

Title: **Improving student experience, retention, belonging, and success through induction: Lessons learned from research**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the common themes in students' experiences of induction and transition
- Understand and discuss the effectiveness of induction in students' successful transition to higher education
- Consider how the lessons we have learned could be applied to induction in their own institutions

Session Outline

This discussion paper is based on the recent research we have conducted about our university's induction, focusing on improving retention, students' sense of belonging, and their academic success. Over the past two years we have conducted student surveys and focus groups to better understand the student experience of induction at our institution, and what we could do to improve this experience. The outcome of this research will inform institutional changes to induction from September 2018, but our findings could also be applied to other institutions.

Findings from several studies have demonstrated that attendance at induction activities has an impact on progression, retention, and attainment (Murtagh, 2016; Thomas et al., 2012; Hamshire, 2016). One of the reasons for this is because the relationships formed with academic and support staff, and fellow students, during the early stages of their transition to higher education can help students to manage difficulties they may encounter later in their studies (MacGregor, 2016). Thus, engaging students in induction activities to help them develop these relationships is crucial, particularly for student groups that tend to have lower rates of engagement, belonging, retention, and success, such as male students, mature students, BME students, international students, students with disabilities, students with care responsibilities, and part-time students (Thomas et al, 2017). In order to improve engagement, retention, and academic success for our students, we need to

gain a better understanding of their experience of induction, and work towards improving induction and transition for all students.

As well as outlining the main findings from our research, this session will encourage delegates to reflect on the student experience of induction at their own institutions, and consider how some of the lessons we have learned could be used to improve that experience.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

The session will involve:

- Discussion of the most significant issues around induction and transition at delegates' own institutions (5 min)
- Presentation of our findings and recommendations (20 min)
- Discussion about how the lessons we have learned from our research might be applied to delegates' own institutions (10 min)
- Questions (10 min)

Discussion questions:

- What is the purpose of induction? What do we want students to gain from induction? Is this what the students actually gain from this experience?
- How effective is induction in helping our students in their transition to higher education?
- Which lessons from this research can be applied to induction at other universities?
- What more can we do through induction activities to help improve student retention, belonging, and academic success at the start of students' academic life?

References

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