

What Works? Student Retention & Success



Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change

Birmingham City University
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What Works? Student Retention & Success is a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative working with the Higher Education Academy, Action on Access and thirteen UK universities.

1. Description of the Institution and its disciplines to provide contextual Overview

1.1 Core team:

Luke Millard: Head of Student Engagement, Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (project lead)

Professor Stuart Brand: Director of Learning Experience

Paul Chapman: Head of Engagement, Students' Union

Dr Kerry Gough: Senior lecturer, School of Media

Jamie Morris: Graduate Student Success Adviser and Student (Media)

Dr Nick Morton: Associate Dean, Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment

Helen White: Head of School of Radiography

1.2 Participating disciplines

Phase 1 from programme start:

Birmingham School of the Built Environment, to take a whole school approach across a variety of small programmes

BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography and BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy

BA (Hons) Media

Phase 2 from 2015/16 onwards

BSc (Hons) Nursing

BSc (Hons) Music Technology

1.3 Significant internal changes/external context

Whilst there are always going to be changes in personnel and roles, the team has been fairly consistent and invited new people in when required. The most significant change has been in the profile of the first year experience at the university and nationally. What Works? and other initiatives have raised the importance of the first year at the university and new activities that support the first year have come under the auspices of the team. For example, the Project lead now leads a new form of Welcome Week at the University. At the 2015 European First Year Experience in Norway BCU had 10 representatives, including 3 students, at the conference, the most of any university (excluding the host university) and these numbers increased to 14 at the 2016 EFYE in Ghent.

This included staff who were not even part of What Works? suggesting that the university was becoming more aware of the importance of first year and student transition. This was further backed up by the first running of a Masters in Education (MEd) module on student transition and the first year experience which had 21 staff participants in a week long block delivery in July 2015. The University will also now host the European First Year Experience conference in June 2017.

1.4 Impact data

Impact of interventions is difficult to gauge as there may be variables that could also impact on retention data such as admissions criteria. However, that is the case for all the universities involved so we will highlight the findings with that proviso.

The most pleasing results around level 4 retention occur around the University's English and Media programmes. Both these programmes show a 3% increase in retention over the 3 years. The Media and Communication programme showed a 7% increase in one year when the pre-transition level up activity was refined in the second year of operation.

The other programmes have all shown some increases, but these have often been met with drops in later or previous years. Built Environment courses improved by 1% in the last year to 82% retention rate. Diagnostic Radiography saw a 4% rise in the second year which then fell significantly the next year. However, we also know that the students who are on the course and even those who have left are happier and sense a greater level of belonging and care from the university and the HE sector.

The What Works? survey conducted by Mantz Yorke offered up some interesting conclusions. The BCU year 1 student scores above the sector benchmark for:

- Engagement (except for mature students over 25 years old)
- Self-confidence (excluding males)
- Belonging (except non-British)

The BCU Year 2 student scores:

- Engagement is above sector for all areas
- Self-confidence offers a mixed bag with 8 sectors above and 10 below
- Belonging is below sector except for 20+ and 25+

We also thought it would be useful to consider other external data targeted at first year students and therefore considered the UK Engagement Survey. Whilst the questions are not the same could be seen to be relevant, such as:

- Do you feel connected to a Birmingham City University community?
- Working effectively with others
- Working with staff to make improvements to your course
- Discussed ideas from your course with teaching staff outside taught sessions

When you compare these outcomes to sectoral benchmarks there are some significant differences:

Do you feel connected to a Birmingham City University community? (BELONG?)

Built Environment 19% above sector

Media and Communication 15% above sector

Radiotherapy 19% above sector

Working effectively with others (CONFIDENCE?)

Built Environment 10% above sector

Working with staff to make improvements to your course (ENGAGED?)

English 11% above sector

Radiotherapy 40% above sector

Discussed ideas from your course with teaching staff outside taught sessions (ENGAGED?)

