

**Title:** **Becoming a university student: Understanding successful induction and transition beyond metrics and employability**

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### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Utilise conceptual frameworks from the academic literature to evaluate the success of induction and transition programmes in the UK HE context
- Draw conclusions as to the lessons learned from an evaluation of one such programme in a widening participation institution
- Reflect upon programmes within their own university with a view to bringing about further improvements that benefit the student body while also responding to the demands of metric accountability

### **Session Outline**

In the 1970s Tinto (1999) conceptualised the responsibility higher education (HE) institutions have for the student 'journey'. There is now a substantial body of literature concerned with the induction, transition, and experience of the HE student. Partly because of the rapid expansion of the HE sector witnessed since Tinto's research, programmes designed to assist students to adjust to university life or to new academic expectations are now a norm in the UK. Such programmes can be readily understood as working to serve HE metric frameworks, such as the TEF or NSS, while also contributing to the bottom fiscal line of institutions. To retain a student through such programmes is also to retain their fees. However, this paper will argue that, done well, such programmes also have the potential to assist students to move beyond 'experience' to self-actualisation, not only in narrow employability terms, but also towards wider, intrinsic, transformational, goals (Farenga 2017).

The evaluation of induction and transition programmes at one widening participation institution, Newman University, will be considered. Using the '7 questions' framework of Thomas' influential What Works? research (2012), this paper offers insight into examples of effective practice, the challenges faced, and the opportunities for future development. In addition, a consideration of Gale and Parker's (2014) 3-category model of transition (transition as 'induction into the institution', as 'development', or as 'becoming' (ibid: 731)) offers participants further insight into the overall likely success of a programme, which is,

in turn, dependent upon the degree to which it is embedded in institutional life. While focused on the experience within Newman University, lessons learned from the evaluation will have application elsewhere, and conclusions as to the potential of programmes to service both metric and fiscal expectations, while also developing student potential in a broadest sense, will be drawn.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

15 minutes	An exploration of the conceptual framework for undertaking induction and transition programmes within HE, as offered by the academic literature, with a particular focus on Thomas' (2012) and Gale and Parker's (2014) work.
15 minute discussion	What happens in our own institutions? Can delegates see elements of Gale and Parker's (2014) work in their own university's transition offer?
20 minutes	An outline of the development of the induction and transition programme at Newman University, and a sharing of the findings of a recent evaluation of the programme.
10 minute discussion	Does this data enable Newman to claim that it has met the challenge of Thomas' (2012) 7 question framework? Can we categorise the success of Newman in embedding the programme according to Gale and Parker's (2014) 3 category model?
15 minute activity	Considering the content of transition and induction programmes at their own institutions, delegates are invited to categorise such the elements of these programmes as ones that institutions should Keep, Change, or Stop. The focus of the activity will be on developing practice in relation to transition and induction that is meaningful for students, and for institutions and the metrics they are subject to.
5 minutes	A brief consideration of the lessons learned from the evaluation at Newman, and how they have led to plans for the future development of the programme.
10 minute plenary	Colleagues will be invited to offer their perspectives on the proposed developments and reflect on whether changes identified during this session can be made in their own institutions.

### **References**

Farenga, S. (2017) 'Students on a journey: an institutional case of widening participation success and retention programme' *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* 19:2 734-754

Gale, T. and Parker, S. (2014) 'Navigating Change: a typology of student transition in higher education' *Studies in Higher Education* 39:5 734-753

Thomas, L. (2012) *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change: Final Report from the What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme* Available at:  
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Tinto, V. (1999) 'Taking Retention Seriously: Rethinking the first year of college' *NACADA Journal* 19:2 5-9