

What Works? Student Retention & Success



Book of abstracts: What works ? Student retention and success change programme: final conference

Parallel presentations: 11:30-12:15

PORTLAND

RUHere - Data based actioning and intervention evaluation using an interactive online student attendance monitoring system

Carey Freeman
University of South Wales

'RU Here' Beyond the Technology: This presentation outlines the findings from a three-year project capturing first year undergraduate attendance data. Built from the ground-up the system named 'RU Here' was developed to collect and analyse attendance data, retrospectively building reports based on aggregate data to help put interventions into place where areas of weakness were identified. Qualitative student feedback tells us that the interventions founded through the captured data improve their sense of belonging and feelings of being valued. They clearly indicated that support from the interactions of students and academic staff within the classroom environment helped them to progress. Early indications are demonstrating an improvement in both attendance and outcomes in terms of marks whilst showing a decline in withdrawal rates.

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Links in the Chain: turning learning analytics data into actions

Ed Foster
Nottingham Trent University

NTU led one of the original "What Works?" research projects (the HERE Project). Our work on student doubters led directly to the development of the NTU Student Dashboard. The Dashboard is one of the first learning analytics resources used in the UK to support student retention and success. The Dashboard provides accurate, timely data on students' engagement with their course and accurately predicts students at risk of early departure. This session will share some of the team's experience of developing the resource and challenge colleagues to consider strategies for using learning analytics to support student retention and success.

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HARLEY

A curriculum framework to support academic transitions

Sarah Parkes, Newman University Birmingham

This session will discuss the rationale for and subsequent construction of an institution-wide framework for undergraduate programme design to support improvements in student retention and success. Underpinned by notions of a 'transition pedagogy' (Kift and Nelson, 2005) this aimed to support student transition into, and successful progression through Higher Education by locating fundamental core modules at each level of study to support key moments of academic transition. Development of the framework, structure and implementation will be presented; alongside emerging correlations in student progression as seen through analysis of continuation rates and re-sits patterns at levels four and five.

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Enhancing Employability for Student Success Edinburgh Napier University's Graduate Employability Project

Fiona Wager, Edinburgh Napier University

Edinburgh Napier University's Graduate Employability Project has provided a whole institutional approach to enhancing student success in terms of graduate employability since 2013. The Project, supported through Scottish Funding Council Regional Coherence Funding, is now complete. This presentation will:

- provide an overview of project aims, objectives and activities, and of the monitoring and evaluation approach run in parallel to project activities;
- explore project outcome data relating to student progression, degree and DLHE outcomes;
- share key messages and lessons learned regarding the project's approach to enhancing graduate employability, its implementation and the value of the monitoring and evaluation strand.

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Deploying a whole-system lens on student retention and success

Cathi Fredricks and Ken Powell, Canterbury Christ Church University

Informed by two, dominant, research-led approaches to improving student retention and success, What Works (Thomas, 2012) and the Holistic, Trilateral Model (James, 2010), Canterbury Christ Church University's challenging and innovative Academic Journey Project (AJP) comprises an entire university strategy for delivering a step change in performance. Applying a combination of both approaches to a medium sized, post 1992 university, that has a strong widening access profile, the AJP, having the learning and teaching strategy at its heart, is transforming the university's potential to realise improved performance. Emerging findings, lessons learned and the tough knots will be shared.

WHITTINGTON 3

Supporting Students from Northern Ireland: Exploring the Barriers and Enablers for a Successful Transition to Higher Education in the UK

Danielle Chavrimootoo, and Suzanne Hargreaves
Liverpool John Moores University

Liverpool John Moores University is situated in close-proximity to Ireland. The university recruits many students from Northern Ireland (NI). Although classed as 'home students' NI students often struggle, disproportionately fail assignments, have poor attendance and are often referred in modules. This paper will compare the motivation, expectations and sense of belonging of students from NI and other students in the UK. The aim of the project is to identify the transitional challenges of level 4 students in the first year and, consider strategies to aid the retention and success of all students within the transitional phase of higher education.

