



UNIVERSITY OF  
LINCOLN

# Foundations for the Future: Lessons from a Science Foundation Year Programme

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# The Local Context

- The East Midlands has the lowest social mobility scores in England for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (Social Mobility Commission, 2017)
- Lowest university entry rates for disadvantaged young people, particularly rural and coastal Lincolnshire (Ibid)
- A third of secondary schools are judged as less than good (Ofsted, 2016)



# University of Lincoln

- Post-92 University based in the heart of the city of Lincoln
- 15,000 students, many from diverse backgrounds



*'The University takes a whole institutional approach to access and student success with academic professional services being engaged together in creating and supporting a diverse and successful student community'*

*UOL Access and participation plan, 2019-20*

# Lincoln Science Foundation Year (SFY)

180 students studying 37 different BSc (Hons), BEng (Hons) and Masters programmes integrated into five Schools across the College of Science.



Engineering



Maths and Physics



Chemistry



Life Sciences



Pharmacy

Supporting Access and Participation in HE for those who may not meet the standard entry requirements

- Non-traditional qualifications
- Break from education
- Combination of subject areas
- Lower-than-expected grades

# Progression and Attainment..early days but....

- 85% of students progress into Year 1
- SFY alumni achieve an average of 3% higher than direct entry peers across all Schools in the College of Science.
- SFY alumni enrolled on masters programmes attain 6% higher (MPharm)

*'Because of the skills I got from science foundation year now I can often advise or help [my direct entry peers] in things they struggle with'*

*SFY Alumni 2019*



# Impact on Year 1 Attainment ..early days but....

- **Gender:** SFY alumni male and females attain equally
- **Ethnicity:** SFY alumni BME students attain 5% higher than the Year 1 average
- **Non A-Level:** SFY alumni with alternative qualifications (non A-level) attain 5% higher than direct entry students with alternative qualifications

*'Self-directed learning is the main thing that I have got from SFY. Being able to teach yourself is the fantastic gift that you need if you want to succeed.'*

*SFY alumni 2019*



# Impact on Year 1 Attainment ..early days but....

- **Mature students:** SFY alumni attain 10% higher than the Y1 average
- **Additional support needs:** SFY alumni students registered with Wellbeing attain equally to non-registered



*Ensuring our student cohort are supported, [SFY] have been particularly strong; readily available and happy to talk... there is a general sense of working together well across the two areas (Wellbeing and Teaching).'*

*Rachael Burnett – Student Wellbeing*

# What Works? The SFY Team

- Dual qualified across educational sectors
- Diverse backgrounds and skill bases
- Multidisciplinary curriculum planning and teaching

*'It is inspiring to see the team make the most of their different backgrounds, creating a multi-layered and supportive learning environment, which I hope to emulate in my future teaching career'*

*PhD student and SFY Demonstrator, School of Pharmacy*

- Outstanding module evaluations (20% above University average)
- University of Lincoln 2018 Team Award 'Best Achievement in Teaching'

*'An amazing lecturer – made everything easier to understand...coming from a non A-level and non-biology background I thought would be really difficult ... but I am starting to feel confident as the days pass ...I feel like this wouldn't be the case if it wasn't for [them]'*

*Module evaluation comment 2018*





# What Works? Supported, Integrated Transition

*'Students undertaking foundation years may feel isolated from the student body' (OfS, 2019)*

- Pre-arrival advice from student services/ WOW week
- Student-authored "Getting Started" guide and HE glossary
- Full access to University accommodation / facilities
- Welcome week: Enhanced programme of activities to embed students into their tutor groups, SFY cohort, campus and destination schools



*'LOVED SFY welcome week – especially ice breaker games, still a highlight 😊'*

*SFY alumni 2019*

# What Works? Supported, Integrated Learning

- Diagnostic tests for each module
- Differentiated pre-learning, lecture and post-lecture resources and activities
- Curriculum co-designed by SFY and destination School academics
- Transition modules taught by leading destination School academics
- Cross-curricular 'buddy system' and student educators



*'Sharing the learning processes by which another student gained understanding exposes me to new ways of learning and helps me access more challenging material'*

*SFY Student 2018-19*



# What Works? Student-Led Development and Communication

- Comprehensive rep system
- ‘Talk to your rep’ lecture slots
- Student set agendas for subject committees
- Annual “Action Day”
- Alumni SFY focus group

*‘Amazing ...communication between students and lecturers was fantastic’*

*SFY 2017-18 Alumni*



# What Works? A Holistic Approach

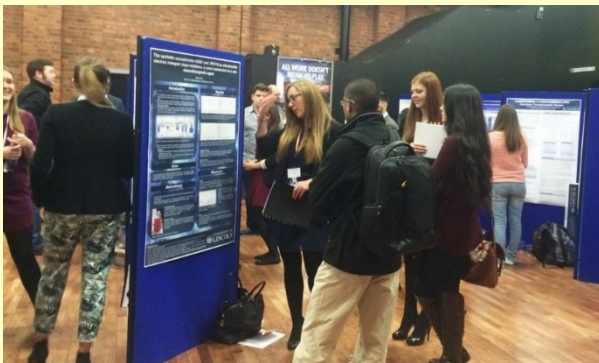
- Study Skills curriculum to develop skills essential for HE and delivered by a broad range of experts from across the University
- Encourage reflective practice  
(learning journal, formative assessment in teaching sessions)

*'Teaching students to learn is genius  
...invaluable ... given us a head start'*

- Strong collaboration with Wellbeing  
(30% access exam support vs. 10% of direct cohort)

- Bespoke tutorial system

*'I can't wait to use all the skills, tips, tricks and  
tools, to aid me in my future learning'*



*'My attitude and learning skills have changed  
dramatically... it will help me be a much better  
independent learner'*

*SFY 2017-18 Alumni*

# What Works? Community

*'The best way to start my uni journey...I couldn't have asked for better'*



*'A highlight of our Alumni social was the number of students who spoke about the sense of community within SFY, both within the diverse student cohort and in relationships with the academics'*

*Kerry Blagden, Director of Lincoln Science Foundation Year*

# Evaluation of the Access Covenant



- Impact on access

- Financial support for FY students

*"Gave me the support to...relax from university life every so often"*

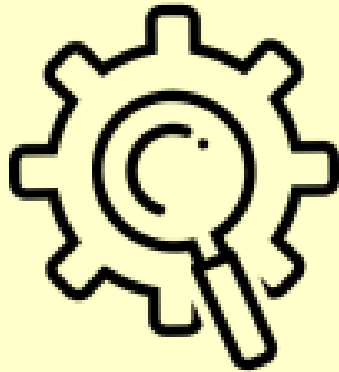
- Tutors and academic support Services

*"I don't think I deserve so much help"*

- Embedding links with wider University support

- Importance of 'belonging'.

## Where next? Building an evidence base



- Develop understanding of financial support for this group
- Develop understanding of how/when students access support
- Small sample size
- Causal claims can't be made on current evidence
- Longitudinal study to map long-term trends and success
- What works in what context-evidence from other FY programmes

# Next Steps and Conclusions

- Holistic approach to student support and skill development highly effective and to be developed further:
  - Sleep
  - Mindfulness
  - Anxiety
  - Procrastination
  - Emotional Intelligence
  - Stress resilience response
  - Physical activity
  - Time management
  - Cooking
  - Budgeting
- Further Research: development of skills to thrive in HE
- Medical Foundation Year / Degree apprenticeships
- Emerging evidence of the success of SFY in supporting students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds
- Integration of SFY within Schools and whole student body is key to success





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