**Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice**

**Title**: Foundations of Speech and Language Therapy Module

**Transition(s) the practice supports**: The module described below takes an holistic approach, providing new post-graduate speech and Language therapy (SLT) students with elements of all three linearly described transition points

- Settling there: Transition to QMU
- Staying there: Transition to Masters Level
- Moving on from there: Transition to the SLT Course/Profession

**Abstract**: This case study describes a  non-credited Foundations of Speech and Language Therapy Module for new QMU post-graduate students designed to fulfil professional body requirements as well as provide a solid foundation for undertaking the academic  programme. .

**Description**: The Professional body for SLT students require that PG pre-registration courses should last for 80 weeks, which means that generally speaking, these students are required to start 4 weeks earlier than other students. In the past, this period has been filled with a short placement in local nursery schools along with a few additional classes. However, this approach left some students stressed and also did not kick of the programme with a sense of belonging or identity with the programme or institution, as students rarely came together. In order to foster this sense and to provide students with a solid foundation for the rest of their programme, the Foundations of Speech and Language Therapy module was developed.

The module supports students in three types of transitions in the following ways

**Transition to QMU**

The key aim of this strand is integration. Generally none of the SLT PGDip students have done their UG degree at QMU, so this strand offers the opportunity to become familiar with the environment, the processes and the technology.  As well as information on academic regulations, etc. students are offered sessions from learning resources staff, input on navigating the virtual learning environment and,

sessions on E-portfolios.  Students who completed their UG course a few years previously have voiced particular gratitude for the chance to refresh their knowledge and skills before having to focus on completing credited modules.

**Transition to Masters Level**

Many PG students commence the course unsure of what is required of them at Masters Level.  They are unsure of how to make the leap from UG to PG study and unsure of what skills to work on.  Previously some students were very disappointed when they received the marks for their first credit bearing assignment and only then realised what aspects of their study they needed to improve on.  This strand of the module provided specific classes on what it means to be a Masters student; as well as sessions on evidence-based practice and input to support them in identifying gaps in their knowledge around appropriate sources to reference.  This strand of the module offered the opportunity for students to complete a formative assessment that was designed to challenge them at Masters Level.  It is marked at Level 11 and detailed feedback is provided as well as the opportunity for 1:1 meetings if the students wish them.  In the most recent iteration of the module, 14 of the 16 students chose to complete the assessment and five of those then requested a follow-up meeting to help support their understanding of the areas that they needed to work on.  All reported feeling more confident about completing a credited assignment following this experience.

**Transition to the SLT Course/Profession**

Although most of the students have a general idea of the role of the SLT, this is often in a very specific area relevant to their personal experience, e.g. a grandparent who has had a stroke and who had SLT input.  They are rarely aware of the breadth of the profession and, therefore, sometimes find it hard to make sense of some of the foundational learning that they do in Semester 1.  Additionally, as students come from a range of related UG degrees, they do not all start with the same baseline of knowledge in the relevant topics.  So in this part of the module a two-fold approach is taken.

The first part of this strand makes available a series of introductory classes on core skills such as linguistics, phonetics and anatomy to provide the students with a shared level of baseline knowledge in preparation for the later, more detailed classes.  Students are also offered the chance to undertake an on-line linguistics formative assessment.  This not only enables them to identify areas of possible weakness in this key area, but also prepares them for the on-line exam that they will take in the subject at the end of Semester 1. Additionally, it flags up to the lecturer any students who may be having particular difficulty with the basics and allows for support to be put in place at a very early stage.

The second part of this two-fold approach involves issues relating to professional practice. Clinical staff members provide seminars and workshops on their particular

areas of SLT practice.  This can provide students with further inspiration to motivate their studies. It also broadens the students' understanding of the profession and introduces students to a wide range of the staff team, helping them to build relationships and know who to access for resources and advice when they are on placement in a particular area.  Input is also offered on core SLT skills such as reflective practice to ensure that students develop an understanding of the professional skills required.

In summary, we know that feeling part of a peer group and experiencing a supportive environment in the early weeks is key in supporting retention, and this approach allows students to build this kind of foundation from the very start of their programme.

**Contact details**: Dr Siobahn Mack, Speech and Language therapist and lecturer, Speech and Hearing Sciences, QMU.

Email: smack@qmu.ac.uk

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