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The positive impact of personal advising training

Dominique Jethwa
Queen Mary's University London

What works notes the centrality of personal tutor relationships on the student experience and the need to develop staff capability in this area. In response to this QMUL introduced a mandatory training session for all academic staff in 2014. The aim of the session is to help staff have effective conversations with students and signpost them when necessary to the correct support services across the institution. Feedback from staff has been extremely positive with 92% agreeing this session has met their personal tutoring needs and many noting this has been their first opportunity to share best practice.

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The implementation of a retention and progression project within the Law Division at London South Bank University

Chris Shepherd and Risham Chohan
London Southbank University

The Law Division at London South Bank University has been addressing retention and progression in year 1 LLB (Hons) by identifying, contacting and interviewing students considered at risk of non-progression. We will present some of our findings and share our experience of introducing and implementing a retention and progression project within a law division. This will include explaining our methodology, "what works" and some of the challenges that we faced.

WHITTINGTON 4

Staff-student partnership: a catalyst for staff-student engagement

Roisin Curran
Ulster University

Drawing from interviews which aimed to capture rich descriptions of the *lived experience* of those involved in staff-student partnerships, the data revealed that whilst participants experienced partnership in nuanced ways, there was a striking degree of accord in the descriptions of the impact of partnership on the individual. Whilst participants' thinking and behaviours had changed as a result of their involvement, quite often the catalyst for change was related to how the participants were feeling. These insights bring new understanding to stakeholders at Ulster in relation to how these findings can help us think more holistically about student engagement from three dimensions: emotional, behavioural and cognitive. Whilst

specific to Ulster, there are valuable learning points, which may be extended to the HE sector more generally.

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Peer Mentors as Placement PALS – Final year students helping second year students on their employability in preparation for their sandwich year / industry placement experience

Vianna Renaud
Bournemouth University

Aims and Objectives: To share how a pilot project of final year students serving as peer mentors, trained and employed as Placement PALS, specifically supporting second year students on employability skills has now been successfully implemented across four Faculties at Bournemouth University. Vianna Renaud, Placement Development Advisor in the Faculty of Media and Communication at BU and doctoral student at the Centre of Excellence for Media Practice will discuss the history and rationale of the project, the development from pilot project to campus wide initiative, the implementation process, the impact on both the second year and final year students, and lessons learned for the future.

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Start as you mean to continue – evaluation of the academic induction phase at a large metropolitan university, and its contribution to students confidence to continue

Penny Sweasey
Manchester Met University

Manchester Met has integrated several elements of Transition and Induction – linking experiences of learners in prior phases of education with academic elements of university that contribute to a sense of being welcomed into the new phase. This presentation will explore the linked elements to construct a view of student experiences at different stages of transition and induction, including a film of 6th formers describing their expectations about moving to HE, academic staff thinking about changes to the first year curriculum, and an evaluation of student feedback data collected by the Students Union at the end of the first term.

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AUDITORIUM

How the What Works journey has transformed staff roles – and careers

Nicki Schiessel Harvey, Wil Vincent and Nick Morton, Birmingham City University

This short presentation sums up how involvement in What Works has impacted how course staff engage with transition activities and planning. In particular we will show how the careers of the three presenters have been directly influenced by involvement in Phase 2. A Head of School, a Programme Lead and a Student mentor are now Associate Dean, Faculty Induction Lead and a Student Success Advisor, the latter role being created through a What Works initiative. Having key enthusiasts in positions of professional (and financial) influence has, we recognize, been crucial to driving through changes and embedding a culture change.

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How does leadership vary in a satellite Campus and contribute to student engagement and success.

Jim O' Brien, Vera Offori Serwaa and Guy Brown, Northumbria University London Campus

The aims and objective of this session are to review and discuss the differences in the leadership requirements of a University campus which is London based and operated through a third party organisation when compared to those of the University main campus. Specifically, the rigours of developing a good and robust working relationship between operating educators at both the main campus and satellite campus which is focussed upon student engagement and success. Whilst recognising that the demographics of the student and the catchment is often very different and thus generates differing needs from student to both engage with their studies and to achieve their potential within the same academic framework.