Built Environment 13% above sector

English 10% above sector

Radiotherapy 15% above sector

It is likely that the University's drive around student engagement and the generation of the BCU learning community is reflected within the high engagement scores across all measures and belonging measures that read positively. Self-confidence measures are more difficult to read and the nature of many of students at BCU with less social capital than some universities, would suggest that this is an area for the University to address in the coming years.

2. Planning for and implementing change

2.1 Team selection

The teams that participated in the programme were all volunteers. Working within the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, the project lead had an awareness of areas of poorer performance and knew people who might be willing to accept support for change. Initial discussions with Associate Deans in each faculty and the University's Director of Learning Experience led to the programme areas being selected. The project lead met with each discipline lead to agree their participation and ask for their input into designing the future programme.

All interventions were founded upon the university's student engagement philosophy which meant that all work would be take forward with significant student input which manifested itself most obviously with the development workshops offered in partnership with the Students' Union.

2.2 Interventions selected and team working

As a project team we delayed identifying interventions until the discipline leads had attended the first three workshops run by the HEA. Those workshops on active learning, induction and co-curricular activities exposed our teams to new ideas and enabled conversations to happen. These ideas were developed by course teams and brought to three half day workshops delivered at the Students' Union.



We made it a requirement that each project team bring staff and students (at least in equal numbers) to work up and share their ideas. At one workshop the radiography team brought over 20 students to help design the interventions.



At each of the initial workshops, and others we ran in forthcoming years, we gave teams the time to develop ideas, but also structured it to allow some sharing of their ideas across teams. In addition, the Steering Group met regularly for the first 18 months of the initiative so that processes and ideas could be developed and shared. This provided a very useful means to build a shared understanding and keep everyone up to speed with university and discipline level developments.

After that time the Steering Group did not meet formally as the processes and ideas were embedded. From them on the focus was on individual meetings with the project lead and being brought together for particular instances such as an HEA visit or the addition of new teams to the programme.

The BSc (Hons) Nursing team, the largest programme at the university, is the latest to be added to the What Works? programme and they had their first planning meeting with 15 students in July 2015. CELT facilitated the half day which has now impacted in the delivery of interventions in spring 2016.

3. Evaluation strategy

As with the development of initiatives, we have relied upon a localised approach to evaluation. However, there has been a centralised approach to the analysis of the retention rates to support findings so that they tally with those provided to What Works? In addition, the analysis of themes across the participating disciplines by the project lead has led to institution wide initiatives to support programmes and students across the institution.

4. Changes implemented at the institutional level

4.1 Developing a new partnership approach to Welcome Week through partnership with Students' Union

The senior management in the University saw the work being undertaken through the What Works? initiative and suggested that the project lead take a fresh look at the University's Welcome Week planning. A planning team was pulled together from the Students' Union and professional services to develop a co-ordinated approach that would focus upon activities that instilled a sense of community and belonging with new students. Inevitably this drew upon some aspects of the What Works? initiatives at the University. The first iteration of this new approach in September 2014 was heralded as a significant improvement with larger numbers of students attending events and the Students' Union reported a 20% increase in the number of students signing up to clubs and societies. Welcome Week 2015 built upon that with over 9000 students attending the Welcome Fair.



4.2 MEd module Student Transition and the First Year Experience

CELT offers an MEd in Academic Practice for faculty and professional services staff. It seemed a logical development for the project lead to develop a module within the MEd that would enable faculty to be enthralled by the possibilities that they could employ to improve the first year student experience. The first iteration of the module was delivered as a week-long block to 21 staff in July 2015 and will be repeated in the same week in 2016 resulting in the university creating over 50 staff champions for the first year experience.



4.3 Graduate Student Success Advisers (GSSA)

There will be a discipline led case study from Media on the Graduate Student Success Advisers and how these recent graduates were employed to build a bridge between students and staff to improve student retention and create a sense of community. The role was initially created by the media What Works? team and had a significant impact in its first year of operation which saw a 7% increase in student retention on media courses that equates to 19 students.

