

# **INITIAL IDEAS ON A HANDBOOK FOR STUDENTS AT FACULTY OF ENGLISH – HANOI UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **I.1. Rationale**

HNUE issues a handbook, distributed free for each freshman at the beginning of their enrolment, in which the information is really useful. However, when it comes to the major subjects, students often get lost as well as feel disoriented on finding suitable strategies to bettering their performances. Therefore, understanding the importance of having a student handbook designed specifically newcomers at Faculty of English, the authors would like to carry this research in order to somehow help them back to their track again.

### **I.2. Aims of study**

Through the study, the authors hope to help English-majored students be more aware of the from-general-to specific information which is closely related to their academic studies as well as social lives. With the assistance of the handbook, students should work out for themselves ways to develop as fully-developed students, then fully-equipped citizens academically and emotionally.

### **I.3. Scopes of study**

Within the scope of a term paper and due to time constraint, the authors cannot cover all aspects associated with students and their time at university. We simply hope to implement the research on the following points:

- Aspects focused: ‘Academic’ aspect with five mostly voted categories from the survey freshmen and sophomores at Faculty of English, HNUE.
- Audience: freshmen and sophomores at Faculty of English (HNUE), who have been suffering from academic information ‘thirst’.

### **I.4. Methods of study**

To meet the objectives of the study, I have used the following methods (1) Do a research on the need of a student handbook; (2) Design a questionnaire to survey from categories that students need information the most; (3) Collect and analyze the data; (4) Research and design the sample student handbook.

### **I.5. Paper overview**

The study consists of the following parts: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature review, which provides some theoretical basis for the study, (3) Data analysis and discussions, (4) The handbook: Introduction and (5) Further study and references

## **II. THE USE OF HANDBOOKS**

### **II.1. Definition of Handbook**

#### **II.1.1. What is a handbook?**

Wikipedia defines the term '*handbook*' as '*a type of reference work, or other collection of instructions, that is intended to provide ready reference*'. Handbooks may deal with one or several topics at a time, and is an easy-consulted and quickly-answered source of information. Also, handbooks are a kind of book providing specific insights and instructions on a specific field or subject. There are many definitions of 'handbook' but they all share one shared feature which is being portable and concise.

#### **II.1.2. What is a student handbook?**

Quite similar to a handbook in general, a 'student handbook' can be simply understood as a carry-round, living and breathing book which includes the mostly up-to-date information students need that closely associates with their studies and life at university.

### **II.2. Aspects covered in Handbook**

As stated, handbook is the place where readers can find the instructions, information and answers just shortly after their questions are raised. Handbook is, thus, diverse disciplinary, in which one or more than one topics are covered.

- *General information of the department* (history, location, staff...), majored courses (credit system, subject names...) *and extra-curriculum activities* (department/faculty's clubs, periodic activities...)
- *Achieving academic success* (Study skills, goal setting, group-work strategies, time management...)
- *Socializing* (getting to know people, living in diversity...)
- Aiming for lifelong success (vision, critical thinking, values...)

### **III. The study**

#### **III.1. Aims**

It can be seen that a handbook would be of great benefit to the students at the faculty of English, HNUE. This study, therefore, is intended to investigate the students' needs regarding their study at university and accordingly to provide source of information helpful for their study process by designing a student handbook.

#### **III.2. Participants**

The participants of this study are 135 freshmen & sophomores at the target context. They have been studying at university for only one or two years,

#### **III.3. Scope**

For the very initial version of the handbook, merely academic aspect is covered. In particular, there are only five academic issues presented in this handbook.

#### **III.4. Instrument:**

A survey is used in order to investigate students' self-awareness of study skills as well as their expectation of a potential handbook. The survey consists of two parts. In the first part, students are asked to state their agreement to five statements related to their study skills. The second part, students are to choose five academic issues that they want to get more information about and the expected form of the potential handbook.

#### **III.5. Procedure**

After the students' needs of academic aspect are assessed, five issues are chosen to include in the handbook. Information about these issues is then collected from different sources before the designing step of the handbook.

#### IV. Survey results

##### IV.1. Students' self-awareness of study skills

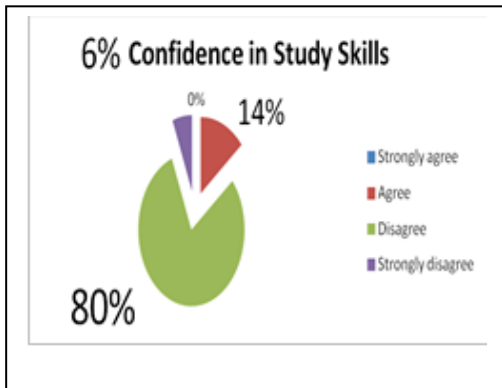


Figure 1

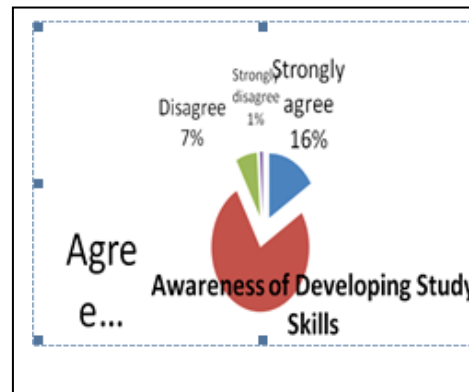


Figure 2

It is worth noticing that most of the students claim that they are aware of developing study skills and know what skills they need to have in order to succeed