Student partnerships: normal and democratising practice in higher education

Nicky Andrew and Ruth Whittaker and Jackie Main and Lesley McAleavy, Glasgow Caledonian University

The idea of student partnerships and engagement enacted as normal and democratising practice in higher education is relatively recent. Engagement is most likely to be successful when adopted as a natural 'whole of institution approach' (Kift and Nelson 2010) and not an onerous set of extra tasks. Engagement, in this sense, coalesces around a culture of active participation within an academic community designed to build confidence and develop a sense of belonging (Thomas 2012). GCU has developed, and is now implementing, a model to support and empower students to influence learning, teaching and quality enhancement through a 'spectrum' of opportunities embedded in mainstream departments and functions.

Parallel workshops: 13:00-13:45

PORTLAND

Level Up Mentoring: A Transitional Tale of How Staff and Students Engaged Collaboratively to Influence the Institutional Change Management Process for Enhancing Engagement, Belonging, Retention and Success

Jamie Morris and Kerry Gough, Birmingham City University

Our session will introduce participants to Level Up online transition mentoring programme at Birmingham City University. Developed as a result of the institutional contribution to the What Works? Student Transition and Retention programme, the Birmingham School of Media and School of English developed the Level Up programme as a student designed and delivered series of interventions which have been implemented in order to aid in enhancing our students' experience of life at Birmingham City University. Since the pilot phase shortlisting for a Times Higher Education Award, the Level Up programme has gone on to be developed as a university-wide initiative. Our workshop will share the collaborative design and development process, with a focus upon delivering an interactive session which will allow our participants to evaluate the potential for implementation in the context of their home institutions.

HARLEY

The DELITE project: An institutional approach to increasing interactivity to enhance student engagement, belonging, retention and success

Matthew Homewood and David Ellicott, Nottingham Trent University

The DELITE project (Delivering Engaging Lectures and Interactive Teaching) ran from January 2015 – July 2016 at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). The project involved 102 academic staff working on modules impacting over 4,500 students across all nine NTU schools. This institutional project provided a supportive environment for practice exchange, experimentation, constructive feedback and evaluation and aspired to impact mainstream teaching across the academy. The session will explore some of the varied and innovative methods, techniques and tools employed by NTU colleagues to increase interaction within teaching sessions and will reflect upon the impact of such interventions using quantitative and qualitative data.

WHITTINGTON 3

What worked for us and what can work for you: sharing our 'toolkit' of tried and tested actions

Jennie Jones, Rachel Bowden, Julie Fowlie, Marylynn Fyfe Gauld and Elizabeth Guy, University of Brighton

The University of Brighton's participation in the What Works? programme incorporated the development of a number of new student retention interventions underpinned by both quantitative and qualitative evaluation in Business Management, Digital Media and Applied Social Science. These were designed to encourage students to develop a sense of belonging, emphasising collaboration and social participation (Thomas, 2012). The evaluation comprised surveys and Appreciative Inquiry focus groups, which investigated students' experiences of both the interventions and their early learning and teaching experiences. Based on this evaluation, a 'toolkit' including examples of effective practice to enhance student success was developed. Through group discussion around these themes these examples that may be implemented in other disciplines and university contexts will be shared.

WHITTINGTON 4

Smart start: Evaluating the evolution and ecosystem of a transition intervention for student on the autistic spectrum.

Ann-Marie Houghton, Catherine Westwell and Georgia McCrone
Lancaster University

To share the hybrid collaborative approach to evaluating a targeted pre term residential, group and peer mentoring programme 'Smart Start' for students on the autistic spectrum. We will illustrate how students initially participating as beneficiaries can over time and depending on the activity provide peer support for other students. Using student, practitioner and workshop participants experiences the workshop will consider how to:

- make activities relevant for and engage students on the autistic spectrum;

- learn from and with colleagues across the university to deliver a programme of activities;
- use enabling, process and outcome model of evaluation to inform future practice.

