

Pre-registration opportunities for Social Work degree students

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Introduction

- Opportunity for potential students, with an offer of a place, to access a site on Blackboard PRIOR to induction week.
- Aims to ease the transition process.
- Site offers preparatory content for academic, social and practical challenges of Higher Education.
- Site includes discussion board for contact with staff and existing students for queries, support and reassurance.

Background

- 2005 – social work staff identified need for pre-induction preparation materials to ease the transition into H.E.
- Area set up the Virtual Campus; VC administrators had the 'power' to manipulate the system!
- Students logged in to access information about their course and a join in a discussion forum.
- Typical issues; reading lists, public transport, car parking, time tables, child care, nerves and reassurance.

Students said...

- "I feel more prepared, as I now know essential information such as the timetable for the year. Also it has been reassuring to know that I am not the only one who is feeling nervous about starting university."
- "hi, the discussion group is excellent i have just got back from hols feeling really nervous but after reading through the discussions realise everyone is feeling the same and i cannot wait to get there thanks"

Rationale

- Proactive management of transition is key to student retention and success (Yorke and Longden 2008).
- Project puts in place scaffolding integral to independent learning, to being self-directed and motivated (Ludwig-Hardman and Dunlap, 2003)
- Online collaboration encourages self-regulation (McLoughlin, 2002)
- Students become familiar with VLE and 'virtual conversational frameworks' whereby learning develops from dialogue (Laurillard 2002)

Students said...

- "I was feeling very nervous about starting the course. By chatting to other mature students I felt fine on Monday morning."
- "It has given me reassurance and answered my queries"
- "It helped me sort childcare out early so I don't need to worry about my daughter getting a place in nursery"
- "Trying to get a feel of university. To seek anything that may help me. The fact that I am a mature student, I hoped to find others."
- "It was the opportunity of chatting to fellow students as well as finding out some extra information about the course"

The way forward

- Virtual Campus replaced by Blackboard.
- 2009/2010 worked on systems integration to automate the process.
- Student volunteers invited to answer queries from own experience.
- Renamed 'Getting Started'

Getting Started...

Preparation for academic practice

SNAPSHOT preparation for higher education

know yourself

academic thinking academic reading academic writing

Includes critical thinking, creating an argument and using the Internet. [More...](#)

Includes effective reading techniques and taking notes. [More...](#)

Includes essay writing and introduction to plagiarism. [More...](#)

Students said...

- "Being able to access information before attendance (ie work load) was very beneficial. IT is not my strong area. I therefore found the Virtual Campus a learning exercise also."
- "I feel that communicating online through this project has been a brilliant idea."
- "The exercise helped to put me in the right frame of mind. Although I have found this week daunting [*induction*] I found by accessing the site over the last few weeks I felt I had a better understanding of what might be ahead although today I must feel my head is swamped!!"

Conclusion

- Proven opportunity to help allay stress and fears about higher education.
- Takes pressure off induction week
- Introduces students to their VLE
- Powerful tool for preparation for higher education at an early stage in the student experience
- "Reassurance that you are not the only one worried about going to university."

References

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