Improving retention, progression and the student experience in, through and out of study through effectively supporting study transitions

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Ready for retention: effective systems for transition and student success
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Aims and objectives

• Set the scene of HE in the UK

• Identify the different transitions in the student lifecycle

• Discuss how the different student transitions can improve retention rates, student progression and the student experience

• Look at how to plan and develop activities around a diverse student population.
Setting the scene
Higher Educational Benefits

‘A diverse student population is essential to vibrant intellectual enquiry and a resilient knowledge economy. It encourages a higher education offer that is socially and culturally diverse, and more representative of local communities’, and, ‘it is vital in creating a fairer society, securing improvements in social mobility and supporting economic growth’ (HEFCE, 2011:6).

**Social**

- Increases social mobility (Watson, 2005; Bourdieu, 1977, 1984)
- Increases community engagement (IHEP, 2005)
- Reduction in crime amongst graduates (Stephen, 2004)
- Lower debt and health issues (Baum et al, 2004; OECD, 2010)
- Greater social tolerance (Lloyd, 2010)

**Economic**

- Often largest local employer
- Generate £45b output a year
- Largest part of the economy (Universities UK, 2007)
- Higher income over lifetime (Universities UK, 2007)
- Unemployment lower amongst graduates (Bynner et al, 2003; Baum et al, 2010)

**Political**

- Graduates more engaged in politics and vote in elections (Bynner et al, 2003; Baum et al, 2010)

**Contributory reasons for UG and PG growth.**

Source: Morgan, 2013
Undergraduate tuition fees in the UK

- **1962** Mandatory maintenance grants are introduced for students to cover tuition fees and living costs.
- **1989** Grants are frozen and student loans introduced.
- **1998** Tuition fees introduced of £1000
  Help with fees and loans made available to the poorest.
- **2006** Tuition fees raised to £3,000
- **2012** Tuition fees in England raised to £9,000 (199086.17 SA Rand)
  Scotland, N.Ireland and Wales remained nearer the 2006 fee level for their home students
- **2016** September - Funding for disadvantaged students will be removed.
Impact of undergraduate tuition fees in the UK

• Different levels of debt
• Not generally decreased UG participation in UK
• Students do worry about debt *(NSS, PEP)*
• Appears to be impacting on English student going onto PG study as higher declining numbers *(PEP)*
• Funding methods and existing debt affects how and when to study
• Higher social classes more likely to go onto UG and PG study and be funded by parents whereas lower social classes more likely to study PT, use savings for their study, take time out and have higher levels of debt.
• Loan scheme at UG and PG level sold as equality of opportunity.
Debt impact on us as educators

• Increased expectations

• Demand a high quality student experience
  • Good feedback
  • High quality support provision
  • Provide value for money
  • Courses should incorporate current knowledge and technology

• Expect to obtain a job post study

• Expect a well paid job post study

• The degree should provide employability skills

• Other issues to consider.
HE Disadvantages for consideration

Social

• Over qualified
  (Coldwell W., 2013 cited by Lister, 2014)

• Negative intergenerational mobility
  (Watson, 2005; Kamenetz, 2006)

• Boomerang Kid-ult generation

• Under-employment
  U.S. Employment Outcomes for Recent Graduates 2009-2011:
  By Degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Percentage unemployed</th>
<th>Percentage in jobs where a bachelor's degree is required</th>
<th>Percentage in jobs where a bachelor's degree is not required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
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<td>Liberal arts</td>
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<td>Technologies</td>
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<td>Agriculture &amp; natural resources</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure &amp; hospitality</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Abel et al, 2014 cited by Lister, 2014)

“**My name is Benjamin Serra, I have two bachelor’s degrees and a master’s degree and I clean toilets. No, it is not a joke. I thought that I deserved something better after so much effort in my academic life. It seems that I was wrong.”** 2nd October 2013 ReTweeted 32,000 times – taken up by World’s Press.

Political

• Disengagement

Economic

• Job displacement
  • IT reduces educational need
  • Graduates performing non-graduate jobs
  • Postgraduates performing graduate jobs

• High levels of study debt (fees and cost of living) impact on:
  • Home ownership
  • Pension investment
  • Private healthcare
  • Disposable income to put back into the economy

• No future investment in lifelong learning

• End of parental cash cow generation.

Source: Morgan (2014)
Challenges of supporting our students

Diversity
• Academic qualifications, domiciled status, social class, students with disabilities, mature students, mode and type of study

Expectation
• A degree will provide employment skills lacking
• Provide better employment chances

Complex student life which is not always obvious

One size fits all
• Part-time have to attend fulltime classes during the day
• Evening part-time/DL students do not have easy access to support services
• Students fit around the needs of the university, not the university fitting around the needs of students.
We need to remember

• Students lives are complex as is student learning

• Reasons for going to university are changing
  • Not sure what I want to do
  • Parental expectations
  • A degree will get me a better job. I am not interested in the journey
  • I need a degree as a bare minimum
  • No longer for the love of studying and self development

• A student’s reason for going to university and prior learning experiences (personal/formal) is likely to have a big impact on their expectation and experience

• Everyone regardless of fee level deserves a high quality student experience

• We want our students to be successful!