AUDITORIUM

Using behavioural insights to improve student engagement via randomised controlled trials

Lucy Makinson, (Behavioural Insights Team) Maija Koponen, Anne-Marie Canning, King's College London

Can we improve the university experience of widening participation students, without large increases in funding? During this session you will develop an understanding of the key principles of behavioural science and how to apply them to increase student engagement and belonging. We will address the role of data for identifying challenges and evaluating interventions and demonstrate how machine-learning techniques can shape the way we use student data to create targeted interventions which maximise impact. The session will share results of several low-cost initiatives which are being trialed and evaluated by King's College London in partnership with the Behavioural Insights Team.

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Parallel presentations: 13:50-14:35

PORTLAND

A project team approach for institutional change to improve belonging and success through improving retention data

Alison Browitt
University of Glasgow

By utilising existing committee and reporting structures at the University of Glasgow, the What Works? Student retention and success change programme team had, and were supported by, pre-existing experience. Standing relationships and knowledge enabled progression of aims of improving availability and use of institutional data. This session covers challenges and successes of the approach, of the retention data, and includes feedback from staff on priorities: while types and levels of data required differ by audience, timely and reliable data can be an enabler to engage staff with issues and provide agency for change in practice to promote belonging and success.

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What Works at Wolves? A Case Study from the Institute of Sport.

Mark Groves
University of Wolverhampton

Improving student belonging is a priority for all HE programmes. The 'What Works?' phase one findings identified that particularly effective interventions are situated within the academic sphere, such as the intervention focussed on assessment unpacking at the University of Wolverhampton. This case study outlines how I endeavoured to roll out the 'What Works at Wolves?' principles across programmes

delivered within the Institute of Sport at the University of Wolverhampton. In undertaking this roll-out I examined whether it was possible to change the practice of staff in a way that might develop student confidence and sense of belonging.

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The entrepreneurial student response to What Works?

Jamie Rawsthorne
Unique Insights

After seeing fellow students drop out and meeting with their vice-chancellor Steve West, two students in their first year spent the whole Summer reading the WhatWorks? research. This led to them conducting over 90 interviews and 5 focus groups for themselves, enquiring about the specifics of the WhatWorks? research at their own university. Shortly after conducting their own research, using the WhatWorks? research as the fundamental backbone, they developed a technology solution focused on improving the transition into university. On average, it's estimated around 10% of students who've signed up to university simply don't show up and nearly 75% of students who drop out before Christmas do so within the first 21 days. Hear about two students with a passion for education who used the WhatWorks? research to create technology to ensure: technology to ensure: - Universities can support the 42% of first year students who consider withdrawing. (L, Thomas, 2011); - Universities can proactively provide support to students instead of waiting for doubting students to come to them, in which only 18.9% of students take an action internal to university. (L, Thomas, 2011)

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HARLEY

Expanding induction and using the VLE to enhance induction to First Year Life Science.

Chris Finlay and Maureen Griffiths
University of Glasgow

The first year School of Life Sciences courses have an annual intake of 650-750 students. The VLE is central to fostering student engagement, belonging and communication. With transition into undergraduate study a recognised challenge the VLE can be employed to reinforce delivery of the induction experience. This session will aim to discuss how the VLE, in combination with targeted face-to-face activities, is used to engage with students to make essential information accessible to all. Student feedback and VLE logs have also helped identify what content is best delivered in other ways, e.g. exercises run in lectures, laboratory classes or online.