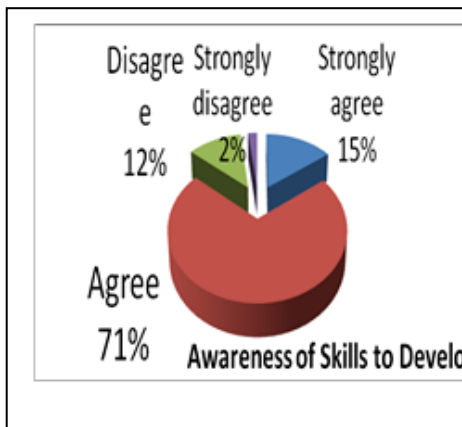
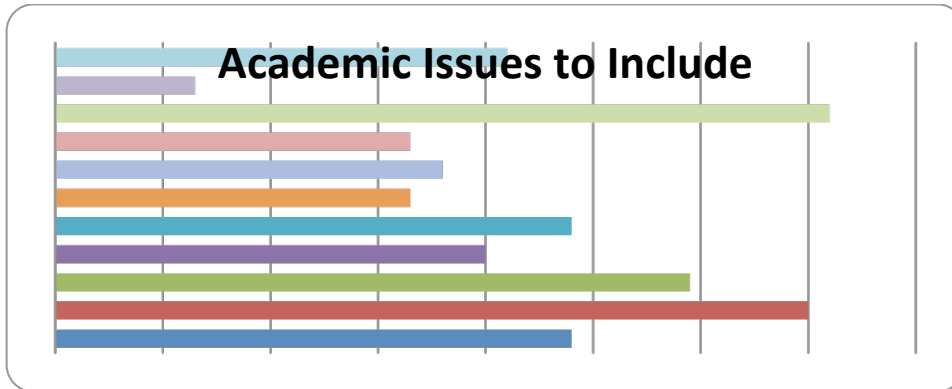


Figure 3

When asked about students' desire to get more informed about study skills, it is not surprising that all students give positive response.

Overall, it is revealed from the questionnaire that there is a need for a handbook for students so that they could become more successful in their study.

##### IV.2. Expected academic issues to include in the handbook



**Figure 4**

As shown in figure 4, the top five most important issues as identified by the students include:

- + Time management
- + Learning to learn
- + How to survive exams
- + Remembering strategies
- + Developing group work skill

Regarding the desired form of the handbook, most of the students (77%) prefer online to printed form.

## **V. The handbook**

The handbook is named “A Student Handbook for Dummies” with information on five academic issues compiled from a variety of sources such as books on study skills, handbooks of other universities and the internet. Each issue is presented with illustrations in forms like pictures, diagrams, or mind maps. It is also required that the information is brief and the presentation is clear and eye-catching so that students are interested in reading and find it easy to follow the handbook.

## **VI. Further research**

It could be found that the scope of the initial handbook is rather narrow, covering only five academic issues. Further research, therefore, is needed for a more comprehensive version of handbook. A more complete handbook should be developed to include other aspects with larger numbers of issues. In addition, the

process of designing the handbook could involve more teachers and students. It is also a good idea to carry out research to investigate students' reactions to the use of handbook in order to better the design and the application of the handbook.

**APPENDIX**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON ACADEMIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS AT FOE – HNUE**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain understanding of students' academic needs and expectations in order to better serve the students.

**1. Please circle the option that best describes you. What year of undergraduate program are you currently in?**

- A. First year
- B. Second year
- C. Third year
- D. Fourth year

**For questions from 2 to 5, check (√) the box that corresponds to your degree of agreement with the statements on the left.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2. I am confident that I have good skills to succeed in my study.				
3. I am aware of developing good skills for my own study.				
4. I know what skills I need to develop for my study.				
5. I would like to get informed about academic skills for my study.				

**6. Please choose the FIVE most important academic issues that you want to get more informed about.**

- A. Time management
  - B. Learning to learn
  - C. How to survive exams
  - D. Tips for doing assignments
  - E. Effective group work
  - F. Quality information search
  - G. Academic and associated jargon
  - H. Exploring personal learning style
  - I. Remembering strategies
  - J. Library research skill
  - K. Useful addresses & websites
  - L. Other(s) (Please specify) .....
- 7. What form of information would you like to be provided?**
- A. Printed
  - B. Online

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

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