• We need to support our student in, through and out of the student lifecycle.
Supporting student transitions

Interactive activity

Identify what you think are the important transition periods in a student’s journey at University
What are the key transitions?

The Practitioner Model

- First Contact and Admissions
  - Further study
  - Career
  - Time-out

- Arrival and Orientation
- Pre-arrival

- Re-orientation and Reinduction
- Outduction
- Introduction to Study at University

Source: M Morgan (2011) Improving the Student Experience- the practical guide for universities and colleges, Oxon:Routledge.
First contact and Admissions

• Setting expectations

• Managing expectations and aspirations

• Academic integration

• Social integration.
• Why go to university?
• How and why will university study be different to previous types of study?
• What is expected of a university student?
• How will students be treated at university?
• What happens in each academic level of study?
• What support advice and help is available both academically and personally throughout the lifecycle?
• Is university suitable for everyone?
• What will the university experience give students?
• What are the options for a student after university?
Pre-arrival

• Reinforcement of first contact and admissions information

• Academic and personal advice

• Guidance and support

• Identifying and providing support to students with specific needs

• Combined unit information sent out.
• Do I need to undertake any pre-entry academic work or reading?

• What do I do when I arrive at university?

• How do I register?

• How do I pay my fees and accommodation costs?

• What do I need to do in the first few weeks at university?

• What will be expected of me academically in the first few weeks?

• What support services do I have access to?

• What extra curricula activities can I engage in?

• What if I don’t settle in and I want to leave?
Arrival and orientation

- Expectations set during the first contact, admissions and pre-arrival stages need to be delivered.
- Focus on academic and not administrative activities.
- Opportunity to make friends.
- Settle into their university life and studies as soon as possible.
- Appropriate information and support.
Induction to Study

• Settling into studies

• Coping with the demands of academia

• Managing pressures of life

• Induction period
  • Minimum of 1 semester
  • Maximum of 1 academic year.
Re-orientation

• Takes place at start of new academic year

• Reminder of academic and personal support available

• Reorientation session for all returners

• Identify extra support students need
  – Introduction to academic requirements
  – Refresher on support available
    • PAL
    • Mentors
    • Academic and non-academic support.
Reinduction

Remind students of support available and help identify and correct academic areas that need improving.

Provide:

• Ongoing study skill development

• Access to employability advice and support whether via the curriculum or extra curricula;

• Opportunities to engage in

• Involvement in community and citizenship activities.
Reinduction activities

- **Academic issues**
  - Revision sessions, past exam papers
  - Work returned more quickly
  - Project help

- **Life support skills**
  - Presentation and report writing skills
  - CV writing, job interview help
  - Careers advice.
‘Getting students through the student lifecycle involves more than simply getting them to complete their course. It should support students in the transition from the world of study into the world of life’.

‘OUTduction’ starts during INduction when students are introduced to the key skills and knowledge they will build upon and utilise during and post study’.

Source: M Morgan, 2008
Students are failed in business know-how

Call for universities to ensure that all degrees teach entrepreneurship, writes Hannah Fearn

UK universities must make the development of students' entrepreneurial skills a core part of degree courses, or they will lose out to international competition, according to a new report.

The joint report from the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) and the National Endowment for Technology and the Arts says that 11 per cent of UK graduates are engaged in entrepreneurship - most of which are through business schools.

It calls for universities to ensure all degrees in a wide discipline provide students with understanding of entrepreneurship, with the vice-chancellor's overarching strategy for the institution.

"Universities must lead the way in transforming how higher education prepares the UK's workforce for its future economy," said Jonathan Kestenbaum, chief executive of Nesta. "Universities will be gins of the university, too dependent on short-term funding as inherently fragile," he said.

The report, Developing Entrepreneurial Graduates, recommends that universities should involve businesses and social entrepreneurs in the provision of training in entrepreneurship.

Tim Barnes, executive director of UCL Advances (which promotes entrepreneurship across University College London), welcomed the role of Universities Secretary John Denham, who said he believed the big shift in his department would work to bring employers and universities together to identify why this was a topic of such "persistent dissatisfaction, persistent rumbling".

"Our job... is to get people in the same room to talk about these issues through because I am absolutely convinced that... the tensions and the conflicts that people feel are there will actually very often melt away.