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From Induction to 'Internship': Embedding Employability through 'Appropriate Challenges'

Helena Knapton
Edge Hill University

As Eden (2014: 266) has argued, there seems to be a move away from the notion that 'employability skills' might somehow be encapsulated within one generic blueprint: the concept of 'learning gain' similarly seems to look increasingly instead to 'whole person models of experiential learning that see employability as integrative, reflective and transitional.' Arguably, the process of generating 'employable students'

and 'ideal' future employees (Allen et al, 2013) arises at the moment of course enrolment. This paper compares and contrasts the approaches of three discrete professional disciplines at Edge Hill University (namely, Law, Nursing and Education) to the issue of student transitions towards employability. Robust, continuous induction processes, the use of pre-arrival activities aimed at promoting student engagement and a strong sense of 'belongingness' (Yorke, 2016), and the use of profession-relevant assessments, for example, are presented as key: finding the 'right level of challenge' (Eraut, 2007: 418) to both enthuse and prepare students for the demands of the professional workplace, is however also a core aim.

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What worked and What didn't? The Informed Study Project, 5 years on from Phase one: lessons learnt from developing an online self-evaluation of students Fitness to Practice.

Richard Day and Susan Annetts
Cardiff University

The aim of the session will be to present the challenges, success and lessons learnt from implementing the Informed Study Project for the last 5 years. Challenges have included attempting to expand its use to other programmes and the wider aspects of the University and maintaining it alongside other FTP processes. Successes included recognition and interest from external bodies and other outputs and presenting data on student's retention, and the benefit it has had within specific cases. Finally the objective will be to provide the audience with key points of guidance if they wish to set up a similar system.

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WHITTINGTON 3

**Enhancing first year students' experience through cooperative learning
Cases from Humanities and Social Sciences at QMUL**

Ana Baptista, Queen Mary University of London

Recognising the importance of the first year experience, a strategic project was devised as part of the Engagement, Retention and Success agenda at QMUL for 2016-2017. Specifically, the focus of my role as Learning and Teaching Advisor led me to develop partnerships with academics teaching first year modules across the 8 Schools of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at QMUL. Interventions particularly focused on two main 'effective practices in undergraduate teaching and learning' – 'active learning' and 'cooperation' (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) – were promoted within classroom settings.

Following the structure used in the cases in Clark, Andrews, Thomas and Aggarnal (2013), this presentation will cover (i) the nature, focus and description of interventions, (ii) consequences for students' engagement, (iii) preliminary reflections on evidence of effectiveness/impact of the interventions, (iv) clear links to the 6 characteristics of effective interventions as referred by Thomas (2012 - 'What Works? Phase 1 report'). Also, it will be highlighted: (v) consequences for academics' engagement and development, and (vi) challenges to developing partnerships and pedagogical (institutional) sustainability.

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Addressing Student Expectations and Building Confidence for the study of Law through a Pre-Arrival Activity

Amanda Zacharopoulou
Ulster University

This session aims to explore how the introduction of a pre-arrival activity and comprehensive week 0 induction programme can help foster students' knowledge, skills and confidence through active learning experiences with fellow students from diverse backgrounds, and engender a sense of student belonging and identity. The session will assess the challenges and improvements that have resulted from this approach. It will outline the positive impact of the interventions with regard to academic achievement and first year progression rates. Moreover, findings demonstrate that students do feel a sense of belonging and are engaged with their discipline.

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Balancing What Works and personalised student pathways: How Herts Success is fostering success amongst widening participation students

Stéphane Farenga,
University of Hertfordshire

Since 2014/15, Herts Success (HS) represents a centralised approach to improving success and retention amongst widening participation students at the University of Hertfordshire. Inspired by What Works 1 (WW-1), HS avoids the one-size-fits-all approach by combining the WW-1 learning with an institutional student-generated approach to intervention support. An opt-out model, underpinned by targeted communications, encourages students to proactively curate their university experience by taking up on-going interventions, designed to maximise developmental outcomes through peer and staff collaboration. Evaluations underscore that the HS model is improving retention, sense of belonging and the student experience of a potentially vulnerable and marginalised group.

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WHITTINGTON 4

CLAN- Campus Life Advice Network

Carlo Rinaldi
University of Glasgow

The session will look at the creation and structure of the CLAN system as developed at the Dumfries Campus of the University of Glasgow. It will discuss the problems in setting up such a scheme in a smaller rural campus. It will then discuss the benefits this scheme has brought to our first year students in terms of belongingness. The importance of peer mentoring in terms of student retention will be the main theme throughout the session.

