Designing staff development: Enhancing the First Year Experience

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Today

• Background and why?
• The course design and purpose
• Frameworks
• Student perspectives
• Pedagogical implications

.......and a few points to discuss
What Works: Student retention and success programme 2012-16

BCU approach founded upon:
Student as partners philosophy
Creating a sense of learning community
Students’ Union partnership
Poor retention/student dissatisfaction in some areas
Sectoral drivers
Strategic implications

- Partnership with staff and students
- Commitment
- Priority for all staff
- Staff capacity
- Monitoring student behaviour
- Institutional data
- Student capacity
Strategic enablers

1. The **institutional commitment** to a culture of belonging should be explicit.

2. Nurturing belonging and improving retention and success should be a **priority for all staff**.

3. Staff capacity to nurture a culture of belonging needs to be developed.

4. **Student capacity** to engage and belong must be developed.

5. **Institutional data** should be used to identify departments, programmes and modules with higher rates of withdrawal, non-progression and non-completion.

6. Systems to **monitor student behaviour** and **take action** when at-risk behaviour is observed.

7. **Partnership with staff and students** to implement change across the student lifecycle and throughout the institution.
Welcome to EDU7211 Transition and the First Year Experience

This module is designed to allow you to explore some of the existing practice surrounding student transitions as they join Birmingham City University and to examine new ways of developing our current provision in order to enhance their experience across the first year and beyond.
Aims

• Evaluate theories and processes around the first year experience and student transition as a basis for proposing changes to existing practice.

• Make informed design decisions in relation to a new aspect, approach or initiative around the first year experience and student transition within the context in which you operate.

• Critically reflect on your approaches to the design process providing evidence of how you have acted on feedback from your peers and other stakeholders.

• Construct an action plan for change that includes appropriate methods for evaluation and dissemination of the intervention you design.
Daily structure (week long block)

Academic underpinning – educational evidence for why we do what we want to do.

Case studies – practical examples of what is possible, the challenges we face and how we can overcome them.

Development time – time for you and your colleagues to develop your ideas collaboratively and individually.
DESIGNING AN ORIENTATION AND TRANSITION STRATEGY FOR COMMENCING STUDENTS

A conceptual summary of research and practice
Alf Lizzio (2006)
The ‘Five Senses’ of Successful Transition

A SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS
- Institutional Identification
- Community Participation & Contribution
- Academic Competence
- Disciplinary Engagement

A SENSE OF CAPABILITY
- Task & Role Clarity
- Vocational Direction

A SENSE OF CULTURE
- Clear Values
- Personal Development

A SENSE OF RESOURCEFULNESS
- Systems Access and Navigation
- Physical Environment
- University – Life Interface
- Student-Staff Relationships

A SENSE OF PURPOSE
- Student-Staff Relationships
- Clear Values

Designing an Orientation and Transition Strategy for Commencing Students: A Conceptual Summary of Research and Practice
Alf Lizzio (2006)
Institutional culture

How would you describe the FYE culture at your university?

Discuss in your groups (5 minutes)
Our challenges and opportunities

• Changing A’ Level landscape

• The working student

• Motivation, Belonging & Resilience student success

• Mental Health and student wellbeing

• First year experience shapes perception and sets expectation (NSS) – Learning Gain
Survive and Thrive!!!
This profile line compares how first year respondents answered questions in the UK Engagement Survey between 3 data sets. Data from 2014, including the national benchmark, is used to contrast against data from 2015.

The percentage represents the number of respondents that answered positively to the proposed question (e.g. “Very Often” or “Often”). As a result of this aggregation method not all questions could be included, most notably the questions about what students do with their time.

Additionally not all questions could be compared due to differences in between the 2014 and 2015 surveys but where possible the questions have been mapped between versions. Only questions where the text had not changed significantly were mapped.

They questions come from the following question groups:

Q2, Q13. During the current academic year, how much has your course emphasised the following activities?

Q4, Q6, Q8. During the current academic year, about how often have you done each of the following?

Q17. How much has your overall student experience contributed to your knowledge, skills and personal development in the following areas?
Embedded Belonging

Through Institutional Student Engagement
The Mehaffy perspective

“The first year of college is broken”

Changing nature of the student
Other things are more interesting – can learn elsewhere
Staff autonomy: Work in a silo
Staff training: is it appropriate
Teaching focus not learning focus
Pastoral not related to the academic
Courses are staff-centric not student centred
The Mehaffy perspective

“The dominant conclusion of that study was that what mattered most about graduation success was not a specific program or special funding but culture; a campus culture where faculty and staff believed that their role was to help students become successful. Culture is a critical component of a redesigned first year of college.”
The Mehaffy lunchtime challenge

• Monday - How can we create a more powerful, more engaging first year of college that increases student retention and success?

