PARALLEL SESSION 5
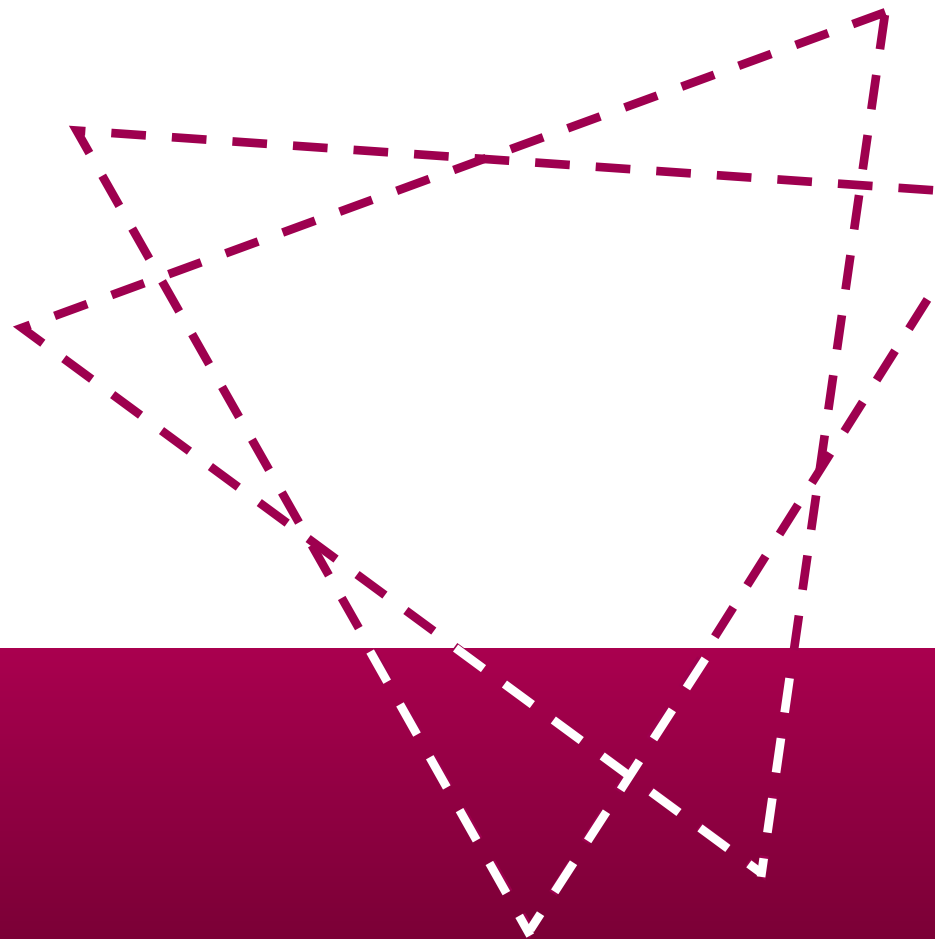
WEDNSEDAY 28TH JUNE 2023

Contents

Parallel 5.1 (Show and Tell), Room 3508

PILOTING A SUMMERTIME LOW-THRESHOLD PEER GUIDANCE SERVICE FOR NEW STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND

👤 SPEAKERS

Niina Rissanen, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Niina Rissanen (Master of Arts) is working as a coordinator at the University of Eastern Finland at the Student and Learning Services. Our team provides services for new students, especially orientation and tutoring. Niina Rissanen focuses mainly on peer tutoring and study skill issues.

