Widening Participation to Higher Education: From National Strategy to Student Experience

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Introductions

• Zoe Hollingsworth
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Icebreaker
Discussion

- What does widening participation mean to you?
- What involvement do you have in widening participation?
- How do you define the ‘student experience’?
Widening Participation to HE

- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) aim:
  - Our aim is to promote and provide the opportunity of successful participation in higher education to everyone who can benefit from it. This is vital for social justice and economic competitiveness.
  - Widening participation relates to the whole 'life-cycle' of a student in HE. This covers pre-entry, through admission, study support and successful completion at undergraduate level, to progress on to further study or employment.
UK HE & NTU

- Nationally over 2.3m students including over 1.8m undergraduates
- 59% full time students
- NTU over 26,000 students
- Recruitment from across the UK
- 54% UK wide, 33% from local region, 13% international
- Recruitment, retention & achievement
The Student Experience

• Outreach
• Transition support
• Teaching/academic support
• Pastoral support
• Financial support
• Extra-curricular opportunities
• International experiences
• Resources
• Strategic priorities
Identifying Strategic Priorities: National

- Office for Fair Access (OFFA)
- HEFCE
- Other funding bodies
- Key Information Sets
- National Student Survey
- League tables
- Student guides
- Social drivers
Identifying Strategic Priorities: NTU

- NTU strategic aims
- Data analysis
  - Local priorities
  - Recruitment
  - Retention
  - Progression
  - Employability and/or further study
Identifying Strategic Priorities: NTU

• E&D protected characteristics
  – Gender
  – Ethnicity
  – Age
  – Disability

• Widening Participation
  – Socio-economic background
Widening Participation at NTU: Stages

- Stage one: Primary phase
- Stage two: Secondary pre-16 phase
- Stage three: Post-16 phase (including mature students)
- Stage four: Applications and admissions
- Stage five: Pre-entry support activities
- Stage six: Induction
- Stage seven: First year experience
- Stage eight: Moving through the course
- Stage nine: Progression to employment or further study
Key principles

• Targeting
• Tracking
• Promoted mainstream activities at NTU
• Protected groups & specific barriers
• Continual presence
Example 1: Outreach
Example 1: Outreach programme

- Primary to post-16
- Children’s University
- Partnership scheme
- Activity breaks/summer schools
- Work inspiration
- Attainment raising events/activities
- Subject specific
- Work with parents/carers
- Work with students with additional barriers to progression
- Transition support
- Practical sessions
Example 2: Induction - Welcome Week
Origins of Welcome Week

1. In 2004, a student satisfaction survey showed students rated institutional induction as the second least satisfactory aspect to University life.

2. The then Learning & Teaching Enhancement Strategy had a major focus on induction.

3. Enrolment went online, now two free days at the start of induction week.
Impact on retention

- In 2004, 132 students had withdrawn by the end of week 10
- In 2005, 85 students had withdrawn by the same time

- Potentially £425,000 saving to the University (in modern money)

- However, by the end of the year withdrawals were the same
Impact on satisfaction

Overall satisfaction with NTU (Oct - Nov 2013)
So what is Welcome Week?

- Programme of activities designed to welcome students to NTU
- Takes place over 10 days in late September / early October
- Runs alongside course induction
- Over 450 activities
- Joint project between the University and Students’ Union
Activity

Small group discussion

• How does your institution welcome new students?
• What issues/areas do you think it is important for a welcome programme to address?
Key aims of Welcome Week

• Give students the chance to:
  - Find out more about their course / the University / Students’ Union / Nottingham
  - Complete essential procedures (e.g. enrolment)
  - Try new things and make friends

• Accessible and appealing to all
  - Typical “Freshers”
  - But also – mature, international, local students, etc....
Welcome Week events

- Four keynote events
  - Super Sunday
  - Welcome to NTU
  - Freshers’ Fairs
  - Saturday Antics

- A wide range of sporting, social, academic and cultural events
Social

Picnics, BBQs, Lunches, Bars, Clubs
Cultural

Theatre, Cinema, Ghost Walk, Local attractions
Sporting

Sports clubs trials and tasters
Day trips

Family friendly & aimed at mature, international students
Welcome Week communications

- Printed guides
- Starting at NTU website
- Social media groups
- Targeted emails
- Possibility of an App for 2014
Who is involved?

