Chapter 5
Exploring and Enhancing Support for Advanced Entry Students Transitioning Into Higher Education

Heather Elizabeth Branigan
University of Aberdeen, UK

Sally L. Middleton
University of Aberdeen, UK

Jacqui Hutchison
University of Aberdeen, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter outlines a multi-phased project aiming to understand and enhance the transition experiences of advanced entry (AE) students (i.e., college students entering university directly into second or third year with SQA HNC/HND qualifications). The project team includes academic and professional services staff with heavy involvement from student interns, giving a unique insight into transition support for AE students. Data were collected through student focus groups and a staff survey. Focus groups highlighted perceived gaps in support as students transition through(out) university, suggesting students lack knowledge about existing resources and desire more peer support. Resultantly, a new online toolkit has been developed to host existing support and new resources developed for students by students. Staff survey findings highlighted variation in knowledge of and contact with AE students, leading to consideration of how to better support staff to support these students. Findings can be applied to the wider sector such as students transferring from other universities.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the authors outline three phases of a project conducted at the University of Aberdeen to understand and enhance the transition experience of Advanced Entry students. The research team is made up of staff from academic schools and professional services, giving a unique insight into enhancing support for this group of students.

Specifically, this chapter describes initiatives which have centered around the ethos of co-construction with students, to create peer support *by* students *for* students. For the purposes of this chapter, Advanced Entry (AE) students are defined as those who have entered directly into the second or third year of university study from a Higher National Certificate (SCQF Level 7/ 1st year university) or Diploma (SCQF Level 7/ 2nd year university) delivered by a Scottish college, regardless of whether they have 'articulated' (awarded full credit for their prior learning) or 'progressed' (awarded partial credit for their prior studies) The authors are aware this is a narrow definition of advanced entry, but the work described in this chapter could be applied in a wider context, benefitting other groups of advanced entry students such as those transferring from other universities and for use in other countries that adopt an articulated pathway e.g., Australia and Canada.

AE pathways from college have been identified as routes for widening access and improving social mobility through education (Commissioner for Fair Access, 2022). This pathway is particularly important for widening access because many students taking this route are from non-traditional backgrounds (e.g., students from deprived areas, care experienced) and are cohorts often associated with poorer retention rates. For example, recent figures show that 25.1% of AE students came from the 20% most deprived backgrounds, and 1.9% were care experienced (SFC Report on Widening Access, 2022). Therefore, this pathway directly addresses the Scottish Government's widening access target of 20% of university students coming from the 20% most deprived backgrounds by 2030 (COWA, 2016).

TRANSITIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ANCIENT, NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

The University of Aberdeen (UoA) is an ancient university[1] with, at any one time, approximately 600 students who have entered university through the AE route from colleges. The University's focus on articulation pathways is particularly relevant given changes in the local (e.g., North & East of Scotland) and national economic landscape (such as changes to the oil and gas sector, disruptions to hospitality industries post-pandemic).

The Commission on Widening Access (COWA, 2016) suggested that "in 2013/14 only around 1% of learners from an SIMD20 postcode area who progressed from college to university with full credit for prior learning entered one of Scotland's four ancient institutions" (p.33), with the hesitancy to engage being blamed on a suggestion from the universities that students from college withdrew at a higher rate than "standard" entrants, especially when they were awarded advanced entry. The report's authors' suggestion that a possible reason for these withdrawals was because ancient institutions were "less likely to have in place the core elements regarded as pre-requisites for successful articulation, such as seamless curricular links, entering as part of a familiar cohort, transitional academic support and targeted pastoral care" (p.33) gave the UoA a focus when developing its articulation offering.

24 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/exploring-and-enhancing-support-for-advanced-entry-students-transitioning-into-higher-education/326316

Related Content

Developing World-Class Internationalized Universities: Double Tops Construction in China
Abeni El-Aminand Cai Yuzhou (2023). *Elevating Intentional Education Practice in Graduate Programs (pp. 188-198).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/developing-world-class-internationalized-universities/317401

Not Possible to Destroy Opinions by Force: Arendt, Guevara, Foucault, and Limiting Free Speech
Christian Jimenez (2020). *Handbook of Research on Ethical Challenges in Higher Education Leadership and Administration (pp. 72-91).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/not-possible-to-destroy-opinions-by-force/252791

Mechanism of Direct and Indirect Assessments for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education
Arshi Naim, Praveen Kumar Malik, Shad Ahmad Khanand Arshiya Begum Mohammed (2024). *Evaluating Global Accreditation Standards for Higher Education (pp. 200-216).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/mechanism-of-direct-and-indirect-assessments-for-continuous-improvement-in-higher-education/344935

Praxis of the Teaching Profession: A Dialectic of Institutional Oppression and the Development of Pedagogy and Critical Consciousness
YiShan Leaand Carol L. Butterfield (2019). *Navigating Micro-Aggressions Toward Women in Higher Education (pp. 202-217).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/praxis-of-the-teaching-profession/212046

Learning Design Thinking Through a Hands-On Learning Model
Norman Gwangwava (2021). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 1-19).*
www.irma-international.org/article/learning-design-thinking-through-hands/274939