Outi Tikkanen, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Outi Tikkanen (Master of Education) is working as a coordinator at the University of Eastern Finland at the Student and Learning Services. Our team provides services for new students, especially orientation and tutoring. Outi Tikkanen focuses mainly on orientation and new student's online materials.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

The implementation of the peer guidance service is based on student feedback and the Student2Student peer guidance service concept already in use at UEF. The aim is to provide a low-threshold service for new students with advice on questions related to starting studies, as well as a support service for academic subjects.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

A low-threshold guidance service for new students was piloted at the University of Eastern Finland in summer 2022. The service concept was based on the **Student2Student peer guidance service** developed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the resources of which were utilised in summer 2022 in advising new students. Student2Student is a form of service provided to our students by students trained for the task. Students can contact the service by phone or anonymously via chat and discuss their issues confidentially free of charge. The summertime guidance service also support the academic subjects, as in the summer months most of the staff are on holiday and thus not available for inquiries from new students.

According to feedback, uncertainty and many questions increase the stress among new students in the summer, when students would like to start planning their upcoming studies on how to combine family or professional life with their studies, for instance. The service was offered in July-August 2022 three days a week (Tue-Thu) and two hours a day. The tools used were chat and phone. The advisors were psychology students working in the Student2Student peer guidance service and employees working in student services in the summer (a total of 4 people). The students received a compensation for the hours they worked.

The aim of the service was to answer questions related to starting studies (e.g. orientation and tutoring, schedules, familiarization with the pre-orientation materials) and to calm down stress related to the start of studies. New students were instructed to familiarise themselves with digital pre-orientation material in particular during the summer months and encouraged to participate in orientation events and tutoring at the beginning of the autumn semester. If necessary, students were forwarded to the guidance offered by their own academic subjects or some other university service they needed. The peer guidance service complements the other UEF services for new students. A clear division of labour has been agreed between actors, i.e. the peer guidance service does not offer subject-specific counselling or study guidance and counselling.

Feedback on the service was collected in connection with each customer contact. The feedback was good. The service responded excellently to its original goal as an easily accessible and low-threshold advice service providing help with information retrieval, for instance, and a service that reassures students in challenging life situations. The academic subjects were also satisfied, as students' questions were answered during the summer holiday season. The feedback also provided new development ideas. In summer 2023, the service will be extended to international degree students.

The services for new students have been developed systematically and on a research basis since 2017. The peer guidance service for new students is part of the service concept for new students at UEF. It seems to have promoted accessibility and pedagogical well-being and thus responded to the needs of new students as well as the academic subjects in the rapidly changing environment.

PEAT (PRE ENTRY ASSESSMENT TOOL): SUPPORTING STUDENT READINESS

SPEAKERS

Heather Fotheringham, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland

Dr Heather Fotheringham is Evidence-Based Enhancement Lead at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). Heather leads on university-wide strategic initiatives to help develop an evidence-based enhancement culture including the university's work for QAA Scotland's national Enhancement Theme, and management and analysis of student feedback surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS).

Scott Connor, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland

Scott is Digital and Open Education Lead at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). Scott leads and supports professional development supporting staff in making effective use of institutional technologies and platforms in blended and online delivery. Scott also leads and supports Open Education across the institution, and heads up the university's Learning Analytics project.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

PEAT (Pre Entry Assessment Tool) is an online service that students can use for self-assessment to determine their readiness for a programme of study. In this session the presenters will outline the development and implementation of PEAT, outline some use cases, and discuss the use of the tool beyond its current institutional context.

PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

It is widely recognised that academic preparedness plays a key role in student success during study, with inability to cope with academic demands, learning efficiency, self-efficacy and motivation all being identified as impacting on persistence (Krause, 2005; Yorke, 1999; Yorke & Longden, 2004). Student expectations also play a role in students' latter experiences of study with mismatches between expectations and reality impacting negatively on the student experience (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005; Taylor & Bedford, 2004).

The development of PEAT (Pre-Entry Assessment Tool) at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) aimed to address the dual issues of students entering a course without requisite skills and with unrealistic expectations. Building on a previous Erasmus+ project, AToM (Access to Masters), PEAT is an online service that students can use to undertake self-assessment on a variety of subjects and topics.

