

Title: **Making the Connections: Induction, Transition and Beyond, putting a transition project into practice**

Presenter: **Pamela Thomas, Jill Molloy AND Rohzeena Januar**
Birmingham City University

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the value of using students in helping to develop a transition project
- Discuss key messages that can be delivered through Student facilitated sessions
- Identify the practical considerations in delivering and facilitating transition projects
- Explore ideas for content of sessions; personal study skills, academic skills and professional skills

Session Outline

The School of Law's Connect transition project at Birmingham City University, originated as a Student Academic Mentoring Partnership, funded by the university's Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). Being aware of the diversity of qualifications that students entering the LLB degree programme had completed, the project aimed to ensure that all students were equipped with the skills to succeed as independent learners at degree level. As many of our students are first generation university students, it was important to support them in identifying the difference between study at sixth-form/ college level and study at university. Content of the sessions included Personal Study Skills, Academic Skills and Professional Skills elements. The name for the project developed from our wish to help students to 'connect' on a number of different levels; it was hoped that students would connect with the peer mentors, thereby supporting them to feel more comfortable and willing to ask their fellow peers for advice and guidance on transition based issues and to explore ideas and practice in developing the necessary skills to succeed. Connections were also facilitated between students on the course, support services and the Centre for Academic Success. As a result of staff and student partners working together in planning, designing and delivering the sessions, and providing on-going support, we could ensure that students gained and developed the necessary transferrable skills, which would help them to grasp the concept of more independent study at an early stage in the course. Moreover, the project aimed to improve our student professional awareness by incorporating professional behaviour attributes into specific sessions. Professionalism is important for all careers, however, it is of particular importance for law students who aspire to enter the legal profession. Following the introduction of Connect, student progression and retention at level 4 improved by almost

10%. Feedback from the level 4 students was very positive and additional benefits were identified in relation to International students, in settling into the programme.

How transferable is Connect? Connect is a highly transferable project, which could be implemented across a wide range of subject areas. Connect has now been implemented within the School of Social Sciences, and School of Business at Birmingham City University and is to be rolled out across the university. By identifying the key messages for students and the academic and professional skills that students need to succeed in a particular discipline, the project should enhance the transition of students into study across disciplines.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

25 minute presentation, based on the School of Law's Connect transition project which commenced in July 2016. This will include a critique of the project, analysis of our findings and results, adapting to changing circumstances and future development.

20 minute discussion focussing on:

- Putting a transition project into practice – logistics of timetabled sessions or drop-in style sessions.
- Recruiting and using students to facilitate sessions.
- Skills for success – personal, academic and professional skills that may be incorporated.
- Thinking ahead for future developments

References

Adam, A., Hartigan, C., and Brown, N. (2010) The value of an early academic development programme to students' transition and first year experience: The UTAS UniStart programme, *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education* 1(1) 43-54.

Kuh, G., (2008) High-Impact Educational Practices: What they are, who has access to them and why they matter. Association of American Colleges and Universities. Available at: <http://provost.tufts.edu/celt/files/High-Impact-Ed-Practices1.pdf>

Lizzio, A., (2006) Designing an Orientation and Transition Strategy for Commencing Students. Available at: https://www.griffith.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/51875/Alfs-5-Senors-Paper-FYE-Project,-2006.pdf

Millard, L. and Gough, K., et al (2016) Students as co-designers in revitalising the first year student experience. In P. Bonne and D. Knutt eds. *Ten Times the First Year; reflections on ten years of the European First Year Experience Conference*. Tiel: LannooCampus Publishers, pp.91-121

Morrison, J., Conrad, M., et al, (2013) A case for Change: A first year experience framework at York University. Available at: <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/wp->

<content/uploads/2014/07/Case-for-Change.pdf>

Thomas, L., (2012). Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change: A Summary of Findings and Recommendations from the What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Tinto, V., Establishing Conditions for Student Success Available at:
<https://vtinto.expressions.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/European-Access-Network-2002-Keynote.pdf>

Zacharopoulou, A, and Turner, C., (2013) Peer assisted learning and the creation of a “learning community” for first year law students, *The Law Teacher*, 47:2, 192-214, DOI:10.1080/03069400.2013.790159. Available at:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03069400.2013.790159>