEAP badges are valuable. They help to unlock benefits in the #UniAsItShouldBe scheme – you get money towards buying books, laptops, and in the case of Medical Biology students – a model skeleton to help with those anatomy classes.



Every time students complete 15 LEAP badges, these magically become a 'meta-badge'. These merit a mention in your Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) that all students have available to share with potential employers after graduation. So not only does it help to give you skills that you can do anytime and wherever you have the digital means to do so, it is also something the University verifies that you have completed. Thus, showing commitment and persistence in your studies. These are qualities that employers appreciate. So right from the start, you are supported in your studies and you can see that spending short but regular chunks of time doing the LEAP exercises is earning you long term benefits too by showing employers that you have additional and verified skills.