The tool allows staff to create a bespoke question set and specify a level of competence or readiness required. Where students' self-assessment highlights that they do not reach the desired level they are provided with a personalised set of recommendations (e.g. directed to support services or self-study resources) to enable them to reach that level.

The personalised set of recommendations is accompanied by individual feedback and instruction provided by the tutor. The nature of this depends on the context and purpose

for which the tools is used. A 'hands off' approach may direct a learner to engages with resources independently and then to retake the test until successful completion/achievement of thresholds is achieved. Alternatively a more 'hands on' approach could mean they are be instructed to contact a Personal Academic Tutor for bespoke support.

In this presentation, we will talk about the development and implementation of the PEAT tool, highlighting key features and identifying use cases which include:

- Pre-induction of students into university or college

- Pre-induction of students onto further programmes of study

- Bridging knowledge gaps between areas of study, for example in micro-credentials, or between HN and degree levels.

- Assessing learner essential skills and providing signposting to key support resources.

We will briefly demonstrate the tool and discuss how it could be used in other institutions as we envisage releasing the product as open source. We also hope to open some debate about the merits and limitations of student self-assessment.

ONLINE OPEN DAYS: USING DIGITAL TOOLS TO REACH A DIVERSE TARGET AUDIENCE

👤 SPEAKER

Winnie Van de Broeck, KU Leuven, Belgium

Winnie is a content manager in the marketing and communication department of KU Leuven, with a focus on providing information for prospective students.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

The pandemic forced KU Leuven to focus on online media to recruit prospective students. This experience showed us that online recruitment events have different advantages than physical events. They allow us to reach a diverse target audience and interact more with students directly.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

Research has shown that the pandemic has increased online media use, especially among 16 to 24-year-olds (1, 2). While men turned to online gaming, women increasingly searched for information online (3). People were also searching for online alternatives to physical events (4). To provide an answer to this increased demand for online information, KU Leuven both expanded on the information already available on its websites, and started organising online open days. These online open days provided information adapted to either a national or international target audience. Internationally we focussed on the admission process and cost of studying in Belgium, nationally we focussed more on study choice.

Although even in 2022 these online events still drew a lot of interest, we have noticed dwindling attendance that we are trying to solve. Especially for our international audience online events seem like a crucial information tool.

We noticed that online events tend to draw a different crowd than physical events. Transportation to get to the event can pose both a time- and financial barrier. Physical open days also tend to be visited by the prospective student together with mom and/or dad, while online open days are more a solo activity. This also means that online the prospective student will ask the questions they have, instead of the questions their parents have.

Because online questions can be asked through a chat function, some of the barriers of physical events have been removed. Students who are shy or have some form of disability can find it easier to type their question.

In this way our online events help students who may not be able to attend our physical events, either because they do not have the time, the transportation, or a disability, to make a properly founded study choice. They are provided the necessary information and an opportunity to ask any questions they may have. International students are also provided an opportunity to chat with students already attending. We have heard from

(prospective) students they especially appreciate the opportunity to talk to our student ambassadors.

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Parallel 5.2 (Show and Tell), Room 3011

COFFEE WITH ADDED CONVERSATION - A PIONEERING NEW APPROACH, SHARING BEHIND-THE-SCENES CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ACADEMIC PRACTICE – GOES NICE WITH A SLICE OF CAKE!'

SPEAKERS

Nicola Clarke, Birmingham City University, England

Nicola Clarke has been a Senior Lecturer and Doctoral Supervisor in the Faculty of Health Education and Life Sciences since 2003. Responsible for teaching academic skills, reflection and reflective practice. Nicola is a mental health nurse and the author of the Student Nurses Guide to Successful Reflection - Ten Essential Ingredient's and Experience, Deconstruction, Implementation, a new framework to support reflective writing for academic purpose.

