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Paper 80 – Pecha Kucha

Dropout Bear and other Stories: Toward an Understanding of Non-Completion in Art and Design

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Abstract

The past forty years have seen attempts by educational researchers to understand the reasons why students withdraw from their studies. Most of this work has been undertaken from an institutional perspective, and has employed quantitative methodologies that provide limited insights in terms of the student experience. The Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) focus on completion as the basis for University funding in teaching and learning has provided a further, commercial imperative for Universities to investigate the issue. Moreover in a climate of increasing student tuition fees Universities face an enhanced social and moral responsibility to understand and respond to the needs of their students.

This paper seeks to explore factors that affect or contribute to non-completion in a School of Art and Design, with a view to enabling the early identification of students at risk and the development of appropriate interventions that could potentially assist them in completing their studies. It reports on an ongoing study of non-completing students from the academic year 2009-10, utilising online and face to face surveys across an undergraduate and postgraduate population. This is underpinned by supporting demographic data based on age, gender, ethnicity, highest qualification on entry and postcode. The context for the study is provided by the School's strong commitment to widening participation. The ultimate aim is to enable student achievement through the provision of timely, cost effective and targeted support for students identified as at risk of non-completion.

The paper is co-authored by three early career researchers, all of whom have been directly involved with the development of the project.

Keywords: non-completion; widening participation; student achievement.

