Moving from induction to transition: cross-institutional change, practice and policy to enhance new students’ experience.

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Outline of our institutional journey

Background
• From where? Institutional cultures and challenges

Projects & policy – our change process
• Key stages and strategies

Reflections
• What helped in meeting the challenges?
Our aims:

• Enhancing the experience of new students
• Improving retention and student success
• Innovation, embedding and dissemination
• Better collaboration and communications
The challenge – institutional cultures and habits
McNay’s typology of organisational cultures

Central control over practice (delivery)

Central control over policy (development)

Tight

Bureaucracy

Collegium

Enterprise

Loose

Corporation

Tight

Loose

1 McNay’s (1995, 2006) analysis of institutional cultures in Universities
The challenge: institutional cultures

McNay’s (1995, 2006) analysis of institutional cultures

1 "COLLEGIUM" or ENTERPRISE"
The Challenge:

• **Diversity**
  o Of students and student needs (widening participation; internationalisation; retention)
  o Of staff attitudes and involvement
  o Of institutional cultures

• **Inconsistency & lack of comparability**
  o “post code” effect

• **“Silo” practices**
  o lack of institution-wide communication and collaboration

Need for:

• **better, holistic and longitudinal support**
  Cook & Rushton 2003, 2009; Leese 2010; Lowe and Cook 2003, Tinto 1975

• **institution-wide collaborative working**
  Hixenbaugh and Thomas 2006; Yorke and Thomas 2003; Weaver 2008
“….with widening participation and retention, it is important to build up strong working relations across the institution, with other student services and administration, academic departments, teaching and learning strategies, staff development and induction, widening participation activities and the Students' Union, to create a strategic approach.” Thomas (2002:15)

“Coordination of the efforts of faculty within and between departments, and among faculty and staff, academic and student affairs, should be the norm, not the exception, of institutional action. Institutional action must be such as to enable individuals to transverse, in a collaborative fashion, the intra-institutional boundaries of campus life that typically separate individuals from each other…. Rather than working at odds, academic and student affairs must come to see themselves as working together, much like medical teams do, on behalf of student retention and the personal development it entails.” (Tinto 1993²: 151 – our emphasis)
Projects and policy – our development

Enhanced Induction Project 2007

Cross-institutional prioritizing
Central steering group
Funded projects
Student survey
Staff workshops

International orientation programme
Student ambassadors / mentors
New student activities & resources
New arrivals webpages
Freshers Refreshers week
Enhanced Induction Project

Enhancements in/of Induction Week (week 0)

- cross-institutional networks & collaborations
- More and better information before and on arrival

- Listening to students; working with students
- early socialisation
- avoiding information overload – drip-feeding
- The need for academic and programme-based activity
Enhanced Induction Project 2007

Policy Framework 2009

A Policy Framework 2009
‘The student experience of arrival, induction and orientation’

Planning based on student life-cycle & on key principles

Cross-institutional roles and responsibilities

‘Induction coordinators’ in Schools
A Policy Framework

Enhanced Induction Project 2007

Policy Framework & induction coordinators 2009

Induction network group

Aversion to the word “induction”

Networking – Grass-roots, a practitioners group

Dissemination and development of student survey

Growth of inter-campus collaboration

Sub-groups / working parties

‘Induction coordinators’ in Schools

A Policy Framework

Induction Network Group
“Induction”

• What does “induction” mean?

• Is “induction” optional? Is it a one-off event?

• Encouraging full participation....
“Induction” = Week 0
(in the university calendar)

Replaced by

“First Week” = Start of Term

Key messages to students and to Staff ....

..... “Be here!”

New Arrivals Group

Induction week (Week 0) becomes First Week (Week 1)

Statement of “Entitlement” for new students
New students’ entitlement, before and on arrival:

**ESSENTIAL**

**Before arrival**
Communication, engagement, key processes

**Before and/or on arrival**
Welcome, introductions, expectations, processes

**On arrival in the first week, and ongoing**
Getting to know staff, students, university
Activities – social and academic

**GUIDELINES**

Variety and interactivity, staff involvement and availability, inclusivity, cross-institutional collaboration
Enhanced Induction Project 2007
Policy Framework New Arrivals Group 2009
Induction week becomes First Week 2010
Statement of Entitlement 2010
New Arrivals and Transition Policy 2011

Induction week becomes First Week
Statement of “Entitlement” for new students

New policy on “New Arrivals and Transition” 2011
New Arrivals & Transition policy

New policy on “New Arrivals and Transition”
2011

- Baseline entitlement & local flexibility
- Outcomes-driven, focus on relationships and activity (statement of entitlement)
- Integrated, extended, collaborative approach to transition
- Primary responsibility with Schools and programmes
- Institution wide responsibility
- Developmental and evaluative planning and reporting cycle
Outcomes of the initial project...

- Prioritising and sharing of experience across the university
- Increase in collaborative working, including Students’ Unions
- Significantly increased provision and comparability
- Improved student & staff participation
- Increase in group and socialisation activities; decrease in large sessions & information
- Growth in student satisfaction
- Improvements in retention
- Development of extended transitional support
Ongoing developments, 2013-14:

- **Learning more from students about their experience**
  - International students barometer
  - Student engagement survey – FYE questions
  - Research on postgraduate transition
  - Work with students on Digital Literacies for transition

- **New structures**
  - New Faculty structure – increasing collaborations?
  - New Student Experience committees, Faculty & University level
  - First Week in January for new arrivals, and as refresher

- **Pre-arrival engagement**
  - Applicant’s portal
  - Pre-arrival “Flying Start” events

- **On-going transition through the year**
  - Extended transition weeks
  - mid-term review weeks
  - mid/end of term activity

- **New Personal Tutoring policy (2013)**
  - Frontloading of personal tutoring for new students, including Direct Entrants and postgraduate (taught) students.

- **Review of New Arrivals and Transition policy 2014**
  - Including consideration of 2nd and 3rd year transitions
Ingredients for success

• Student voices and partnership
• Time
• £££
• Networking
• Champions (at all ‘levels’) and lead/support from senior management
• Learning and building from grass-roots experience – policy developed from practice
• Academic and programme base
The challenge: institutional cultures

McNay’s (1995, 2006) analysis of institutional cultures
Institutional Change

‘energy-flow’
Pedler et al 1996
Institutional Change

SERVICES

‘front-line scanners’ Pedler & Megginson 1992
CENTRE
STUDENTS’ UNIONS

• Academic heartland
• central steering core
• developmental periphery

Clark 1998

Top-down
Bottom-up
Sizer (1987), McNay (2012)
References

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- Tinto, V (1993), Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition, Univ. of Chicago