Mr Denham said it was mistaken to think that the intrinsic value of higher education was not what employers want something instrumentalist and higher education is delivering something of intrinsic value that is different is one of the problems," he said, adding that many employers wanted people who were able to solve problems, communicate, apply critical analysis to evidence and think for themselves.

As part of his wider drive to consider the future of higher education in the next 15 to 20 years, he said he would be "going to the business community, students, people interested in the regional impact of universities and so on" to develop a picture of "the challenges of the future as they are seen from within the university sector with the view of how it can provide an answer to the key questions of the 21st century".

Employers still irked by lack of graduate skills

Business leaders have reiterated concerns about the quality of UK graduates in a new survey.

Employers are concerned about the literacy, numeracy and employability of today's students, according to the survey conducted by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI).

It found that improving education standards tops the list in its annual survey of employers' concerns, monitoring trends in employment and training.

Minister warns that employers believe graduates lack what firms need. Rebecca Attwood reports

The UK is "not yet anywhere near" a position where employers believe that the university system is producing graduates with the skills they want, John Denham, the Universities Secretary, warned this week.

In an interview with Times Higher Education ahead of his speech at Universities UK's annual conference, Mr Denham said the results of his department's consultation on higher-level skills had made it clear that there was still seen to be a gap between what employers say they want from higher education graduates and what universities produce.

In the coming months, he said, his department would work to bring employers and universities together to identify why this was a topic of such "persistent dissatisfaction, persistent rumbling".

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Employers also demand for graduate more than three per cent) said there was demand for hip and manage-
OUTduction activities

• Focused employability skills
  – Debating skills
  – Project management
  – Time management

• Academic skills refresher
  • Plagiarism
  • Referencing
  • Report writing
• Careers advice

• What to do with the degree?
  – Career route options
  – How can skills learnt at university be transferred to life post study?

• Future study
  – PGT/PhD
  – Lifelong learning
  – Voluntary work

• What are the different study, travel and work options available after graduation?

• How could they impact on a student’s career and life in general?

• How to get a job?
  – CV writing
  – Interview technique
  – Learning to complete an application form
The key to a quality student experience

• Supporting students in, through and out of each stage

• Key service providers need to talk to one another and coordinate and join up their activities

• Effectively combining these aspects

• Academic imperative must be heart of all activity

• Must be owned by the Student’s home unit (faculty, school, department).
Areas to consider when developing practical initiatives

Managing

Curriculum and Assessment

Student

Employment

Pedagogy

Academic and Social Integration

Finance

Support

Aspirations and Expectations

And

Higher Education Academy

PEP

Interconnecting Today to Create Tomorrow

Kingston University London
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Curriculum and Assessment</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Contact</td>
<td>Information on subjects that make up a degree; specific subject study in each level of a degree; type of assessments undertaken in each year; using the degree post study.</td>
<td>An outline of the different study and learning styles available.</td>
<td>An overview and promotion of support and facilities available.</td>
<td>Information on loans / fees / bursaries; money management advice; accommodation costs.</td>
<td>Advice, support and guidance on part-time work during study; year placement options; internships; summer placements; voluntary work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Admissions</td>
<td>Pre-Arrival</td>
<td>An outline the different study and learning styles available; start engagement in learning the process.</td>
<td>Information on accessing services and support.</td>
<td>Applications for loans / bursaries; payment of fees / accommodation costs; money management advice.</td>
<td>Advice, support and guidance on part-time work during study; year placement options; internships; summer placements; voluntary work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Rrival</td>
<td>Specific information on subjects to be studied in the first year of academic study; Pre-arrival preparation tests / reading / coursework.</td>
<td>A reminder of the different study and learning styles available; start training in learning the process.</td>
<td>An explanation of the services and support available; learning when and how to access services and support.</td>
<td>Payment of fees / accommodation costs; money management advice; accessing hardship funds.</td>
<td>Advice, support and guidance on part-time work during study; year placement options; internships; summer placements; voluntary work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival and Orientation</td>
<td>A reminder of subjects that make up a degree; specific subject study in each level of a degree; subjects to be studied in the first year of academic study; type of assessments undertaken in each year; using the degree post study.</td>
<td>A reminder of the different study and learning styles available; start the main engagement in learning the process.</td>
<td>Money management advice; accessing hardship funds; debt control.</td>
<td>Money management advice; accessing hardship funds; debt control.</td>
<td>Advice, support and guidance on part-time work during study; year placement options; internships; summer placements; voluntary work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Induction to Study</td>
<td>An explanation of how different subjects and assessments are undertaken in the first year of study.</td>
<td>A review of learning how to study in a given year; understanding the different types of learning styles and approaches required.</td>
<td>Regular reminders of services and support available and how to access them.</td>
<td>Money management advice; accessing hardship funds; debt control.</td>
<td>Advice, support and guidance on part-time work during study; year placement options; internships; summer placements; voluntary work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reorientation and Reinduction</td>
<td>A reminder of previous skills and identification of skills gap; making subject choices which count towards degree; learning and undertaking different assessments for the new level of study; study away / placement options.</td>
<td>A review of previous learning skills and styles in new academic level.</td>
<td>A reminder of services and support at relevant and appropriate times of the year.</td>
<td>Payment of fees / accommodation costs; money management advice; accessing hardship funds; debt control.</td>
<td>Advice, support and guidance on part-time work during study; year placement options; internships; summer placements; voluntary work; preparation to enter employment post study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outduction</td>
<td>Explaining the classification structure; applying skill set post study.</td>
<td>An explanation of how to transfer learning processes to future study and work.</td>
<td>A reminder of services and support available and how to access them in final level of level of study and post study as alumni (career service etc).</td>
<td>Money management advice; preparation for repayment of loans / fees; debt control.</td>
<td>Advice, support and guidance on preparing to enter employment or further study as an alumni.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What to ask?

