UNIVERSITY OF WALES INSTITUTE, CARDIFF | ATHROFA PRIFYSGOL CYMRU, CAERDYDD

Foundation Year Network Annual Conference – July 2011

Student Expectations and Engagement: Understanding the experiences of foundation students

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UWIC

Cardiff's metropolitan university | prifysgol metropolitan Caerdydd

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Collaborations



- UWIC
  - Annette Daly
  - Lalage Sanders
  - Kat Regan



- UWE
  - Shekar Bheenuck
  - Anne Cox-Konsta
  - Shona Nelson

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UK university drop-out rate rises

There has been a rise in the drop-out rate at UK universities, figures show.



The numbers applying to university continue to rise

Annual performance indicators from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show 7.4% of young undergraduates left after a year in 2007 against 7.1% in 2006.

State school pupils made up 88% of young undergraduates, up from

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Hefce must keep closer eye on widening access, say MPs

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Specific improvement plans needed for badly performing universities as working-class participation rises just two percentage points in four years. Melanie Newman reports

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Student complaints about universities rise by 33%

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Higher education: Student expectations for 2012 are higher than ever

Kerry Law, director of external relations at De Montfort University, Leicester, says a fine-tuned marketing strategy is crucial in attracting students for next year

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Top-charging universities admit too few state school pupils

Almost half of the universities that have announced plans to charge £9,000 tuition fees are not meeting targets on widening their social mix

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Jeevan Vasagar, education editor

guardian.co.uk, Thursday 31 March 2011 18.00 BST

Article history

A larger | smaller

Background

- Almost 10% of students leave during their first year (National Audit Office)
- Students accrue debts of over £5,500 in first year (Bolton, 2009).
- Key factors identified in research as predictors of drop-out include:
  - Confidence in choice
  - Knowledge of course/institution
  - Preparedness for university
  - Gender
  - Entry qualifications
  - Route of entry
  - Social support

(Cook, 2004; Davies and Ellias, 2003; Woodfield et al., 2006; Wilcox et al., 2008)

What impact does a foundation course have on student expectations and engagement?

Overview of Student Expectations and EngagementT (SEET) project

New Ideas Social Research Fund/ WAG

- Current foundation students (2010-11)

Higher Education Academy (HEA)

- Current level 1 students (foundation graduates of 2009-10)

Overview of SEET project (1)

New Ideas Social Research Fund (Welsh Assembly Government) Current foundation year students (2010-11)				
Quantitative 1 (Sept/Oct)	Qualitative focus groups (Oct/Nov/Dec)	Quantitative 2 (Mar/May)	Online Quantitative 2 (June)	Exam Board outcome grades (June)
Academic Behavioural Confidence Scale Performance Expectation Ladder Risk Factor questionnaire Demographic information	Group 1 Group 2 Group 3 Group 4 Group 5 Group 6 Group 7 Group 8 Group 9 Group 10	As for Sept/Oct + Attendance Perception Questionnaire	To mop up any who were not picked up in Mar/May	In process – dichotomous data: 1. Pass 2. Not pass / components to retrieve
163	59	124		

Overview of SEET project (2)

Higher Education Academy Current Level 1 students (graduates of 2009-10 foundation courses)		
Qualitative data collection (May/June)	Reflective online questionnaire (June)	Exam Board outcome grades (June)
Semi structured focus groups and individual interviews Reflective summary compiled and sent to participants for comments	Covering: - How well you feel fdn prepared you for Level 1 - Enjoyment of Fdn vs. Level 1 - Aspects of fdn which were helpful/not so helpful - Any aspects of course for which fdn did not prepare you?	In process - Overall average outcome grade for: 1. Fdn graduates 2. Direct entry
16		

Focus for today –

New Ideas Social Research Fund (Welsh Assembly Government) Current foundation year students (2010-11)				
Quantitative 1 (Sept/Oct)	**Qualitative focus groups (Oct/Nov/Dec)**	Quantitative 2 (Mar/May)	Online Quantitative 2 (June)	Exam Board outcome grades (June)
Academic Behavioural Confidence Scale Performance Expectation Ladder Risk Factor questionnaire Demographic information	**Group 1** **Group 2** **Group 3** **Group 4** **Group 5** **Group 6** **Group 7** **Group 8** **Group 9** **Group 10**	As for Sept/Oct + Attendance Perception Questionnaire	To mop up any who were not picked up in Mar/May	In process – dichotomous data: 1. Pass 2. Not pass / components to retrieve
163	**59**	124		

