Pre-certificate stage: A route for alternative qualification or failed A-levels?

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- Faculty cuts Foundation Students numbers down from 120 to 70, of which only 25 in Biology
- Reasons: maximising the grade profile of level 4 entrants, showing initiative in Widening Participation
- Leads to: rejection of over 300 students from the biology foundation year alone
- Pros and cons

The drivers and potential benefits of WP and student diversity

Driver	Potential benefits
Increasing student numbers	Financial viability of individual courses or whole institution
Tapping the pool of talent	Attracting a larger pool of highly qualified/ talented applicants – enhancement to reputation and maintenance of high academic standards
Improving teaching and learning	Improved learning outcomes for all students Improved social experience for all students
Providing access to funding streams	Additional support for institutional strategic aims or to ensure financial viability
Generating new roles and markets	Reduced reliance on Funding Council grants
Complying with anti-discrimination and equality legislation	Avoidance of litigation
Corporate social responsibility	Demonstrated commitment to institutional mission and value statements

Higher Education Academy 2007

Admissions

- **Foundation Year** (Life Sciences Brochure for 2012 entry):
  - Overseas applicants requiring foundation year to adjust
  - Applicants taking non science A Levels/BTEC Diplomas
  - Mature students coming back into education without traditional formal qualifications

  - 2011 offer = 200 UCAS points if applicants taking A Levels
  - Each application reviewed on merit
  - Work experience as important as qualifications
  - **Not suitable for those doing A Level Biology or Biology based BTEC qualifications**

Pros and Cons

Failed A-level student

- Low motivation, frustration
- Immature
- Bored
- Attitude problems
- **Used to studying**

Alternative qualification

- Highly motivated
- Mature
- Interested
- Enthusiastic
- **Lacks study skills**

Difficult to teach together

Aims

- Provide students with the scientific knowledge and study skills
- Build confidence, effectiveness and motivation alongside more traditional study skills.

Teaching staff opinions

- Changes were announced too late
- Smaller class sizes welcomed
- Difficult for some departments to fill places just from Widening Participation (WP)
- Looking forward to teaching the more motivated WP students
- WP students generally do better, so less problems with progression and success in the certificate stage.

Open for discussion!

References

- J. Shaw, K. Brain, K. Bridger, J. Foreman, I. Reid: Embedding widening participation and promoting student diversity, The Higher Education Academy 2007
- Life Sciences Brochure, Hull University 2011