For every initiative developed within a stage or theme, the following questions need to be addressed.

• What is the aim and objective of the initiative?
• Who needs to be involved in the development of the initiative?
• Who is the target group?
• What do they need to know?
• What information is going to be delivered?
• Who will deliver it?
• When is it going to be delivered?
• Is the timing appropriate?
• How will it be delivered?
• What is the cost of the initiative?
• What is the timeline for the initiative?
• Is it financially viable?
• Can the initiative and information be adapted for another group of students?
• How will it be evaluated and monitored?
### Example of interlinking stages and areas

**Stage** = Arrival and Orientation  **Activity** = First week’s orientation programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Staff involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Curriculum and Assessment  | • Start the process of learning by giving out and explaining timetables (if not available before)  
                              | • Explain course documents and                                          | Home unit academics and non-academic staff, Central Units such as Academic Registry, LRC, IT, external examiners, student representation |
| Pedagogy                   | • Start the process of teaching students how to study at university such as having a fun lecture in a large LT  
                              | • Get students to start working in groups on fun activities (e.g. Fun subject quiz or rocket building competitions)  
                              | • Light touch study skills (LRC?)                                         | Home unit academics and non-academic staff, university L&T academic centres, staff development, LRC, IT, student representation |
| Finance                    | • Costs related to study (e.g. accommodation, uni fees,  
                              | • Money management of advice for students                                | Home unit academics and non-academic staff, university financial services, student representation |
| Support                    | • Light touch reinforcement of support available students (e.g. disability, dyslexia, financial guidance | Home unit academics and non-academic staff, disability/dyslexia/equal opportunity units, financial services, student representation |
| Employment                 | • Job fair  
                              | • Reminder of purpose of education and how to transfer learning skills into the workplace in PT work, placements or post study | Home unit academics and non-academic staff, university careers and employability/enterprise units, student representation |
Orientation Working Group

LRC

Finance

Enterprise

Home unit academic and non-academic staff

Chair and Clerk

Student Representation

Careers and Employability

Academic Registry

Disability/Dyslexia/Equal Opportunity Units

Academic Registry

Higher Education Academy

PEP

Kingston University

LRC

Careers and Employability

Academic Registry

Finance

Enterprise

Home unit academic and non-academic staff

Chair and Clerk

Student Representation

Careers and Employability

Academic Registry

Disability/Dyslexia/Equal Opportunity Units

Academic Registry

Higher Education Academy

PEP

Kingston University
Summary

• Students lives are complex
• Student Experience is multi-dimensional
• Supporting transitions is applicable to all UG and PG
• Do not silo students or unit functions
• By creating and delivering a high quality student experience, retention and satisfaction scores will improve.
‘Go from not joining the dots’
‘to joining the dots up’..............
‘Dot to dot and beyond’
Conclusion

‘We need to inspire new generations to engage in higher education, to believe in the benefits of HE and to invest in it. By ensuring that no student is forgotten or left behind, through adopting an inclusive strategy in all its activities, sustainability should be achievable’.

Morgan, 2013
Thank you for listening

Any questions?

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Author and Editor of www.improvingthestudentexperience.com
Creator of the Student Experience Transitions Practitioner Model

Editor and Contributor to Improving the Student Experience-A practical guide for universities and colleges (Routledge, 2012) and Supporting Student Diversity in Higher Education (Routledge, 2013)

Most recent publication:
Morgan, M. and Direito, I. (2016) Widening and sustaining postgraduate taught (PGT) STEM study in the UK: a collaborative project. Creating change through understanding expectations and attitudes towards PGT study, experiences and post-study outcomes from the perspective of applicants, students, universities and employers. Available at: http://www.postgradexperience.org/project-docs/

References and useful texts


Morgan, M (2011) Improving the Student Experience- the practical guide for universities and colleges, Oxon:Routledge.


