



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Academic families and Autonomous Learning Groups

Transition(s) the practice supports: This practice supports the transition of 1st year life sciences students into university life. The project addresses the diversity of our undergraduate students and their differing needs in terms of learning and support. The project also aims to encourage a sense of belonging and development of a community of learners.

Abstract: The project will introduce a series of peer support activities to help welcome and encourage new students in their transition into university. This will involve 2nd and 3rd year students being trained to both mentor and facilitate groups of 1st year students in their learning of key aspects of their course. The second aim is to encourage students to interact across the different year groups with a particular emphasis on a shared set of perceived challenges, e.g. students who have children or other caring responsibilities, who aren't necessarily supported by current campus initiatives.

Description: There will be a series of organised events throughout the second semester that will further encourage and welcome our new students. It has long been recognised that peer support is an important factor in the student experience. The project was developed in response to student feedback citing the lack of opportunity to meet others on their degree course. I undertook an in class survey using clickers (anonymous) in order to gain an idea of the diverse groups and their expectations. The results were presented live within the class and the biggest impact was in realising that everyone things in common. This led to discussions about community and getting to know each other. As part of the course we organised an event which allowed 1st year students to engage with 2nd and 3rd year students on their course. They were tasked with taking a 'selfie' and finding out at least 5 key things about their university experience. A lot of reassurance and friendships resulted from this very brief activity. This led me to think about how we could develop a more formal and structured set-up in order to further encourage peer support as students make the transition into higher education and from 1st year into 2nd etc. The project is in the very early stages, with senior students undertaking training in mentorship and group facilitation 26th Jan. whilst the 1st year students are being organised into groups to be assigned to paired mentors. The project has been developed in partnership with our students who have provided a valuable insight into what works best for them.



enhancement
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