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Ulster University

Peer Relations: an integrated roadmap to student success

Aine McKillop, Roisin Curran, Avril Honan and Grainne Dooher

Peer support has developed a strong sense of belonging at Ulster University and has provided the underpinning evidence to develop a roadmap of best practice to consider when embedding peer support activities. The following principles apply:

peer relations must involve meaningful interactions that will help fellow students share learning and may involve formalised student-led student groups from Year 1; peer relation activities should develop knowledge, confidence and identity; a sense of community is created when social integration is facilitated within and outside of the academic sphere and can be promoted through induction and student organised social events; peer relations fosters a collegiate environment and campus community and develops students academically and socially; and peer activities should be discipline owned and relevant to interests and future goals within the academic sphere.

Student Reflections: The importance of giving students the opportunity to learn from, and value the experiences their degree offers

Julie Fowlie, Jet Dela Cruz and Bethany Scott University of Brighton

Aim: Introduce a practical on-line tool to support level 4 Business students guided reflection about their boarder achievements eg, participation in extra activates, IT skills developed, career goals, personal development: Introduced as part of the What Works Phase 2.

Objectives: Demonstrate MyUniCourse: Studentfolio (2016 version) which uses the open access e-portfolio software Mahara™ with actual examples; outline the analysis of student academic work suggests that students are able to articulate their personal development and can see benefits of the opportunities provided, using student quotes; detail how using Studentfolio as part of What Works Phase 2 influenced wider adoption of the technology

AUDITORIUM

Implementing a holistic model of student support: Lessons from UCLan and beyond

Jackie Cooper and Benjamin Stein
University of Central Lancashire and Hobsons

This presentation evaluates the benefits, challenges and best practice associated with implementing technology to support a holistic, institution-wide approach to student support and engagement. The session begins with a presentation of the University of Central Lancashire's decision to implement Starfish, a student success technology and goes on to a discussion of rationale, key players and lessons learned.

Making The Leap: Supporting First Year Student Transition at the University of Limerick

Sarah Gibbons and Michael Smalle
University of Limerick

Student attrition is recognised as a problem in higher education in Ireland. In this context, the University of Limerick (UL) funded a 'virtual' Student Engagement and Success Unit in 2015 comprising of an Educational Developer in the Centre for Teaching & Learning, a Librarian and a Retention Officer in the Student Affairs Division. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how a 'virtual' unit works collaboratively to support student engagement & success. This will be evidenced by sharing work to date by the Unit. Specific initiatives have been informed and directed

by the *'What Works'* project, with the aim of embedding a 'sense of belonging' and inclusion of the student voice.

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Recognising, Engaging, and Student Leadership: How to support living at home students at university

Miriam Amies
University of Manchester Students' Union

The off-campus students project was developed after the University of Manchester identified that retention and achievement levels at university were being affected by whether students chose to live at home rather than move into student housing. This group also intersects strongly with mature students, student parents and student carers who are given their own focus within the project. The presentation will outline the role and importance of supporting participation and engagement for these students, looking at ways to engage the typically disengaged and provide social spheres for the typically independent academic focused student.

Parallel presentations: 15:00-15:45

PORTLAND

Five Years of What Works: successes and challenges in developing a whole-institutional transition support programme

Nicki Schiessel Harvey and Wil Vincent
Birmingham City University

We reflect on how small course-specific initiatives to support incoming students evolved into a faculty then institution-wide approach to pre-arrival support. While tailored activities by different course staff provided the personal touch crucial to achieving a 'sense of belonging' (Thomas, 2012), they lacked the consistency and coverage needed to improve retention institutionally. A scaled-up faculty-wide approach had reach, but lost the 'personal' in a diverse student population. Five years of trial and (sometimes) error have led to a flexible framework of audience-specific initiatives which are making a difference to how new BCU students settle into university life.