Rebecca Gibbons, Birmingham City University, England

Rebecca joined the Academic Development Department (ADD) in January 2019 as a lecturer in Academic Skills. Prior to this, she worked in academic skills roles at the University of Birmingham and the University of Wolverhampton for seven years. She also has experience of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Family Literacy

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Coffee with ADDed Conversation, bringing academic skills and staff of the Academic Development Department to life from behind a screen during a global pandemic. A new approach to teaching academic skills, through unscripted and at times funny chat show style conversations that replicated the natural academic and professional office-based conversations. The spelling of 'ADDed' conversation is a play on words in recognition of the Academic Development Departments, Acronym - ADD.

PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

In April 2020, the faculty of Health Education and Lifesciences, Academic Development Department (ADD) started a new MS Streams channel, "Coffee with ADDed Conversation". Recognising the disconnection students and staff were experiencing because of the global pandemic of Covid-19, our first-year students in particular felt very disconnected from university and the academic support available. Being behind locked doors and a computer screen made contact with our students very impersonal, actually at a time when students were feeling very alone, confused and vulnerable. The team wanted to reach out to these students in a mode that could reintroduce the realness of academic staff. Even through a screen, we wanted the students to have a more organic, connected view of our department and the staff who were there in the background trying to support their academic journey.

Developed in the radically altered study environments of the global pandemic, the channel aimed to support students' academic development by providing a new "behind-the scenes" view of academic culture. The channel did this by naturalistically modelling the academic-professional conversations that we had previously had in the office, where we freely learned from each other through the rhythms of normal day-to-day discussion. Coffee with the ADDed conversation provided students with informative but informal (and unscripted) chat-show style videos covering a range of academic skills, including assessment literacy and criticality. There are over 20 videos, garnering thousands of views and frequently appearing on the "trending channel" list. Each short video takes the format of a casual discussion about an issue, problem, or question raised by students themselves. Topics have included: "What is critical thinking?", "Returning to Education", "Writing an Introduction", and "The Artistry of Using Evidence". Students and staff feedback has been very positive, with all modules across the HELS faculty embedding videos onto Moodle pages for easy access.

In particular for those first year students we reached out in a new accessible way to bring chat, fun and interest in academic skills into the virtual world. We tried to make ourselves real to the students and hoped to enable them to feel empowered to engage with their studies. This new way of exposing academic conversation allows a diversification away from standardised teaching formats that we hoped students would find accessible and engaging, whilst personalising the Academic Development Department at a time when face-to-face contact was severely restricted. A key benefit of the unscripted chat-show-style format is that it showcases the diversity of our perspectives as academics even on seemingly fundamental questions and issues, as well as modelling the constructive ways we debate them. By sharing our own discussions (and disagreements!), students learn about the thought process behind what makes, for example, a good introduction, or what is involved in using evidence effectively, rather than simply rote learning rules or techniques. In doing this, Coffee with ADDed Conversation informs viewers about the topic of the day, but also models critical thinking and synthesis of ideas, demonstrating how conclusions can be drawn from difference and new knowledge created.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION – THE JOURNEY OF ENGAGING STUDENTS THROUGH THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

SPEAKERS

Elley Petrie, Abertay Students' Association, Scotland

Daniela Bandeva, Abertay Students' Association, Scotland

I was an Abertay student from 2015 until 2020, and within this time I was Vice President and President of the Students' Association. I spent a year as a Learning Development intern at V&A Dundee, and have since returned to the Association in the role of Digital Engagement Co-ordinator.

Fiona Brunton, Abertay Students' Association, Scotland

Since 1989 I have been a student and an employee of Abertay University in varying roles. In 2017, I joined the Students' Association as Representation and Democracy Co-ordinator. I am now one of two Engagement Co-ordinators, working with the students via the Association.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

COVID-19 created a new environment for students and staff to negotiate. This meant a steep learning curve for all on available technologies and working practices. It presented a new challenge for the elected officers and staff to engage with a student body many of whom had no previous on-campus experience.

PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

This lightning talk will explore the journey of the staff and sabbatical officers of Abertay University Students' Association during the COVID-19 pandemic and the University closure. We will look at the two perspectives of the people working to support and represent students at this difficult time. We will track the journey from initial lockdown through to the development of blended learning and how this has impacted student engagement and activities.

The first hurdle to overcome was how we maintained our connection with current students while being off campus. We found two main issues during this time: digital poverty for students, and the growing isolation and worsening mental health of all.

A major challenge was establishing a connection with the new incoming students, when there were no on-campus opportunities. We will explore how we ensured that new students felt the Abertay spirit and our support and presence.

Finally, the return to more in-person opportunities to engage with the students, many of whom had no experience of being on campus, presented another learning curve.

We will look at the impacts this had on the staff and sabbaticals, throughout these changing working practices and with the need to provide support and guidance to our students.

THE CHALLENGE OF FITTING PERSONALISED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC LANGUAGE LEARNING INTO THE GENERAL LEARNING TRAJECTORIES

SPEAKERS

Lorie Vandooren, KU Leuven, Belgium

I work as a language policy advisor at KU Leuven (Flanders, Belgium). In addition to that, I am working on a project about academic vocabulary called 'Service Tool Academisch Nederlands' (ILT - Leuven Language Institute).

Elke Gilin, KU Leuven, Belgium

Elke teaches Dutch at the Leuven Language Institute and works as a language policy advisor for KU Leuven.

Bert Zurings, KU Leuven, Belgium

Bert works as a teacher trainer at the Centre for Language and Education and as a language policy advisor for KU Leuven.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

We would like to share our views on the challenge of fitting personalised learning opportunities for academic language learning into the general learning trajectories. More specifically, we will discuss the steps that three faculties at KU Leuven University are taking to integrate individual learning into the bigger picture.

PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

In higher education, there is a growing interest to engage in personalised learning in order to accommodate the needs of the diverse population of incoming first-year students (see for instance Bartle, 2015; Han & Ellis, 2020; Keppel, 2014; Melzer, 2019; Consuegra & Cincinnato, 2020). In this show & tell, we will address the tension between that personalised approach when the focus is on mastering the academic reading and writing skills and the necessity to integrate the individual learning trajectories into the broader curriculum design. It is true that personalised (language) learning plays an increasingly essential role in effective language education to meet diverse learner needs and expectations. At the same time, it is essential to keep the bigger picture in mind so that students and language teachers alike understand the necessity of certain steps within the trajectory.

From our experiences in an ongoing language policy project at KU Leuven (supervised by Lieve De Wachter and Kris Van Den Branden), we have learned that the efficiency of personalised practice opportunities can be increased by embedding them into a broader policy plan within the curricula, taking into account not only student needs, but also learning trajectories (that are part of curriculum design) and teacher professionalisation.

During our talk, we will discuss the steps that three of the engaging faculties (Faculty of Arts, Law and Criminological Sciences and Sciences) are taking to integrate individual language learning into the bigger picture The Law Faculty for example, is struggling with a low student success rate after the first year, also related to poor academic language skills, even in the mother tongue. Therefore, they are now engaging in a learning trajectory, in which students are guided through a learning path starting with a strategic language test, followed by (personalized) exercises in learning modules. At the same time content teachers have engaged in developing more focused

writing tasks that form part of a writing trajectory that students should go through during the different years of their bachelor and master education. By reflecting on these tasks and developing rubrics that are better adapted to the different stages of the trajectory, they engage in harmonising personalised learning with more general learning goals.

Discussion questions:

From our needs analysis, we learn that students consider **personalized, intermediate feedback** as the most useful type of writing support. This personalized feedback, however, requires a large effort from didactic teams. How do we meet students' need for individual feedback without increasing the **work load** for teachers?

