Flying Start

A transition support programme

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The transition experience

A number of studies at Sheffield Hallam have explored the previous experiences of learners' and their transition experience

- Prior LTA experiences
- Expectations (Staff and students')
- Preparedness for University
- The first year experience
- Retention and progression
Key Differences in LTA experiences (FE/HE)

Key differences have been identified in the following areas:

• tutor contact time and 1:1
• class contact time
• lectures versus small group sessions
• examinations and their length
• previous experience of coursework assessments
• previous experience of feedback - in particular feedback on draft assignments and second chances
Why do students withdraw?

"I personally needed more academic support in my first year to facilitate the transition into University life."

- Lack of preparation for HE in terms of both life changes and study skills
- Inability to cope with the demands of the course which included lack of commitment to the programme
- Poor academic progress
- Poor institutional and course match
- Poor social integration and academic support
- Financial issues and personal circumstances
Research around transition and retention

• Successful transition is related to:
  – Induction and transition support
  – provision of adequate pre-entry information
  – Personal tutoring and study support
  – Social engagement
  – Student support - both central and integrated within curriculum
Business School Initiatives

• Enhanced level 4 curriculum and skills focus through revalidation
• Dedicated student support structures as part of the Business School revalidation exercise
  – Academic coaches, Level Leaders and Student Support officers
  – a team approach
• Extended transition activities via *Flying Start Programme*
• Academic coaches to foster a sense of academic community and subject focus
• Group Peer networking scheme
SBS transition survey (2006)
key points that led to *Flying Start*

- Survey collected data on prior learning experience, pre-entry experience of HE, 'usefulness' of induction and support services (awareness and use of)
- Student responses indicated they wanted:
  - a longer period of induction
  - enhanced support for university IT systems and awareness of wider support systems (counselling, education & guidance)
  - more information on what academics expect from students
  - opportunities to meet 1:1 with academic staff to discuss issues
  - mentoring opportunities
Flying Start Programme

• Extended induction 2007/8
• Series of small group sessions throughout 1st year with academic coaches designed to provide opportunities for students:
  – to review their expectations and their transition
  – to integrate with the academic community
  – to develop peer and other support groups
  – to move towards being autonomous learners by L5
Reviewing the Programme - 2008/9 - 10/11

• Focus groups and Academic feedback
• Sessions condensed in to first semester
• Re-ordering of sessions
• Sessions more subject focused

programme as framework for delivering learning outcomes
Typical session themes

• Introduction to the programme and your coach
• IT systems
• Learning and Studying for Success
• Personal Development Planning (PDP)- creating a PDP portfolio
• Creative thinking & Analytical Skills
• Finding information & preparing your first assignment
• 1:1 sessions with Academic Coach (S1 and S2)
Student Networking Scheme

• Opt-in group peer networking scheme for level 4 students to assist transition
• Two subject related Level 6 students mentoring a group of approximately four level 4 students
• Themed meetings and email support groups within first semester
• Managed and supported by staff
Supporting the Programme

• Creation of new support roles
  – Student and Programme Support Officers
• 'Academic Coaches'
  – existing subject staff with additional hours
  – Academic Programme Co-ordinator
• Additional Support
  – Student Networking Admin and FS Admin
Resources

• March - September planning and training
• Approx 420 hours delivery time (academic time)
  – Approx 50 Academic Coaches across SBS
• Tutor and Student programme guides
  – Separate guides for Business and Events portfolios
• Virtual Learning Environment
Evidence of Impact

• Retention in to second year of study
  – 2006/7 13 - 13.5 % of our students withdraw in their first year
  – 2009/10 9.5%

• Fewer students on mixed level of study
  – 2007/8 900 progression appointments
  – 2008/2009 450 progression appointments
  – Improved first time pass rates for 1st and 2nd year students over last 3 years
Evidence of Impact

- Settling in
- Balancing academic and social life
- Learning from final year students
- Reflecting on your progress and HE experience
Evidence of Impact

• Increased awareness of School support systems/services
  – 84% increase between 2007/8 and 08/9 in the number of students seeking advice from Student & Programme Support Officers
  – 07/8 - 775 appointments 08/9 - 1430 appointments
  – Specific mention in student section of QAA Audit in 2010
Evidence of Impact: best aspects of sessions

• Interaction with peers
• Learning about IT systems
• Meeting final year students
• Reflecting on experiences so far
Future developments

• Review of attendance monitoring system
• Refining *Flying Start* sessions
• Reviewing student networking scheme
• Student Ambassadors to co-deliver 3-4 sessions with coaches
• Emphasis on course identity and personal tutors