The institutional impact of this work was that the Executive Dean of the Arts, Design and Media faculty immediately became a champion of the work of GSSAs and reported it to the University's Executive Group. This led to GSSAs being employed across all faculties in the university from 2014 onwards. The success of this role continues to be recognised with one faculty now appointing a GSSA for each of its Schools. There are now 13 GSSAs spread across the University who focus upon the first year student and improving the student experience.

4.4 Student Engagement targeted at first year experience

CELT operates the Student Academic Partners (SAP) programme and the Student Academic Mentoring programme (STAMP). These nationally recognised programmes support educational developments that improve the student experience through the employment of students to work alongside staff. In 2014, as in previous years, the SAP and STAMP programmes were given a theme that the assessors would be especially keen to support. Student transition and the first year experience was the identified theme and this resulted in 32 of the 75 projects funded (43%) focusing upon this area. Details of these projects are provided in Appendices 1 and 2.

4.5 Reward and Recognition through UKPSF

Many of the staff who have been involved in the What Works? programme have utilised the experience for their application for Principal or Senior fellows. Two of the What Works? team at BCU have received Principal Fellow awards that cited their What Works? activities. Two others have achieved Senior Fellow status.

In addition, it is interesting to note that every member of the original What Works? steering group has been promoted during their time on the programme. Clearly participation in the programme and the impact of being seen to drive change has benefitted the participants.

4.6 Dissemination

The University has spoken at a number of conferences around its participation in the What Works? programme and has published with others around the theme.

For example, the University offered three presentations at the 2015 European First Year Experience conference in Norway. One was from an institutional perspective looking at engaging students for strategic change to the first year. The remaining two were from discipline teams informing the conference of the outcomes of their initiatives.

In 2016, the university offered a pre-conference workshop and 5 other workshops at the European First Year Experience in Ghent, Belgium. In addition, the university contributed a chapter to the 10 year anniversary book that highlighted the work of What Works? at BCU.



Workshop presentation at European First Year Experience conference, Norway 2015

Additionally, the project lead has collaborated with the What Works? project lead at the University of Ulster to publish a paper to the International Journal of Academic Development special on students as partners.

Engagement through partnership: the realities for staff and students and implications for academic development – Curran, R. and Millard, L. International Journal of Academic Development (156) – Student Engagement special issue 2015

The University will also host the European First Year Experience Conference in 2017 and will see this as a great opportunity to work with the HEA, Action on Access and Paul Hamlyn to promote What Works? outcomes across the world.

5. Sustainability

The What Works? programme has become part of the principles of many parts of the University and the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching delivers a postgraduate module to staff on the benefits of a What Works? centred approach which is now embedded within the MEd offer.

The programmes involved in the What Works? initiative have been so convincing within their own schools and faculties that many of the local initiatives have now been adopted by their faculties (Built Environment approaches adopted by Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment) and even the whole institution (Graduate Student Success Advisers). Also the cross-fertilisation of ideas across the What Works? teams has been encouraging as the Level-up and GSSA concepts were originally created in Media before the Built Environment adopted them.

The What Works? programme at BCU was a partnership project with the Students' Union and has provided a new arm of our partnership working that has led to enhanced developments around Welcome week and student surveys. As part of this new approach the University and Students' Union won the 2013 HEA and NUS institutional partnership award. The application for award talked of our partnership working across Student Academic Partners and the new approach to embed the SU and supporting activities within curriculum.

However, perhaps the greatest impact is yet to be delivered as the University is creating a new employability initiative that is being led by the What Works? project lead. This will look at creating university wide opportunities for students to develop that sense of belonging at level 4, whilst adopting some principles of High Impact Practices (AACU) and Lizzio (2006). The plan is for a BCU Graduate+ programme across all undergraduate provision that builds upon the What Works? lessons and has three stages:

Level 4: Becoming a successful student (draft titles)

- focus upon becoming a successful student.
- create an offer that develops a student's sense of self, confidence and resilience.
- builds a sense of community and belonging to the University and the City.

Level 5: Designing your future

- focus upon students designing their own future and careers options
- students to ask "what careers/further study are available, what can I do? what skills do I need to develop, how do I develop my CV, what makes me interesting?"
- There will be a clear emphasis on the benefits of placements, sandwich year opportunities, international exchange and employment opportunities.