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Developing valuable and relevant skills and attributes at L4 to improve retention - a multi-school investigation.

Alison Day
Cardiff University

The aim of the session will be to present a small scale investigation conducted within Healthcare, Engineering and Geology schools at Cardiff University- which investigated the skills and attributes that first year students felt they had developed and which they felt were most relevant and valuable to their future employers. It is clear from What works- Phase 1 that one of the key contributors to attrition is students not valuing or seeing relevance in what they learn. Students need to be able to link the skills and knowledge developed to future careers and recognise them as valuable. A lack of engagement, particularly in the first year of study is linked to a lack of relevance- ensuring all programmes include real-life application and clear

links to future careers within their modules will improve relevance, retention and student success.

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From local evidence to institutional action: a case study in how research evidence collected in one department has shaped institutional policy and practice

Tracy Crossley
University of Salford

The aim of this session is to share how evidence collected to measure the effectiveness of a holistic approach to Personal Tutoring in one academic department at the University of Salford led to the implementation of institution-wide changes to improve student retention and success. Participants will learn how quantitative and qualitative data collected from students and staff combined to create a powerful evidence base in respect of improved student retention and academic attainment, and cultural change. Participants will learn about how this work has subsequently had a direct impact on both institutional policy and practice.

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HARLEY

No student left behind: Enhancing student learning opportunities through a whole institution approach to retention and success

Debra Mann and Lucy Walker
University College of Estate Management

As part of their strategic objectives UCEM has undertaken a programme of continual enhancement which has been completed under the over-arching initiative of 'No Student Left Behind'. It is an internal campaign to focus all staff on the role they can play to enable students to complete their programme and enhance their learning. This includes internal and external enhancements that have all contributed to retaining students, enabling their progression and improving the student experience. The aim of this session is to review approaches to improving student retention and success, with a particular focus on embedding retention into the broader work of institutions.

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Building the environment: Academic Mentors and enhanced communication to support transition and improve retention

Michaela Keenan
Ulster University

The School of the Built Environment experienced significant levels of first year student attrition. Through the introduction of the First Year Retention and Student Success Plan attrition has fallen significantly and student success has also measurably improved. A central element of this plan was the introduction of Academic Mentors to monitor and support the transition of first year students. The model focuses on a number of core elements which when brought together follow the student journey providing on-going support and thereby building upon the Higher Education Academy, 'What Works' research whereby within Phase 1 it was noted that "meaningful interaction between staff-students" was one of the core elements when seeking to develop student belonging (HEA, 2012). Participants will

be encouraged to discuss how this model could be enhanced and adopted across disciplines.

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Improving engagement and success: a case study of change in academic support and personal tutoring

Jan Bamford
London Metropolitan University

The session offers a case study of how approaches to monitoring student engagement, belonging, retention and success can be used to inform institutional strategy and promote change. The pilot initiative for a new approach to personal tutoring became the basis for a university framework to an approach to academic support and improvement of academic outcomes through the evaluation and monitoring of the pilot. Some of the rich data collected from the pilot will provide an illustration the approaches taken to monitoring the initiative. The session will outline how approaches to improving belonging, retention and success can be monitored and sustained.

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WHITTINGTON 3

Direct Entrant Induction at QMU: nurturing successful students online and in person

Karl Johnson
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Queen Margaret University's WISeR fund (widening participation and student retention) supports initiatives from staff and students – such as an approach to Direct Entrant Induction presented here. Developed by the Divisions of Business, and Psychology & Sociology, it incorporates online self-diagnostic, directed video feedback, tailored follow-up sessions and ongoing contact hours.

Ultimately, the aim is to evidence this approach as being applicable to all students. This is discussed in relation to supporting the transition into higher education, equipping independent learners, nurturing belonging and relationships with faculty; and therefore retention, as per the "What Works?" findings.

