Same time, same place.....or is

4th International First Year Experience
June 2011
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The structure

1. Background and context
2. Why we did this: high attrition, low performance, student concerns
3. The programme: time line, example PASS session
4. The evidence
   1. Take-up rate
   2. Degree results
   3. Retention
   4. Qualitative comments
5. Summary of the evidence
6. A concluding structural model
Background

Foundation degrees are a Government initiative to widen participation in H.E.

Over 3,000 Foundation degrees in the UK - most offering the opportunity to apply for top up degree.
The transitions project

Why?
A practical response to challenges and issues for students experiencing the transition from foundation degree study at a partner college to a top-up degree at university

Staff concerns about student readiness
How?

“Make as much information as possible available”

• “Engage with students before they actually arrive”

Foundation degree students talk about transition
- Semester four start
  - Feb
  - Visit college with a current top-up student
  - Look at module choices

- Partner college Fd degree
  - Jun
  - Student exhibition and keynote lecture, meet course leader
  - Campus visit, meet current students and SSGT, tour of facilities
  - Test hand-in of coursework, join Facebook group and receive newsletter

- University Hons top-up degree
  - Sept
  - Induction week
  - PASS programme

- Semester five start
  - Feb

- Semester six start
  - June

- Graduate

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PASS (peer assisted study sessions)

PASS Sessions are Peer-Facilitated
Sessions integrate subject content + learning skills
PASS Leaders are trained and supervised
PASS Sessions are regularly scheduled
PASS is evaluated
The model for PASS

Trained Pass Supervisor and Schemes Coordinator for university

Trained Pass Supervisor

Course Leader/module tutor

Pass Leaders (2 postgraduates)

Sport Coaching and Development (top-up) BA(Hons) students

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An example PASS session

**PASS Session:**
No.2 Reflective Practice
Date: 18-10-2010

**Module Leader:**
James Wallis

**PASS Coordinator:**
Marilyn Dousi

**Session objectives:**
Develop greater understanding into reflective practice

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**PASS Leaders:**
Jessica Meal/Georgina Clark

**Module:**
SE384 Advanced Coaching

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10 scheduled sessions from October to mid January

Average attendance 7 out of 10 sessions

67% attending 8 or more

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Student profiles

26 year old male – “When I finished my GCSEs I went straight into plumbing and became trained and then I went out working for a few years. In my school I was told I couldn't go on to university after my GCSEs but after working for a few years I went back to education.”

22 year old male – “I had been abusing drugs to the point where I was extremely paranoid and confused……now I’m back in education and although the step-up in academic level has been difficult to adjust to, it has also presented me with a new world of knowledge and information.”
Top-up degree outcomes with (n=33) and without (n=34) transitions programme
Qualitative evaluation
The student view

Commenting on PASS .. “You don’t feel like you are being watched by lecturers”

‘……would better if the leader was a graduate from this course’

‘……so we’ve started our own study group as a result of the sessions’

‘It’s a comfortable environment for interaction’
Qualitative evaluation
The PASS leader

‘The training sessions were excellent and improved my understanding of how to facilitate (not teach) and gave me confidence to deliver sessions’

‘It was great to see the group dynamics change in such a positive way after only a few sessions’

‘...getting the group to interact was difficult at the beginning but as I felt my leadership skills improve so did the cohesion of the group’
Qualitative evaluation
The course leader view

‘Everything about the set up of FE is more geared towards 16-19, it’s less of an academic focus’

‘...the quality, outcomes and esteem/identity of the top-up cohort this year have all seen a considerable upward shift.

‘...some (top-up students) perhaps achieved their level of competence when they’ve done two years at the FE college and then come here at level 3......they haven’t got the study skills – I don’t think some have got the energy or the determination or many of them the personal skills to be successful in this environment.’
Qualitative evaluation
The Student Support Tutor view

‘I was concerned the system was setting some students up to fail, expecting them to hit the ground running with no concerns’

‘The transitions programme has given me direct contact with top-up students before they arrive and led to more students seeking my support’

‘It’s been great to see the top-up students on the transitions programme achieve’
## Summary

### Outcomes

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<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>Remedial connotation</td>
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<td>Degree classifications</td>
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### Process

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<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<td>Student perceptions post transitions</td>
<td>Academic staff perceptions</td>
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<td>Student autonomy</td>
<td>Difficulty recruiting PASS leaders</td>
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Factors

- Social & peer
- Subject knowledge
- Familiarity with place
- Autonomy in study
- Academic speak

Facilitators

- Transitions programme
- PASS
- Buddy scheme

Outcomes

- Achievement and retention

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**Background research**

**References**


G. Mytton and Rumbold, P.L.S (in press) *Do peer-led workshops influence transition from a foundation degree to the third year of an undergraduate degree?*


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