Personalized practice opportunities for generic academic skills (such as language proficiency) often take on the form of **online learning modules**. How do we avoid that those personalized practice opportunities become **isolated** initiatives that are exclusively associated with remedial teaching or extracurricular teaching opportunities? How do we stimulate teachers to integrate those modules into their courses?

As language policy advisors, we try to stimulate teachers to integrate personalized practice opportunities into their courses. We ask them, for instance, to discuss some of the exercises in class and to repeatedly refer to the modules during the semester. Still, we find that the number of students who **voluntarily** visit those modules remains limited. How do we **stimulate students** in need of extra support to actually improve their skills and **make use of our learning modules**?

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Parallel 5.3 (20-Minute Presentations), Room 2521

LEARNING CAMP (LERNCAMP) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA - A NEW FORMAT FOR EMPOWERING FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

👤 SPEAKERS

Fedora Di Feo, University of Vienna, Austria

Fedora Di Feo is currently writing her master's thesis in Conference Interpreting at the University of Vienna where she also successfully completed two bachelor's degrees in Transcultural Communication. Moreover, she is an undergraduate student in Political Science. Her work as a student assistant, first-semester students' mentor, and tutor lead her to further engage in the topics of lifelong learning and academic training.

Sophie Neudorfer, University of Vienna, Austria

Sophie Neudorfer is an undergraduate student in Japanese Studies at the University of Vienna. As a student assistant with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the University of Vienna, she strives to promote the normalisation of creative and playful approaches to learning in the academic field. Her interest in lifelong earning is rooted in her background in early childhood education.

Frano Rismondo, University of Vienna, Austria

Frano Rismondo is a higher education expert employed at the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Vienna. As part of the "Student Research and Peer Learning-Team" he coordinates the STEOP-(study introduction and orientation period)-Mentoring Programm as well as the Student Research Hub at the University of Vienna.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

In this presentation, we introduce the Learning Camp as our collaborative approach to learning and student integration. In doing so, we will report on the concept as an enabling space, including the level of acceptance by the participants, the reported benefits, their motivation to participate, and our experience and impact on our student staff. Additionally, we will present the evaluation scheme and insights from focus group interviews.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

During the study introductory and orientation period (STEOP), first year students enter a transition phase in which they often have to adapt new learning strategies. In order to support this transition, the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the University of Vienna developed a new format (Learning Camp) to actively support students' adaptation to the new learning environment. While the format primarily targets first year students, it is open to students of all levels and in all semesters, who desire to rethink and critically reflect their existing learning strategies as well as their relationship to learning.

The core idea of the Learning Camps is to support and enable the development of individual learning strategies and kick-start learning communities by providing (safe) spaces for engagement and collaboration.

Learning Camps are moderated by experienced peer-mentors qualified by the CTL (cf. CTL QuaM, 2023), who are trained in process-oriented didactics (cf. Kruse et al. 2006; Girgensohn & Sennewald, 2012). Under their guidance, students are encouraged to discuss their concerns, exchange experiences, and collaboratively rethink existing and develop new learning strategies. By providing materials and guidance, the experienced peers help new students to actively and collaboratively reflect their learning habits and develop new approaches to learning. In turn the process of creation impacted our student's staff own learning startegies.

The setting itself contains two pillars which make it stand out: Firstly, it is developed, organized and held by peers and secondly it focuses on the empowerment of students in their individual development by providing scaffolding based on their personal needs.

In this presentation, we introduce the Learning Camp as our collaborative approach to learning and student integration as well as our process-oriented approach to learning development. Doing so, we report on of the concept of the Learning Camp as an enabling space (cf. Peschl & Fundneider, 2014), the level of acceptance by the participants, their motivation to participate, and the experience of our student personnel. Furthermore, we provide insights on how the experience impacted the participants and our student staff (both as peer-mentors and learners), as well as the insights we gained from evaluating the format with focus groups.