- Joint project between the university and students’ union
  - Schools, Colleges and Community Outreach
  - Students’ Union Exec, Officers, Fresher Reps and permanent staff
  - Student Support Services
  - Sports and Lifestyle
  - University Language Centre
  - Registry
  - Global Lounge
  - International Exchange Office
  - Accommodation
Evaluation

• Students’ experiences of starting at NTU are evaluated each year in the NTU Accepters Survey
• Some standard questions asked year on year
• Ad hoc questions based on development priorities
• Response rate is normally 15-20%
• Focus groups where appropriate
Value to the University

- Very positive experience
- WP retention activity
- Massive PR – see prospectuses and recruitment campaigns
- Visually interesting – high proportion of used photos taken during Welcome Week
- Welcome to NTU – VC & Deans meet every new student
Activity

Task – work in pairs

Take a look at the Welcome Week 2013 Guide. Pick one of the below student groups:

- Mature student
- International student
- Student parent
- Student not living in Halls

1. What kinds of issues might a student from this group be facing in Welcome Week?

2. What kinds of events can you find that you think may be particularly appealing to this student group?

3. Do you have any ideas of new events we could introduce for this student group?
Extracurricular opportunities beyond Welcome Week
Extracurricular opportunities

• Increasing drive to better promote opportunities for engagement with NTU and NTSU beyond Welcome Week
• Student wall planner
• Life Outside Lectures booklet
• LOADS on offer!
NTSU Skills Award  
NTSU Leadership Award  
Raising and Giving (RaG)  
Societies  
Sports  
Student Mentors  
Student Officers  
Students in Classrooms  
Summer Schools  
University Language Programme  

20 June 2017
Example 3: Students in Classrooms & Volunteering
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- **Students in Classrooms**
  - Paid opportunities
  - Includes mentoring, classroom support, literacy support and university ambassador roles
  - Aspirations, attainment and awareness of pupils
  - Practical support for teachers
  - Student skills and experience
  - Collaboration
  - Approximately 75% of HE students are from lower income backgrounds
  - Over 400 students each year, undertaking over 27,000 hours of work
Example 3: Students in Classrooms & Volunteering

- Nottingham Trent Volunteering
  - Local community & international volunteering
  - Local volunteering - regular volunteering in local charities, one day projects, student led projects (mainly in schools) International volunteering – support for lower income students
  - Student skills and experience
  - Over 1000 participants
  - Approx 40,000 hours volunteering
Example 3: Students in Classrooms & Volunteering Outcomes

- 99% of HE students would recommend the opportunities to other students
- 98% of HE students felt they had enhanced their skills and CV
- 93% felt they had enhanced their university experience
- 94% of pupils felt that mentors helped to increase their knowledge of university
- 100% of teachers felt that mentors had a positive impact on pupil aspirations, motivation and knowledge of HE
- 84% of organisation had a good or excellent experience of involving our student volunteers
- 89% recommending or strongly recommending our service
Example 3: Students in Classrooms & Volunteering Outcomes

- HE Student Data Analysis
  - Higher progression rates
  - Undergraduate achievement well in excess of the average for NTU
  - Greater proportion of WP students taking part achieved a ‘good degree’ than both WP and non-WP students
  - Proportion of BME students achieving a ‘good degree’ was higher than NTU average BME achievement for NTU as a whole
  - Considerably less likely to be unemployed
  - More than twice as likely to have progressed to postgraduate study
Discussion

• How could we support students more effectively throughout the whole of the student lifecycle, in order to enhance the student experience?

• In your opinion, what has had the most significant impact upon the student experience in your institution of study?
Any questions?
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