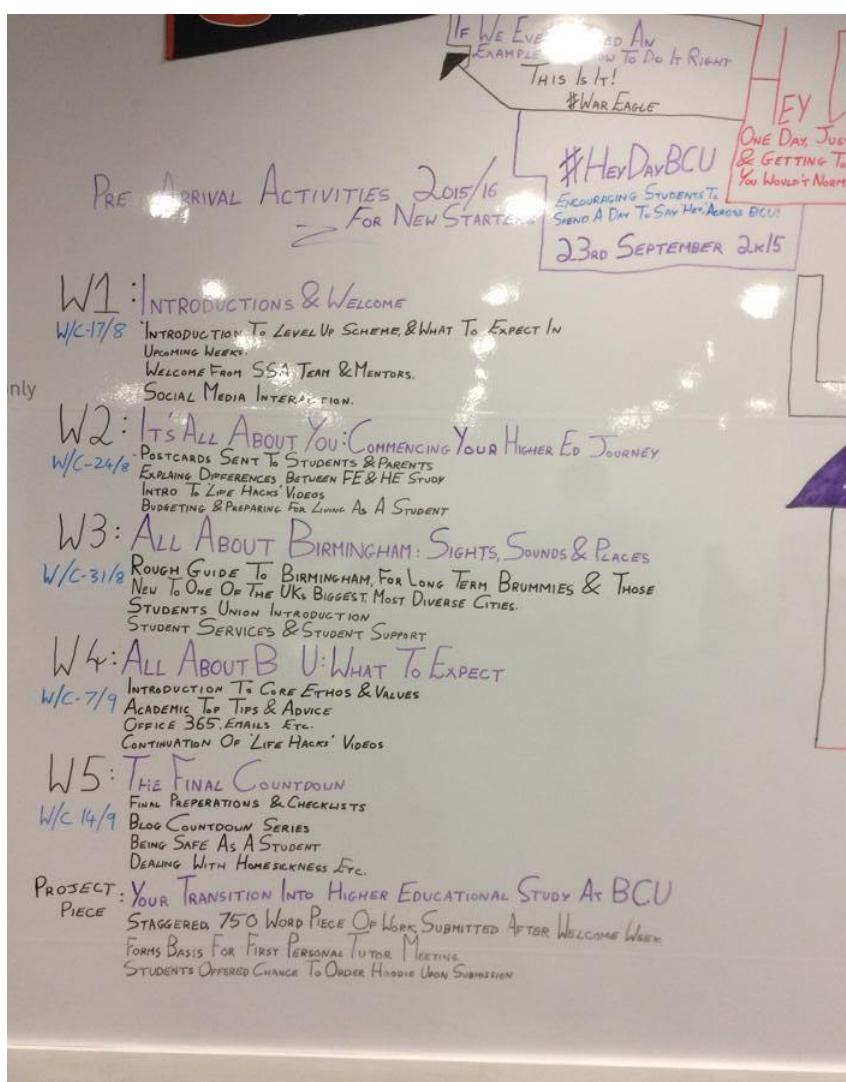
Level 6: Beyond Graduation

- this will involve reflection on progress made at university, decisions re further study or employment trajectory and intensive support for applications and interviews.
- opportunities for final year students to make connections with employers via careers fairs, networking events and project opportunities will be maximised.
- Capstone interdisciplinary projects

This work is being developed and piloted throughout 2015/16 for roll out with students in September 2016.

The University has adopted a position that places much greater emphasis on the first year experience and this has led to us also taking an interest in the field of learning gain. This resulted in BCU leading a partnership bid with Liverpool John Moores, Coventry and Staffordshire universities to the HEFCE call for learning projects in summer 2015. We have been successful in this bid and will now take this work forward over the next three years, with the foundation of What Works? underpinning what we seek to achieve.

