



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Articulation Support Tutor

Transition(s) the practice supports: College to university transition

Abstract: Transitioning from college to university can be difficult for many direct entrant students. The move to a more independent way of learning at university can be a cause of concern for students who are used to a more supported environment. Therefore, Abertay University has introduced Articulation Tutors to help with this transition. This example of practice articulates the role of the Articulation Tutor in Dundee Business School at Abertay University.

Description: Many direct entrant students find the transition from college to university very daunting. Students have often commented that they are supported at college to such an extent that the independent learning at university can come as a shock. For example, university students will tend to have less contact with academic staff and find themselves in large lecture theatres and big classes perhaps for the first time. Therefore the role of the Articulation Tutor in Dundee Business School, at Abertay University, is to ease the transition of the direct entry students from FE into HE. This is achieved through regular meetings both before and after entry to provide continued support.

The Articulation Tutor liaises with Course Leaders at the local college and visits local colleges to give a talk and meet with prospective students. The tutor also arranges for the college students to come to Abertay and have a 'taster session' of university life. These taster sessions include attending a relevant lecture, a talk from the Articulation Tutor and the Course Programme Leader, a tour of the university buildings and a talk by the library staff. This helps to familiarise the students with the university setting prior to entry.

The Articulation Tutor meets with all the new direct entrant students during induction week and then has follow up group meetings every two weeks. These sessions are voluntary and if a student feels they do not need to attend they can still e-mail the Articulation Tutor at any time if they feel they need advice. During the articulation sessions various topics are covered including question and answer sessions about how the students are settling

in, helping to sort out any issues that may have arisen, study skills sessions including report and essay writing, referencing and exam technique. The sessions are informal and if the students suggest a topic they would like discussed the Articulation Tutor will try to cover it or find a specialist who can provide content at a future meeting. In addition, the Articulation Tutor contacts each direct entrant student individually during the term to ask how they are settling in. Current students, who were previously articulating college students, are also invited to come along to speak to the new students and this has proved to be extremely useful in providing a level of comfort at tense times and aspiration for the future.

At the end of semester 1 the Articulation Tutor conducts a Focus Group of the students who attended the sessions and asks for comments. Students also comment favourably on this support during the formal Staff/Student programme review meetings and on feedback questionnaires.

A selection of comments from 2014 are printed below.

"I believe that you have done a splendid job by providing us with all the information which is required for us to know to get us through university. Your encouragement and examples from your own first experience have made me realize that it's not as hard as it seems and once we settle in everything becomes fine'. I don't think that there is anything required for you to improve as you covered everything that we needed to know. Thank you so much for all your help and encouragement". (BA (Hons) Accounting with Finance Year 2)

"I found the sessions very useful as it made me feel less nervous and lost starting university, the sessions gave me very good advice and support and any questions I had were answered" (BA (Hons) Business Administration Yr. 3)

"The articulation sessions have been very valuable to me. Coming from a part time evening college course straight into a 2nd year degree course, I felt like I had well and truly threw myself into the deep end. I had no previous experience of writing essays and reports and had no idea what referencing meant. The sessions really helped make me feel at ease and I knew there was plenty support available if I felt I needed it". (BA (Hons) Accounting with Finance Year 2)

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