Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: The Associate Student Programme in the School of Computing at Edinburgh Napier University-
Supporting computing students' transition from college to university

Transition(s) the practice supports: Smoothing the transition of the Associate Students from several colleges, onto the School of Computing at Edinburgh Napier University, by enabling familiarisation with university environments and pedagogic approaches.

Abstract: The Associate Student Programme (ASP) offers 1st year college students the possibility to matriculate as Associate Students at their chosen university (as well as at their current college of studies), with the guarantee of a place on a named degree programme – providing they meet agreed academic entry requirements. The ASP is designed to extend student numbers participating in higher education and to promote successful progression to university via the "2+2" articulation model. The School of Computing at ENU has designed a diversity of coherent and comprehensive initiatives to facilitate the transition of these students from college to university.

Description:
The student support activities developed by the School of Computing at ENU are coherent and comprehensive, with the aim of being as relevant to the student experience as possible. There are currently over 200 students enrolled in the ASP at ENU, the majority of whom are still in their year 1 or year 2 at college, but some of whom have already completed their transition in year 3 at ENU.

The support activities start when Associate Students are still attending college and continue once they have transitioned at the School of Computing at ENU. The practices addressed to the students still in college include:
- Drop-in lectures, giving students the chance to experience a standard university lecture at ENU. The students are given a program of lectures for which they can sign up online.
- Guest lectures
- Academic skills workshops, for example on using Moodle. Additionally, the ASP college students are given access, on Moodle, to all the year 1 and year 2 modules of the ENU computing students, with added quizzes.
- Induction events in June, during which the Associate Students get their university schedule, a visit of the library, one lecture, one tutorial, giving them 3 months to prepare for the start of the programme. They also get the opportunity to talk with students already attending ENU.

Furthermore, some transition support activities continues into the first year at ENU, such as the pizza lunches and the buddy program.

Some of these initiatives were designed at the start of the ASP in 2013, with others added more recently. Indeed, the practices are constantly evaluated on their efficiency in terms of the students' academic and social integration at ENU, using students and college teachers' feedbacks. The evaluation process of the support activities now needs to take into account the additional challenge of economic sustainability of activities. For instance, the student mentoring scheme, initially designed with paid mentors, will evolve into the volunteer-based buddy program.

In conclusion, the practice intends to identify and anticipate the difficulties of the Associate Students transition from college to university. The practice is comprehensive through preparation of the students while they are still at college and support through their articulation at ENU. It is also relevant to the Associate Students' needs, by revolving around the ENU curriculum and academic skills. However, the practice also intends to develop resilience in the students, as the transition from college to university will inevitably entail adaptation.

To have a look at the research conducted on the ASP of the School of Computing at ENU, please consult http://www.iidi.napier.ac.uk/c/publications/peopleid/13379311

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