The sustainability and embedding of an initiative is often best demonstrated by discovering aspects you do not control. Therefore, a walk past the Faculty of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment's Faculty office was exciting as the GSSA's and their team of student mentors had started to draft their action plan for 2015/16 on their interactive planning wall that all students can see and to which they can add comments.



**Impact on the First Year Experience
Student Academic Partners (SAP)**

Projects supported in 2014/15

6.12S: Preparing to Moot. A Step-by-Step Guide

Staff Involved: 2, Students Involved: 3, Students Impacted: 3, Hours: 100

The aim of the project is for students to create a step-by-step guide to mooting, which will be drafted by the staff partners and published by Routledge. The project aims to capture the student voice and will act as an important resource in students' study.

6.09S Early Transition Support for the MSc Management PG Community

3 students, 2 staff, 70 students impacted, 170 hours used

The MSc Management programme attracts a wide variety of students who are entering post graduate education for the first time. The programme has over 300 students and the vast majority of these are International students following six different pathways. The early transition for these students is complex. This project is complimentary intervention to address issues faced by students during their transition into postgraduate studies.

6.17S: Development of flexible/interactive lab learning resources

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 1, Students Impacted: 142, Hours: 89

The project has allowed the provision of more timely formative feedback on the work. With a growing student population, manual tutor led formative feedback is time consuming and often too slow to be of use. This system has been designed with automated feedback, but allows staff to identify students who are struggling and intervene with tutor assistance when needed.

6.18S: Parkside Works / Live sound Society

Staff Involved: 4, Students Involved: 1, Students Impacted: 50, Hours: 106.6

The aim is to network with clients to create opportunities for students to gain valuable industry experience and to develop a live sound training and accreditation program so they can gain practical knowledge of live audio systems and form a ranking system so selecting crew is far more efficient.

The project has enabled students to get out and work in the real world with real clients. It has provided a backbone for students to gain experience in the field of live sound which is invaluable when looking work post study. The live sound accreditation has developed confidence amongst the programme in delivering the material and with students participating.

6.19s: Student Link Ambassadors - The School of Art

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 4, Students Impacted: 500, Hours: TBC

The aim is to employ ambassadors to get involved with the student recruitment process by preparing, developing and delivering a diverse range of material suitable for discussion/ presentation to schools and colleges. The aim is to strengthen and extend these links.

6.16S Developing a Learning Resource to Support Vendor Certifications

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 1, Students Impacted: 142, Hours: 89

This project involves the creation of a central learning resource to support students who wish to study for the Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA) tests that are offered within the school of CTN.

MTA tests help students validate their fundamental technology knowledge, supplies them with a career foundation and the confidence to succeed in advanced studies and future vocational development. It also gives students a recognised Microsoft certification that can enhance their employability.

6.20S: 3D Materials Library and Database

Staff Involved: 2, Students Involved: 2, Students Impacted: 140, Hours: 12

The aim of this project is to support the rebuild of the 3D Design Material Library after the move from Gosta Green to Parkside. This will provide a resource to not only 3D Design students but also to other groups that may use the studio. All students in all level will benefit from resources and the materials in the library.

6.26S Athena Swan – Supporting women into academic careers

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 10, Students Impacted: 10, Hours: 158.5

The Athena SWAN Charter is an award given to HEIs to recognise their commitment to advancing women's careers in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) employment in higher education and research.

The ten students working directly on the project have been have identified some difficult truths about gender perception and attitudes to learning and academic careers, they have designed questionnaires and present their findings at the Learning Lab and to the project leads. As the project progresses they will be impacting on many BCU students at Athena Swan events, via surveys and workshops. In addition they will promote BCU to a number of schoolchildren to help raise aspirations especially for girls.

6.30S: Student Life Hacks – Video Series

Staff Involved: 5, Students Involved: 3, Students Impacted: 3, Hours: 23.5

This project seeks to produce a series of short, informative 'how to' videos, about a number of academic and technical skills. They are designed to provide a student

friendly, detailed explanation of how to carry out a number of tasks students may need additional support on, or not be aware of.