• Tuesday - How can we build a curriculum that is integrated and interesting, that addresses student interests and passions, that connects students to the community and region?

• Wednesday - How do we organize students to optimize engagement, learning, and a sense of belonging?

• Thursday - How do we create a culture of experimentation and innovation? How do we create a culture that celebrates failure as a way of learning?
Why are you going to University (select all that apply)? New starter survey 2015
Improve career prospects 80.2% 397
To study a subject I'm interested in 71.31% 353
To live independently away from home 21.21% 105
To meet new people 40% 198
Because it's expected of me / pressure from others 5.25% 26

What is your biggest concern about starting university?
The academic work 42.28% 104
Making friends 10.98% 27
Managing finances 20.73% 51
Moving to an unfamiliar place 6.5% 16
Accommodation 0.41% 1
Fitting in 12.6% 31

Do you plan to work whilst studying at university?
Yes, I plan to work part time 60.08% 298
Yes, I plan to work fulltime 6.05% 30
No 13.91% 69
Not sure 19.96% 99

What are you most looking forward to?
Meeting new people 14.4% 70
Learning about my subject 77.37% 376
The freedom of being away from home 2.88% 14
Social life 3.91% 19
The student perspective

Jack Hogan and Ella Robson

From your experience - what are the key challenges for students seeking to successfully complete their first year student experience?
Setting the curriculum design challenge for staff

- Transition pedagogy
- Assessment for engagement
- Lifewide learning
- Are there any full-time students left?
Transition pedagogy

Student success is largely determined by student experiences during the first year.


http://www.freewebs.com/horsecoverseen/the-far-side-comic.jpg
Common FY Curriculum Complaints (Kift, 2009)

- Lack of clarity and consistency regarding expectations
- Lack of coherence, achievability and relevance

**Assessment and feedback**
- UK Yorke & Longden (2008): 29% said feedback not prompt
- James *et al* (CSHE, 2010): only 35% found feedback helpful
- AUSSE (2009,76): only 40% FYs often/ very often received prompt feedback (cf 80.4% of staff thought feedback often/ very often prompt)
- UK NSS (2008): satisfaction with assessment & feedback lowest
- US NSSE (2009,38): 42% FYs sometimes/never receive prompt f’back

**Lack of preparedness** re tertiary literacies: e.g academic; information; IT; numeracy; visual; statistical; professional practices; cultural; + + + ???

**Group work** – esp group processes

**Staff interest** – only 26% FYs believe staff are interested in their progress (CSHE, 2010).
What this means for us …

- ‘Joined-up’ institutional approaches = partnerships.
  - General and specialist services
  - Academic and non-academic support
  - Curricula and co-curricula engagement

Once 1st semester starts, harness the curriculum as academic and social ‘organising device’ to do serious transition and retention work
  - Both in and outside (physical and virtual) classroom – eg
    - By inclusive teaching, learning & assessment practices
    - Being explicit about what’s required for success (HE & discipline)
    - Attending to sense of belonging through curriculum strategies
    - Through pathways & interactions facilitated

(Kift, 2008)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Knowledge, academic skills, attitudes, behaviours mapped and articulated so relevance to success understood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostics</td>
<td>Which individuals or groups may need particular attention to explain how they can be successful in this new environment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Are there strategies in place to address inclusivity and make it a positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>How will students connect – peers/staff/institution/building - friendship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Schedule of assessment – early successes and integrated developmental support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Do you have an evidence base? Why do you need change – show impact!</td>
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Key questions for curriculum design - adapted from Kift (Millard 2018)
Taylor (2008, 23) Strategies for assessment

Assessments for development
- Low weight, high marking
- Draft essay
- Reading log
- Notes on literature review
- Components of portfolio

Assessments for transition
- Low weight, low marking
- Reflective activity
- Study Plan
- Contract

Assessments for achievement
- High weight, low marking
- Examination
- Final report / essay
- Portfolio

Weeks from beginning of semester
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

Self assessment (formative or partially summative) – no or minimal marking time

http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1059&context=jutlp
Embrace lifewide learning

....is learning in different places simultaneously (Barnett)

• Liquid learning
• An individual inhabiting several learning spaces simultaneously
• The learner and university without boundaries
• Learning taking place in any learning space

.....university loses control of learning, but can we use to assess and integrate diversity of student ‘real life’ interactions and show the strength of those life experiences
Enabling success

How do we enable student success?

In your groups identify key issues you would want your colleagues to integrate into their course design to enable (and not penalise) students in the first year.
Thanks for engaging

Do you have any questions?

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