Focus group participants:

UWIC

Foundation in Social Sciences

- Mature (3)
- Young female (8)
- Young male (7)

Foundation in Health Sciences

- Mature (6)
- Young female (5)
- Young male (2)

UWE

Foundation in Allied Health Professions

- Mixed (7)
- Mixed (7)

Foundation in Science

- Young female (7)
- Young male (7)

TOTAL participants = 59

Method

- Lunch provided as incentive
- Facilitated by research assistant,
  - i.e., someone not involved in the organisation or delivery of the courses
- Auditory digital recordings made and transcribed



Structure of focus groups

- Expectations about university and the foundation course
- Reasons for coming to university
- Experiences so far
- Perceived support
- Reasons for persisting/giving up
- Challenges
- Looking ahead to next year



Analysis

Inductive Thematic analysis (ITA)

- Exploratory approach
- Inter-rater reliability
- Looking for main initial proto-themes in each transcript and then across all transcripts



Initial prototheme



Initial prototheme



Initial prototheme



Initial prototheme



Initial prototheme



Initial prototheme



Essentials for success and engagement

- Becoming a HE student
- Clear course structure and learning goals
- Self appraisals that facilitate engagement
- Sense of expectations being fulfilled

I think probably maybe some more lessons over on the [university] campus because at the moment I don't feel like a uni student (5).

Friends are because obviously that is sort of part of the university package, isn't it? You get new friends or you've got friends and you live the university lifestyle sort of thing (6).

Essentials for success and engagement

- Becoming a HE student
- Clear course structure and learning goals
- Self appraisals that facilitate engagement
- Sense of expectations being fulfilled

Knowing that I'm going to get an undergraduate degree (3).

Reinforce the fact that is is a golden ticket onto your chosen degree. Otherwise, you have to faff around with applying and getting the grades you need to get onto a degree in some other way… and then there is no guarantee of a place (5).

Essentials for success and engagement

- Becoming a HE student
- Clear course structure and learning goals
- Self appraisals that facilitate engagement
- Sense of expectations being fulfilled

If you can train your mind or brain to learn it through this course then you're capable of doing a degree (1).

Being able to "put up" with this course to be able to do what I want to be doing later (3).

I needed something to kind of bridge the gap… kind of a find my feet year, really, so I think it is working out quite nicely so far (7).

Essentials for success and engagement

- Becoming a HE student
- Clear course structure and learning goals
- Self appraisals that facilitate engagement
- Sense of expectations being fulfilled

It will be worth the money in the end, just need to get through the four years and then it will be be worth it (5).

To get us ready for a degree level (1).

You know, they should meet every expectation I've got and they haven't at all (1).

Essentials for success and engagement

- Collaborative peer cohesion
- Supportive staff–student communications & clear framework for progress

We get help from each other when we are stuck (5).

Having my course mates put pressure on to turn up to lectures helps (3)

The fact is, suck it up and get on with it. I think that should be stressed, cos that winds a lot of people up … why am I learning about Microsoft Word… but then obviously I'm not, but others are. I think that should be stressed, that if it is not for you, then it is definitely for someone else there (7).

Essentials for success and engagement

- Collaborative peer cohesion
- Supportive staff–student communications & clear framework for progress

The message from the uni is, we want you to feel like you have all of your options, not just like you're shut off cos you didn't pass A levels …It's sort of like we want you to what you want to do, so here is an opportunity (9).

So the motivation goes in with the 40%; to not know even half the stuff and pass, sort of takes that professionalism out of it almost. You can't really call yourself a professional in something if you only know 40% of it (8).

Implications

Expectations

- Malleable
- High quality staff delivering high quality courses within clear framework
- Promotion of value of course within institution
- Adaptability and flexibility
- Value for money

Implications

Support

- Awareness of and encouragement to use available support.
- Provision of more opportunities in induction and in class for the development of social cohesion and collaborative learning
- Development of university student identity and ownership
- Ensure personal tutors and staff have an awareness of how life-changing coming to university is for some.

Implications

Communication

- Consider clarity of information conveyed especially in the early days – don't assume academic understanding
- Clear and reciprocal staff/student communications

Sense of progress

- Be conscious of importance of assessment feedback to enhance sense of achievement and academic confidence
- Help students to see wider picture

Next stage?

- Consideration of the views and perceptions of foundation tutors and staff.
- Will be looking for participants and hoping that we can count on you!



Image adapted from www.sterlingtimes.org/

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