

1E Enhancing engagement of local 'commuter' students at induction to support transition and promote student retention and success

Presenters: Alison Browitt and Neil Croll, Recruitment and International Office

A report on the findings of a project supported by the University of Glasgow Learning and Teaching Development Fund, relating directly to the strategic priority areas of supporting student success and improving student retention of our diverse student body.

Local 'commuting' students are thought to be less likely to engage with the social sphere of university life, contributing to their becoming disengaged with learning and more likely to withdraw from studies early (Tinto, 1997). However, demand and enthusiasm for Local Student Orientation events in the week before Freshers' Week belied this thinking and suggested they could be more readily engaged early in the transition to HE.

The event was the culmination of research conducted with first year students who live outwith institution-maintained accommodation. Barriers to participation in induction and orientation, and engagement with academic and student life in general, were investigated; with a particular focus on 'non-traditional' students, including, school leavers from local schools with low participation in HE, adult returners from access courses and those from socio-economically disadvantaged postcode areas, to identify further information and support needed by these entrants for successful transition to HE in a changing learning and teaching environment.

This paper reports on the research and evaluation, carried out in the form of focus groups and student surveys. We examine the concerns of new local commuting students and provide details and feedback on the successful early induction events. With events over two years, involving over 800 participants, continuation and progression can be used as initial measures of student retention and success, as well as reported impact on transition and their first year experience. We aim to share ideas with colleagues for supporting the retention and success of our diverse student body by promoting engagement and belonging at the start of their University careers (Thomas, 2012).

References

Tinto, V. (1997) Classrooms as Communities: Exploring the Educational Character of Student Persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol.68, No.6, pp.599-623

Thomas, L. (2012) Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: final report from the What Works? Student Retention & Success programme. Available from: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/What_works_final_report.pdf [accessed 3 November 2014]