

Title: **Transition support for direct entrants to University; welcomed or dismissed?**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Engage with and reflect upon student narratives about transition support initiatives, relating these to the kinds of support on offer in their own institutional contexts.
- Appreciate the relevance of social constructions of student identity to other transition contexts (e.g. workplace to university)
- Consider the value of employing landscapes of practice as a conceptual framework for thinking about issues of student transition

Session Outline

This paper outlines important insights emerging from longitudinal research, which explored students' experiences of transition from college to Edinburgh Napier University. Collaboration between university and partner colleges creates a range of opportunities intended to smooth college students' pathway to University and to aid transition; some of which are valued by the students, while others are dismissed.

The students were Associate Students of a Scottish Funding Council scheme to increase the number of students progressing to University as direct entrants from college. Associate Students are offered bespoke transition support and a guaranteed place at university. While still in college, they are given access to university resources and to a programme of intensive induction visits. Additionally, staff from the University Widening Participation (WP) team visit Associate Students, delivering academic skills workshops in collaboration with college lecturers.

The paper frames these transition support initiatives as 'boundary encounters' (Kubiak et al., 2015) which are intended to enable learners to build connections between the various communities in their landscapes of practice (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Findings uncover the challenges for those who work with students at the boundary of a community, in particular, highlighting the difficulty of boundary-workers establishing

sufficient legitimacy to make the practice of one community relevant to another (Kubiak et al., 2015).

The importance of student identity as a framing factor in learners' responses to transition support is highlighted by participants' narratives. The study underlined the extent to which the positioning of college students as already being Associate Students of the University crucially shaped their uptake of support initiatives and their subsequent engagement with the university. Interestingly, the research throws light on the conundrum of low uptake of vital skills workshops in preparation for studying at the University, in contrast to students' narratives about campus visits, where they enthusiastically welcomed the embodied boundary crossing (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016) as legitimate, enjoyable activities relevant to their status as Associates of the University. These tensions and challenges associated with collaborative provision of transition support will provide the focus for reflection, discussion and debate during the session.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Introduction to the [Associate Student project at Edinburgh Napier University](#), support initiatives and the longitudinal study. (10 mins)

Debating point for small groups - Can transition support delivered by University on college campuses ever really ease or smooth student transitions onto undergraduate programmes as intended by the Scottish Funding Council's initiative? Barriers? Challenges? (5 mins)

Exploration of student narratives in relation to transition support (5 mins)

Debating points for small groups – What do the students' accounts of transition initiatives tell us about what works and why? Who should deliver what and when by way of transition support in order to encourage uptake and impact? (5 mins)

Discussion about the positioning of students' identity as Associate Students and its impact upon subsequent engagement with University (further student data) (5 mins)

Question with coloured concept cards containing definitions of key terms to facilitate discussion as follows: How can concepts from practice theory such as landscapes of practice, legitimacy and boundary crossing give rise to fresh thinking about your own practices to support transitions across boundaries into university from various communities of practice such as further education or from the workplace? (10 mins)

Conclusion and lessons learned (5 mins)

References

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