This has been particularly successful with first year students transitioning into university life as it has equipped students with some of the key skills they are expected to learn and develop through any university degree. By having specific BCU videos it ensures the transition is fully relevant to their study. As well as this, the project also clearly supports undergraduate research and collaborative learning, a key skill for academia and employment.

6.33S: Demystifying end of life care

Staff Involved: 2, Students Involved: 4, Students Impacted: 60, Hours: 39.25

The aim is to find out how to improve student knowledge around demystifying end of life care for people with intellectual disabilities and their careers, a current issue, so that they can empower people with intellectual disabilities, their significant others and supporting professionals in clinical practice.

The project has identified gaps in knowledge, researched literature that will be utilised via MyCat resource in order to support students in their development over 3 years. The project has also identified outside organisation (hospice) that would benefit from presentation and resources to assist them working with people with intellectual disabilities.

6.34S: When your first year is also your last year

Staff Involved: 2, Staff Students: 2, Students Impacted: 25, Hours: TBC

The project recruited students to act as Student Curriculum Design Consultants to work with staff and the current cohort of ECS Top-up degree students to identify ways in which the transition into University-life and top-up degrees could be enhanced. The project has developed supportive materials and amendments to course design in response to these consultations. The top-up students have to manage the step up to level 6 work in what is both their first and their final year at the University, they also have to negotiate and navigate their way around the processes, protocols and expectations of a completely new and very different type of educational institution.

6.35S Bridging the Gap

The project aims to enlighten current and future students on the valuable experience ADM provides in supporting final year students. And to provide an insight into competitor visual data as recorded at New Designers and gain a greater understanding of specialisms such as 3D Designer Maker and Furniture and Lifestyle Design

6.43S Clinical supervision in mental health nursing care

The project will affect the student experience as well as helping them in their subsequent clinical practice. The project will influence curriculum design and enhance the student experience during university study and on subsequent employment. This project should receive funding because it will improve the student experience whilst also having a real effect on clinical practice.

6.45S ‘Top Ten Tips’

In order to further prepare students for joining university and specifically Birmingham City University and the diagnostic radiography and radiotherapy programmes. We propose to create 3 online videos featuring current students providing top tips for success, thus reducing anxiety and creating a positive culture. We hope that the advice given by the students will remove some of the stressors which lead students to feel that they can't achieve success. By students designing and starring in the videos then this should create a sense of reality and encourage the students to prepare for their new journey.

Appendix 2

Impact on the First Year Experience Student Academic Mentoring Programme (StAMP)

Projects supported in 2014/15

4.12M Media Production Training

Staff Involved: 4, Staff Students: 4, Students Impacted: 49, Hours: 129

This project emerges out of two recent concerns. Firstly, it has been devised to address some of the recent poor student satisfaction results the BA English and Media joint honours pathway has received in the NSS. Being a wholly theoretical degree, English and Media students have highlighted how media production training limits their professional development. Secondly, the Technical Department are facing growing student numbers and are keen to develop training sessions to allow non media specialist students the opportunity to access the media equipment that is available for loan.

This kind of work impacts the student experience two-fold by enhancing the students skill-set whilst also boosting their experience of learning and teaching at BCU, hopefully then being reflected in the NSS.

4.01M: Academic mentoring for Chinese international students on the MA in Jewellery, Silversmithing and Related Products

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 1, Students Impacted: 35, Hours: 106

The MA in Jewellery, Silversmithing programme has range of course requirements that are unfamiliar to students with Chinese educational backgrounds including the required level 7 self-directed study culture, academic expectations and methods of structured thinking and designing.

Through the work on the project by a current Chinese PhD student and alumnus of the MA JSRP, additional support has been provided that has been hugely beneficial to support the students in their emerging understanding to improve their experience and develop their ability to succeed at a higher level and with much better employability potential.

4.02M: Academic mentoring for success for internationals - MA Interior Design

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 3, Students Impacted: 30, Hours: 141

This project aims to create a bridge of communication between students and staff to support teething problems in the first year of overseas study. Amongst other things, mentors aid students by helping with grammar and language and explaining design briefs and assessment requirements.

