



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Supporting Direct Entrants: The Abertay College Transition (ACT) Programme

Transition(s) the practice supports:

The programme is designed specifically for students articulating from college (HNC or HND level) to year 2 or 3 of a degree at Abertay. It is also open to mature students beginning a degree at Abertay and to non-UK students coming to Abertay for part or all of their studies.

Abstract:

This free one-week full-time programme is designed to allow students articulating from college to explore the different learning environment at Abertay, to develop and receive feedback on the academic skills they will require on their degree, and to learn about the support available during their studies. We aim to empower our articulating students with an understanding of their own strengths as successful college students, as well as knowledge of the areas they will need to develop in order to succeed on their degree course. Approximately one-third of the students articulating from college to Abertay University attended the programme in 2015.

Description:

We recognise that for many students articulating from college to University, the change in educational culture is significant and can be overwhelming, particularly when entering at year 3. Our programme was redesigned in 2015 to prepare students for that cultural shift, and to enable them to recognise and manage their expectations of university life and study.

We do this by providing students with the opportunity to reflect on and further develop the academic study skills they have already used at college. The programme includes workshops on

- Understanding, planning and researching assignments
- Developing research methods
- Referencing, avoiding plagiarism and writing in an academic style
- Creating an academic poster
- Giving an academic presentation
- Becoming an independent learner and a critical thinker

Classes are delivered by Learning Development Advisors and academic staff, often via team-teaching. Students are expected to produce a short reflective essay on their experience, and are provided with feedback on this writing.

The programme also includes introductions to the University's VLE, and how to use the library. Classes are task-orientated and practical; however, a practice lecture, delivered by an academic member of staff, is also included so that students can become familiar with this method of teaching, which many may not have previously encountered. In addition, there are sessions introducing other aspects of University life, including the Students' Association, student societies and the Sports Union, as well as support teams such as the Counselling, Academic Support and Disability Services. We recognise that college students may have other responsibilities alongside their studies, but we feel it is important to highlight the opportunities available during their time here, and the fact that the Abertay student experience is about more than just the modules studied. Abertay students who were Direct Entrants in previous years are also invited along to talk about their experience of articulation, studying and University life, and to answer students' questions.

Although students receive much of this information again during Orientation Week, offering an opportunity to meet and talk to advisors in a smaller group often makes it easier to raise issues, either at the time or later in the semester. We are conscious of the different support systems at college and try to emphasise to our articulating students the advice and guidance that is available at Abertay. We survey the students at the end of the course - in 2015 100% of the students surveyed said they would recommend the programme – and are currently running a series of focus groups with articulating students which will inform the design of the 2016 programme.

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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.