

College to University Transitions Revisited: Mind the Gap?



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Background to the project

- A QAA Enhancement Theme collaborative cluster led by City of Glasgow College, with Edinburgh Napier and Glasgow Caledonian universities
- To explore the staff and student experience of the transition of college students to university in Scotland



Background to the project

- Two threads:
 - Student experience:
 - <https://doi.org/10.5334/ijelt.5>
 - Staff experience:
 - 2 student interns
 - 4 focus groups
 - 12 participants (college and university lecturers)



Why did this project come about?

“I'm not saying for a second that **lecturers are more friendly at college** than they are at university” [College lecturer]

“And I know the word that always springs to mind with **college is 'quite cozy'.**” [University lecturer]

“We have them connected with the university from first year really from when they started university is they start at college. So they're actually part of the university as well. So they can access all our stuff. So and we get them into the university as much as possible as well... . But there is **there is only so much we can do. There is always gonna be that difference between university and college.** It's just always gonna be there” [University lecturer]

“the main one is academic writing is kind of hammered into university students from first year onwards, things like referencing and **the way that we expect them to write is different at college.** [University lecturer]



What is the role of 'tertiary'?

“Five years ago 90-odd percent would have been coming with intention to go on to university.... We're now talking about graduate apprenticeships. We're now talking about employment opportunities. So you know you're trying to say **this is the information that's here for the university. However, there's this route also.** And so yes, when you're doing assessments, you're having to prepare them for the soft skills, employability skills to build the meta skills.” [College lecturer]

“I've got a boy yesterday who had seven Highers but he wasn't ready to be in a lecture theatre. He wasn't ready to actually take that jump into university and he himself felt that **going with smaller class sizes and the college route first and then going on to university would be better for him.**” [College lecturer]



Are we problematizing articulation?

“the college students that come, the good ones tend to do really, really well and excel because **they’ve maybe not the broader experience, they maybe miss out on that, but when it comes to focusing on their actual degree, they’re definitely ready to go** that way. And once we get them sorted with the academic writing they tend to do really well” [University lecturer]

“**There is a big leap from second year in university to third year in university as well.** It's not as noticeable because you're in the same building and you'll recognize some of the lecturers but there's a huge leap in terms of standards that are expected from you and in the detail around what you're gonna be taught and how you need to approach assessments and exams. So it's the same for them as well.” [University lecturer]

“these types of **these kinds of skills are underdeveloped even for students enrolled on degrees.** So I believe this is an issue for student, for university students as well, not only for college students.” [University lecturer]