The project has been successful in providing new internationals with the skills and confidence to feel equipped to study in the UK and to achieve further employment

success in a global market. The work has also improved programme retention rates. Mentors have helped to reiterate course outcomes through one-to-one mentoring. With an understanding of the student experience at BCU and the local surrounding area, they have been able to direct and refer students in need of further advice and guidance.

4.05M: BCUCodes

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 4, Students Impacted: 8, Hours: 57

The project sees a live web studio run by students with staff support in order to not only improve new media and web design skills of the students, but also improve the digital literacy of the community around them.

This project has enabled New Media students to work on live briefs from real companies, receive advanced skill workshops and will also enable mentors to gain experience delivering their own workshops to other students, other staff, and members of the community in beginner web skills, such as HTML and CSS.

4.26M Partners in Braille

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 2, Students Impacted: 17, Hours: 83.5

Braille is learnt throughout both years of the Foundation Degree Rehabilitation Work (Visual Impairment) programme and much of this learning is self-directed while our blended learning students are away from BCU. Our idea is to supplement the scheduled teaching time for Braille in each of our first year students' Group Learning (GL) weeks at BCU with the Partners in Braille mentoring project with second year students.

4.06M: Digi.LAB

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 5, Students Impacted: 45, Hours: 117.5

The Digi.LAB is a student-led workshop resource located in the School of Architecture. The mentors design and coordinate a series of exploratory workshops for students to learn entry-level equipment like laser cutters and 3D printers that are essential for architecture students to complete their work.

There was a greater sense of activity in the open studio - with the permanent presence of the digi.lab contributing to this factor. It has made the studio environment feel more 'productive' which helps student peer-to-peer learning and cross level interaction in formal sessions and informal discussions outside of the regular timetable.

4.18M: Prevention is better than cure.....

Staff Involved: 3, Students Involved: 21, Students Impacted: 18, Hours: 102.35

The aim of this project is to create academic mentoring for law students so that they can gain more confidence about studying and draw out priorities during their time on the course. The mentors will aid students with developing key skills for their study.

Through the work of this project, the mentees have greatly benefitted from the interactions with the mentors and the support has enabled them to develop. There has been clear evidence that students utilising the scheme have increased confidence in their work and prioritising their work. The project also supported students with their work loads and helping with stress of deadlines and submissions.

4.30M Reshape the Workforce by the development of a Student led Physiology Drop in Centre

The Physiology Drop in Centre (PDIC) was created to help first year undergraduate nursing students to expand and consolidate their physiology knowledge in preparation for their assessments and throughout their placements. The centre was facilitated and coordinated by nursing students in the advanced stages of their training, who act as mentors to junior students. This initiative has provided opportunities for students and staff collaboration in an attempt to transform the way that students learn while reducing student attrition rate.

The PDIC has been well received by first year nursing students during the last academic year. The feedback obtained has been extremely positive and encouraging. The students felt the Centre had increased their confidence in physiological knowledge and its application in practice. Student academic mentors have been praised for their positive attitude and friendly approachable manner.

4.26M: Transition Mentor Project

Staff Involved: 1 Students Involved: 7, Students Impacted: 120, Hours: 51.25

The aim of this project is to employ Peer Mentors to support year 1 transition through meetings with learners and research and ensure higher retention. Yr 3 peer mentors will be employed to support Yr 2 with progression on to their third year/top up year.

This project has been beneficial in identifying learner's motivation within the programme, and some may coast and we need to give them the opportunities to engage with the programme and becoming intrinsically motivated. Yr 1 student retention has improved and student grade profile has improved.

4.31M: Student Engagement in Recruitment and Selection

Staff Involved: 3, Students Involved: 31, Students Impacted: 1000, Hours: 375.5

The aim was to utilise the students knowledge and experience in recruitment and open days. Through partnership working between staff and students, the experiences and support for interviewees and their families is far greater.

