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Paper 127 – Pecha Kucha

Using student induction data with final student qualitative data to manage experience and expectations for 'realistic engagement' in Higher Education.

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Abstract

This presentation will provide rich evidence for practice around retaining and supporting students within a College of Health and Social Care. Recruiting over 1600 undergraduate students annually from diverse sectors of the local population, a number might be termed traditional students with others defined as entering from a 'widening participation' route. Standard registration information, being limited to simple demographics, fails to provide information about other factors associated with being a student thought to impact on success, e.g. whether the student has parents who went into Higher Education, if they have dependents or financial pressures, and if they have the ability to integrate into student life, (Yorke and Longden 2008, Tinto 1975, 1993).

A questionnaire was designed to elicit key data influencing progression and retention. Access to this baseline data allows tracking of students to offer targeted support to enable engagement in teaching, learning and assessment, identifying those students in need from the outset.

Follow up staff and student focus groups in the final year pursued some of the issues in more depth, but we argue that it is important to understand local context and associated issues. For example, some of our students receive bursaries, some do not, and some have busy clinical placements and an extended academic year, whilst others follow a more traditional study pattern. This study therefore not only allows us to understand individual students at risk but to also consider the cohort as a unit of analysis and as a contextual factor in retention.

Seven key themes emerged from undertaking focus groups with students and staff, in the larger project. One of these being the teaching and learning strand of undertaking Higher Education, with four sub themes identified, academic factors, assessment, standard of teaching and the structure of the programme. These will be discussed in the presentation.

References

- Tinto, V. (1975) "Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research" *Review of Educational Research* vol.45, pp.89-125.
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