Keywords: Enabling Spaces, Learning Strategies, Learning Communities, Empowerment, Peer-Mentoring

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SOAR FIRST-GENERATION PROGRAM OF SELF-DISCOVERY & CREATING SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS

SPEAKER

Joy Petersen, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Residential Education Specialist and currently a PHD candidate, working in the Student Affairs Department at SU. I am fervently involved in the design and promotion of aesthetic and experiential education in the out-of-class learning environment.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

This presentation highlights innovative curriculum design in the co-curricular space for first-generation students at a predominantly white-only university, with the intention to build connections and self-confidence.

PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

Stellenbosch University is a university in transition. This year it will celebrate 105 years of delivering a student experience that have for the last twenty years catered to mostly second, third and fourth generation students. Since the change of guards in 1994 this changed dramatically for SU. While the South African universities landscape indicate that higher education institutions enrol almost 80% first-generation, at SU it has been comparably low with under 40% of the entire student cohort intake annually. This presented serious challenges for the first-generation student cohort who must content with a student population that has an established and familiar culture that has been in existence and passed through generations for more than a century.

The Division of Student Affairs identified a need for first-generation students to be familiarized and acclimatized to the very sophisticated structures and cultures of the existing student communities in a manner that will enable them to use their STRENGTHS, leverage the OPPORTUNITY of a higher education, activate their AGENCY, and enhance their RESILIENCE – the SOAR Program seeks to elevate the first-generation student experience. Founded on these principals, the main goal of the program is to enhance their confidence, make early friendships and create a sense of familiarity with their new environment.

The study into the SOAR program sought to answer the following questions:

1. How we design and curate deliberately for this specific group of students that are largely underrepresented at SU?

2. How do we create connections and build student capacity and self-confidence for these students to become agents of change?

Our outside-of-class curriculum prioritized two focus areas. Firstly, we calibrated our design lens and honed it on the students' aspirational being. We employed a variety of arts-based pedagogies including poetry, drama and vision boarding to ignite their personal development and enhance their social capital, and hence social integration beyond the

classroom spaces. Secondly, we employed Nancy Kline's Thinking Pairs as a means to create sustainable connections and friendships amongst the first-generation peer groups.

We present the results of the students' evaluation of the SOAR Program by analysing their written reflections and reporting on their focus group contributions within an appreciative enquiry paradigm, three months after their participation on the program.

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM FIRST-YEAR LEARNING COMMUNITIES

👤 SPEAKERS

Jet van der Zijden, Utrecht University, Netherlands

As an assistant professor at Utrecht University, I am driven to improve education by developing, implementing and investigating educational strategies with a focus on the first-year experience. I have been involved in multiple educational projects on the first-year experience, e.g., the current research project and the recently started project Belonging@UU.

Theo Wubbels, Utrecht University, Netherlands

I'm an emeritus professor of educational sciences at Utrecht University. My research interests are learning environments and interpersonal relationships in education.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

This study explores students' perceptions of peer and teacher interactions within First-year Learning Communities and characteristics explaining positive or negative experiences. Interactions are positively valued when students experience peers' and teacher's learning support, social connectedness, and active class participation. Active participation and learning support were promoted by students' positive social connections with peers and teacher.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

First-year learning communities (FLC's) are known to improve student integration, retention and learning (Tinto, 1997; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). However, the classroom social climate within FLC's and its potential role in contributing to these outcomes of FLC's have not been studied. The aim of our research is to elucidate students' perceptions of the social climate within the Utrecht Undergraduate Pharmacy FLC's by exploring students' perceptions and valuation of peer and teacher interactions within these learning communities during the first year. Furthermore, we want to relate these perceptions to the dimensions of the classroom social climate and clarify which characteristics may explain positive or negative experiences of interactions.

Fourteen first-year students from the cohort 2020-2021 participated in semi-structured individual interviews in the first (T1), second (T2) and fourth period (T3) of the first year. At the end of the year, first year students (n=100) completed an online questionnaire on the quality of peer and student-teacher interactions.