Having current students during this stage created the opportunity to work collaboratively. Similarly, by having student involvement and involving STAMPS in the interview days it allowed them to engage further into their course. Students have assisted the Admissions tutors in the presentations by relating their own experience of being a student to interviewees and helping to facilitate numeracy/literacy testing.

4.34M: Re-Induction Conservatoire Ug International Students

Staff Involved: 2, Students Involved: 2, Students Impacted: 36, Hours: TBC

The project seeks to establish links with first-year international students before they arrive in the UK, thereby facilitating a much easier and more successful transition between school and university for students who also have to deal with the added pressure of navigating a new culture.

By making advance contact with these students via e-mail and Skype so that they have a point of contact for any questions they may have, and preparing an online pre-induction using Moodle to introduce them to aspects of the course with which international students often struggle these students arrive in Birmingham much better prepared, and able to make the most of their course from day 1, which really impacts on their student experience.

4.36M: Fashion Buddy/Parenting system

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 15, Students Impacted: 30, Hours: 10

The project proposes to set up a parenting/ buddy system, whereby L5 students mentor L4 students, this peer to peer support gives student the opportunity to gain and access academic support from more experienced students, under the guidance of academic staff [personal tutors].The project has ran lunchtime mixer groups where buddies meet up to discuss their interests, organize social events, but also look at trouble shooting and providing a support mechanism that will help first year students settle into university life.

4.38M: Undergraduate Marketing Programme Mentor

Staff Involved: 1, Students Involved: 4, Students Impacted: 350, Hours: 104

The aim is to support students with their academic course-related issues/questions, give direction for successful results and encourage their engagement in related activities. We also want to create better communication between first and second year students and create better academic support.

The student mentors helped students with a wide variety of activities including support with placement applications and option module choices. However, the main area of help centred on assessment support, providing guidance on interpreting coursework briefs, reflective learning, as well as acting as a signpost to additional help such as the centre of academic success.

4.41M Academic mentoring for success for internationals - MA Product Design – 1 year course

Non-native speaking students recognise their ability to communicate is a condition that can either foster or inhibit creativity through design and therefore academic mentoring is vital to maximise course success and 1st year retention rates. Whilst international students bring cultural diversity and a fresh perspective to the world of design, there remains a responsibility to cater for the cultural and language needs of students on the MA Product Design course. BCU's average demographic of

international students is 12% and because MA Product Design rests at the 98% international student mark a student mentor's contribution would provide some of the academic language support required. Further to this, it would provide newly arrived internationals with the skills and confidence to feel equipped to study in the UK and to achieve further employment success in a competitive international global market. Such input should also dramatically improve course retention rates.

4.42M Let's talk about it

This project is innovative and fills a gap in our academic provision. Furthermore it will help students to gain new language skills which will enhance their CVs, and to communicate in a multicultural environment. Participation to activities abroad and confidence will increase as a consequence.

4.43M ADM Transition Mentoring: Level Up Model Adaptation

The Level Up transition mentoring adaptation represents a Faculty-wide effort to revise and implement its transition mentoring practice for new students arriving into the Faculty of Art, Design and Media. Building upon the successful development of transition mentoring programmes within the Schools of English and Media, the faculty of Arts, Design and Media are looking to enhance their provision cross-Faculty through their shared redesign and translation of the Level Up ethos. In an effort to build a culture of collaboration and to develop a stronger sense of community and belonging across our wider student body, an added advantage of this project will be an improvement in our students' retention as they join their new Arts, Design and Media family.

4.47M Before You Arrive' – An interactive student enhancement project to aid new starters

This project focusses on enhancing first impressions, improving the quality of support & and advice on a local level prior to a student joining university. Through collaborative and interactive engagement, the project seeks to ensure that students are fully prepared for university, and supported through their transition into HE.

4.48M Narrowing the gap: Mentoring the prospective student through the transition

The targeted nature of this initiative to encourage students to come to this university is not a revolutionary idea. However, it is not something we or many other Universities offer and sometimes the simplest ideas are the most effective. The focus on BTEC students and their transition is novel as we seek to better understand and support those students as they access our courses.