



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: First year community placement

Transition(s) the practice supports: *(the aim of this is to identify where this would sit on the transitions map. It would help to know which students it supports – eg discipline related, widening participation, those going on placement)*

Transitions into placement

Abstract: *(a brief outline of the practice – this will allow all your institutional examples to appear on the one page of the website, linking to further information. This should be no longer than 120 words.)*

The first year community placement is part of a 20-credit Education module available to all BA students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Strathclyde. Students undertake a seventy hour placement with an organisation of their choice working with children and young people 0 – 14 years. The students' learning on placement is supported by an on-campus module where lectures and tutorials are designed to explore topics related to placement as well as using the students' own placement experiences to promote the learning of others. At the heart of the module is the development of the individual through the community placement.

Description: *(this is the information to which the abstract would link) a more detailed description of the practice with an indication what led to its development, how long it has been in place, and why it benefits students. This could be written, in a multimedia form or presented as a poster (PowerPoint slide or PDF).*

Placement learning is one of the most powerful learning experiences for undergraduate students at the University of Strathclyde. While placement experiences are challenging - the School of Education sets high expectations and uses rigorous methods of assessment - students enjoy the opportunity to put on-campus learning into practice in a real context. On this module, students from across disciplines work together to learn about children and the communities in which they live; children's health and wellbeing; child protection; children's voice; the composition of the family. The notion that the health and wellbeing of children and young people is central to the advancement of society is a seminal theme in this module. This module has the potential to create a powerful impact on the university's neighbouring communities and to impact positively on the learning of students. It is a longer term goal that helping undergraduate students to understand and engage with the communities in which they work will have an impact on the communities in which they work as graduates.

This module has been available since 2013-14, and by June 2016 students will have contributed well over 50,000 placement hours to the communities in which they work. Students contribute placement hours to a range of projects within the University of Strathclyde, and many students subsequently stay on with their placement provider in both voluntary and paid positions. Students from disciplines across the Faculty learn together and are able to offer different perspectives on the themes of the module. As a result of the level of independence required in securing and undertaking a placement that meets University requirements, students are developing a range of employability skills and graduate attributes from the start of their course.

Students undertaking the first year community placement have ranged in age from sixteen to fifty-one years old since the module's inception in 2013. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences also has the largest number of undergraduate students from non-traditional backgrounds in the university. As our students come to the University of Strathclyde with a wide variety of experiences, this module is designed to support the needs of all students. The intention is to offer placement experience for students in order to develop their understanding of content learned on the on-campus programme and to provide opportunities to use placement experiences to inform discussion, thinking and learning in on-campus classes.

The development of the individual student is at the heart of the module and the community placement is the vehicle through which to promote this development. The ability to reflect upon this development is at the centre of the assessment for this class. This personal approach to learning enhances ownership of the learning process for all students while allowing each student to see their personal learning journey as important and worthwhile.

Students are asked to select a placement of their own choice based on a personal strength or a development need. Placements can take place at a time that suits the student's timetable and personal commitments. This level of responsibility can be a daunting experience for all students but the course provides a virtual 'situations vacant' board where students struggling to be placed, and particularly students new to Glasgow, can find placements on offer from organisations keen to benefit from this opportunity. As a team we recognise that for some students the nursery at the bottom of their street is as much as they can cope with in terms of balancing a placement alongside their university studies. However, other students who want more of a challenge can choose to undertake a placement abroad. There are no limits on where a student can be placed as long as the placement meets the module requirements. All students are given the same aim: to go out on placement to make a difference.

The on-campus module runs across two semesters to provide consistent, ongoing support for students throughout the academic year. Lectures and tutorials cover content designed to broaden students' knowledge, understanding and skills and to support them in reflecting on

their placement learning. A 'home' tutor works with students in groups and pedagogical approaches are carefully selected to promote collaborative working, to support students in exploring difficult issues and to provide opportunities for students to ask questions. Tutors are charged with creating a learning community within their tutorial groups.

In line with the seven principles of Curriculum for Excellence, this placement opportunity offers personalisation and choice, relevance, coherence, challenge, breadth, depth and progression. It is designed to support students in developing attributes that will enhance their learning throughout their career. It is a unique learning opportunity that makes an impact on the student experience while students aim to make a difference for the communities with which they are working.

There are a number of challenges with this module:

- There are around 260 students on this module each year (160 Primary Education students + 100 BA students from across subjects in the Faculty). With a tutorial to support the learning at each lecture this is an investment in terms of staff time from the School of Education.
- All students are required to pay to join the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme. This has implications for those with limited income.
- International students can struggle to provide the Police Reports and Certificates of Good Conduct required to support their PVG application.
- Some students find the transition to university challenging and a seventy hour placement to fit around their other studies requires perseverance and the ability to be able to problem solve.
- Students moving to Glasgow and students from non-traditional backgrounds have limited cultural capital to support finding a placement in West Central Scotland.
- A Placement Coordinator is committed to this module by the School of Education to manage requests from placement providers and to support students in finding their own placements. This adds to the commitment required by the School.

A range of lessons have been learnt that have helped to improve the module:

- From 2015-16 adverts from placement providers placed on the Myplace Situations Vacant board were starred to show those which were particularly suited to students who had moved to Glasgow to study.
- Provision must be put in place to support students who are late starting placement through no fault of their own.
- Regular ongoing checks are necessary to identify students who are not keeping up with the requirements of the module. There is now an option at the end of semester one to transfer out of this class for students who are not coping with the demands.
- Expectations are high and need to be maintained at this level. Students entering the HaSS BA programme have a minimum entry tariff of AABBB from S6 so are well positioned to succeed on this module. However, their expectations of university are sometimes of an organisation that is less demanding and which allows students to interact if and when they choose. Reinforcing expectations is an ongoing and important task.

Contact details: *(name and email address of key person (with their permission agreed before submission) who can discuss the case study in more detail).*

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All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.