

# Welcome to Flying Start: an academic coaching programme

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# Sheffield Hallam University



## What will be covered..

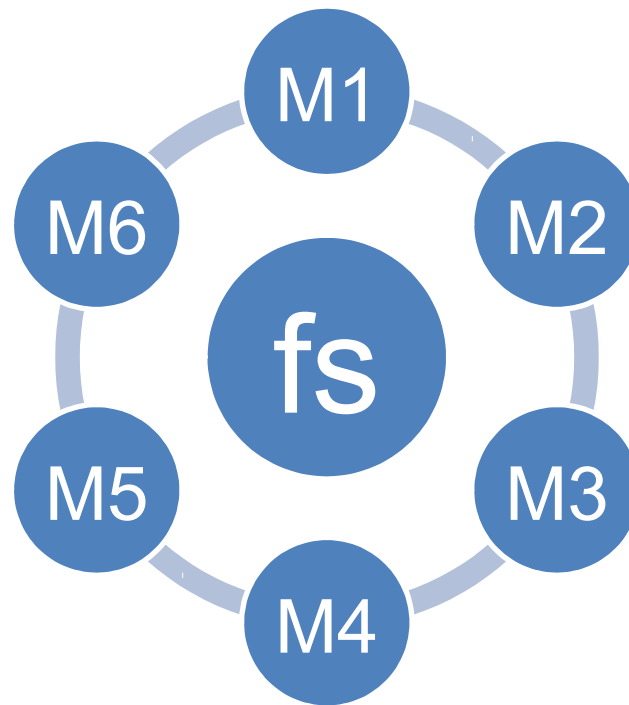
- Key differences in experiences and some research in to transition and retention
- The background and development of the programme
- Impact and improvements
- Challenges ahead

## A definition..

*'Retention is continued student participation in a learning event to completion, which in higher education could be a course, program, institution, or system'*

Dr. Zane Berge and Dr. Yi Ping Huang

The first year..



# 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

# 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



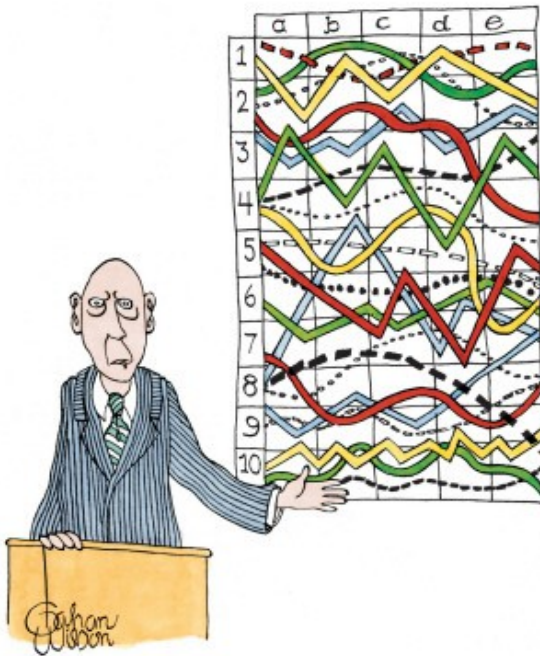
# Key differences in LTA experiences high school to higher education

- 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

# Business School Initiatives

- Dedicated student support structures as part of the Business School revalidation exercise
  - Academic coaches, Course Leaders and Student Support officers – a team approach
- *Flying Start Programme*
  - Extended transition activities
  - Academic coaches to foster a sense of academic community and subject focus
  - Group Peer networking scheme

**SBS transition survey  
key points that led to  
*Flying Start***



*"I'll pause for a moment so you can  
let this information sink in."*

- 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 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

# 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)

# Reviewing the Programme 2008/9 - 11/12

- 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

# Student Networking Scheme

- Initially opt-in group peer networking scheme for level 4 students to assist transition
- 2011/12 Recruitment and training of final year students to deliver session on their university experience
  - 30-35 students recruited and allocated to 2-4 seminar classes each

