



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Using Facebook to help aid the transition to university.

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition from school/college to university.

Abstract: Facebook groups are used to promote engagement and aid the transition to university. The purpose of the groups is to allow potential students to ask questions. It also allows academic staff to post information about the course and for current students to answer questions from a student perspective. Once term begins the groups are used as a course management tool and prove to be particularly effective during the first semester of level 1. The group gives new students a more informal place to ask questions, gives them information they didn't know they didn't know, and most importantly, shows them that they are not alone in their sense of bewilderment with regards to the complexities of higher education.

Description: For the last three years the School of Psychology has been using Facebook groups to promote engagement and aid the transition to university. These groups are opened on applicant day and all offer holders are invited to join the groups. The purpose of the groups is to allow potential students to ask questions. It also allows academic staff to post information about the course and for current students to answer questions from a student perspective.

Once term begins the groups are used as a course management tool and prove to be particularly effective during the first semester of level 1. Rather than getting the same e-mail multiple times the groups can be used to answer questions once and have hundreds of students see the answer. This is beneficial in terms of the efficient use of academic time, however, it also has clear benefits to the students. The group gives new students a more informal place to ask questions, gives them information they didn't know they didn't know, and most importantly, shows them that they are not alone in their sense of bewilderment with regards to the complexities of higher education. We have multiple accounts of students using the group to make friends before they arrive and meeting up before e.g., induction lectures, so that they have someone to sit with. This seems to be a particularly popular strategy for international students who often find other students from their home country to meet up with and ease the transition not only to university but to life in a new country.

We continue to use the groups throughout the entire degree programme. As a subject with typically high-volume courses, the use of Facebook allows us to connect with students more than would be possible through face-to-face interaction and consequently promotes a sense of community and belonging, an important factor in student retention. We know that students

can be poor at checking their e-mails, however, they do check Facebook, with some surveys finding up to 95% of university students have a Facebook account. By posting information via e-mail and on Facebook we can help aid transition simply by increasing the number of students who have engaged with important course information.

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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.