A co-creative community of practice in Computing

Michaela Black
Ulster University

Programming modules within Computing courses have a long history of being a subject with difficult concept thresholds resulting in low student achievement and engagement. Students can become very isolated even though they were developing the skills for a very team based profession. SPICE is co-creative Community of Practice (CoP) involving year 1 students, staff, and final year students as group mentors. This work will present a model with evidence demonstrating very effective collaborative student partnerships in co-creative curriculum design and complementary dynamic learning landscapes delivering reactive dynamic courses with enhanced student belonging and engagement.

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Early engagement and informed induction through innovative communications strategies: who, what, when, where, how and lessons learned

Ruth Wood and Sue Riddell
Canterbury Christ University

Canterbury Christ Church University continues to strengthen its early engagement with potential students, the smooth and informed transition into the University and timely orientation and induction into services, support and academic programmes. The work builds on the key finding from WW-1 seeking to create the conditions for students to develop a strong sense of belonging and embedding it across the early part of the student journey. The what, when, where and how will be explored, together with lessons learned.

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WHITTINGTON 4

Can peer coaching improve the academic attainment of higher education students?

Jill Andeanoff and Gill Knibbs, University of Essex and Independent Consultancy

Peer support interventions are widely used to enhance student success. Griffin (1995), Hill and Reddy (2007), Andrews and Clark (2011) from What Works, report improved student engagement and satisfaction. There has been an absence of quantitative evidence to measure the impact on academic attainment and confusion still exists around peer support terms (in particular, coaching and mentoring). This presentation highlights the findings of a control group, mixed methods study, enabling the academic attainment of non-coached students to be compared with those who received coaching. Statistical evidence is presented demonstrating that peer coaching does impact on academic attainment and behavioural confidence in particular for students in their first year, as well as improve retention. The coaching at the case study institution adhered to good practice as defined by the What Works report identifying the need for a well-structured programme. This presentation precisely defines the coaching practice utilised in the study providing participants with resources to help implement an exemplary practice coaching (or mentoring) programme.

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Graduate+: embedding belonging through employability

Luke Millard Birmingham City University

Graduate+ is an institution wide extra-curricular award that enables students to reflect upon their personal development needs and guides them to design pathways that shape their own future. The focus starts with a first year programme that seeks to support the creation of a sense of belonging, recognising student attendance and participation in university activities – connectedness – through online pre transition programmes and Welcome Week activities to personal development survey tools. A framework has been developed that builds on Lizzio (2006), Thomas (2012) and creates a culture of belonging, engagement and purpose. This student/staff led session will explore the challenges and successes of creating a new initiative that targets mass first year participation rather than selective engagement.

AUDITORIUM

Pulling up your briefs: accessible assessment processes

Debra Cureton
University of Wolverhampton

The University of Wolverhampton took part in Phase 2 of the What Works Programme and proposed a cross institutional active learning initiative that aimed to improve the accessibility of the assessment processes. Building on work previously carried out at the University, the researchers implemented criteria for accessible assignment briefs and a student led assessment unpacking approach in science, arts and performance based subjects. The intervention was evaluated quantitatively, and qualitatively with both staff and students. The evaluation indicated that the approached was welcomed by staff and students and positively impacted on student success, increasing the amount of students who achieved 50+%, 60+% and 70+%. Additionally, the approach exponentially supported the achievements of BME students which reduced ethnicity based differential outcomes.

Taking an institutional approach to enhancing inclusive assessment practices

Jenny Hambling and Michaela Borg
Nottingham Trent University

Embedding inclusive curricula and pedagogies to support student success is an institutional priority for Nottingham Trent University (NTU). Building on the momentum established by NTU's involvement in the 'What works? Student retention and success' project and drawing on (inter)national approaches to measuring and enhancing inclusivity, an interactive electronic toolkit has been developed as part of the Success for All project. This toolkit offers an opportunity to engage course teams in meaningful reflection and dialogue around inclusive assessment practices; this presentation will share details of the toolkit and will be of interest to those working on inclusivity at an institutional level.

Developing multi-dimensional change: an institutional and student focused approach to engagement and belonging

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(abstract tbc)