## Supporting the Programme getting it right..

- Creation of new support roles
  - Student and Programme Support Officers
- 'Academic Coaches' & Academic Professional Advisors
  - existing subject staff with additional hours
  - Academic Programme Co-ordinator
- Additional Support
  - FS Admin



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The Students' Guide To The Academic Coaching Programme 2011-2012

## Events, Food, Hospitality and Tourism Degree Routes

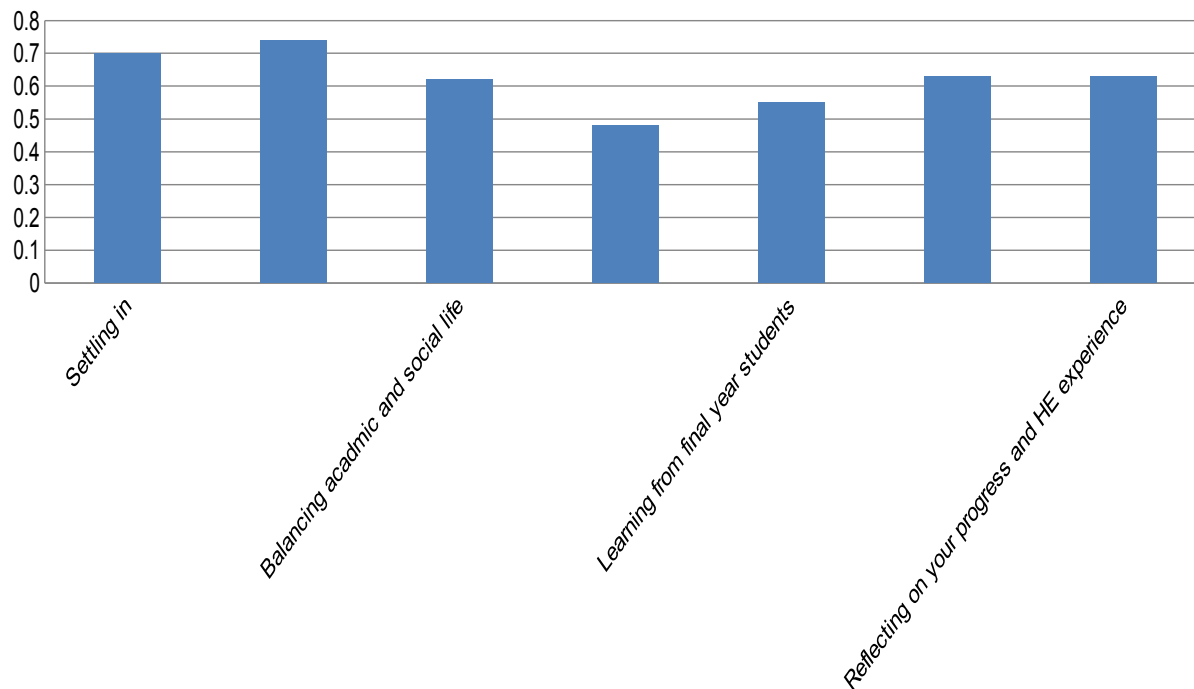


# Evidence of Impact

- Retention in to second year of study
  - 2006/7 13 - 13.5 % of our students withdraw in their first year
  - 2009/10 9.5%
  - 2011/12 (1274 enrolled; 29 withdrawn)
- 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
  - Increased awareness of School support systems/services

# Evidence of Impact

**'Good'/'very good' overall response rate from students when asked about success of sessions**



# Evidence of Impact: best aspects of sessions

- Meeting/Getting to know people in seminar classes
- Meeting final year student/placement student
- Help from and having access to Flying Start Coach
- Library gateway/resources
- IT systems/Shuspace
- Time to think about university/how to adapt/good introduction to university

# Current & Future Developments

- [Internationalising the programme](#)
- Refining *Flying Start* sessions
- Student Ambassadors to co-deliver 3-4 sessions with coaches
  - Students to deliver Placement Support event in 2013
- Emphasis on course identity and personal advisers throughout degree course



# The challenges ahead..

- Diversity of study body
- Engaging students
  - reaching the hard to reach
- Consumers v Investors