Our results show that interactions in FLC's are positively valued when students experience learning support from peers and teacher, social connectedness with peers and teacher, and active participation in class activities. These learning environment characteristics correspond to the classroom social climate dimensions student cohesiveness (learning

support from and personal connection with peers), student involvement (active participation in class activities) and personalization (learning support from and personal connection with the teacher) (Fraser et al., 1986). Students' valuation of FLC interactions are influenced by a variety of factors. Remarkably, an online setting of classes was the one factor that hampered all three valued social climate dimensions and thereby had a huge impact on the valuation of FLC interactions. Furthermore, social connectedness with peers and teacher was not only one of the most valued classroom climate aspects, it also indirectly influenced the other two valued social climate aspects learning support and active participation. When students experience a good level of social connectedness with peers and teachers, they seem to feel comfortable in class and as a result, dare to ask for help and speak up in class.

The results of our study not only provide insight in the process of students' academic and social integration, but also on how to promote this integration on a classroom level and can therefore be used as a guideline for improving classroom social climate. Specifically, our study highlights the importance of social connectedness and socio-emotional support in the online and face-to-face classroom which, in our opinion, needs an increased amount of attention in higher education.

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PEER LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW: REFLECTIONS ON STRATEGIES, SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF A HOLISTIC INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO YEAR 1

👤 SPEAKERS

Aleix Tura Vecino, University of Glasgow, Scotland

I am a Learning Developer and the University of Glasgow's Peer Learning Coordinator. In this position, I lead a team of teaching assistants and student interns with the aim of centrally supporting and helping to grow the institution's provision of peer learning and support initiatives.

Alex Jacquemont-Krupp,University of Glasgow, Scotland

Alex Jacquemont-Krupp is a 3rd year undergraduate in Psychology and a Peer Learning Student Intern.

Marcus Gao, University of Glasgow, Scotland

Marcus Gao is a final year PhD candidate in Law and a Peer Learning Student Intern.

Máté Kedves, University of Glasgow, Scotland

Máté Kedves is a final year undergraduate in History and Politics and a Peer Learning Student Intern.

Caitlin Semley, University of Glasgow, Scotland

Caitlin Semley is a final year undergraduate in English and a Peer Learning Student Intern.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

A collaborative presentation delivered by staff and student interns involved in the creation of a centralised team to support and promote peer learning across the University of Glasgow. After one year of the project, speakers reflect from their different perspectives on the experience, learnings and challenges emerging from this endeavour.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

The University of Glasgow has long been fostering peer learning and support in many of its programmes and courses. The provision of peer enabled activities has traditionally followed a decentralised model, with Schools and specific programmes having complete independence to create and run their own initiatives. In July 2022, however, following the need for a more holistic and structured approach to the promotion of collaborative learning and communities in the institution in line with the new Learning and Teaching Strategy (2021-2025), the University created a central Peer Learning Team embedded within the Student Learning Development department. This team is constituted by a Peer Learning Coordinator, four Graduate Teaching Assistants and eleven Student Interns, and its remit is to support, connect and help the University grow its offer of peer learning and support opportunities for students.

In this presentation, the Coordinator and a few Student Interns from the Peer Learning Team reflect on their experience a year after the start of the project. Peer learning is a topical subject in Higher Education worldwide with a growing body of literature devoted to it. We share our strategy in starting to fulfil precisely this task as well as the range of activities we have engaged in, successful or not, to attain our goals. In doing so from a variety of perspectives we aim to give a comprehensive picture of the work and challenges involved in starting this project that we hope will be helpful to practitioners interested in the implementation of peer learning across the sector.

The presentation focuses, more specifically, on our work to support and grow the provision of peer learning for first year students. We highlight the benefits of instilling a culture of peer learning in the earliest stages of the student journey by discussing the work we have done in the University of Glasgow's pre-entry course Transitions to Glasgow (T2G) and sharing some anecdotal feedback we received for our sessions in this programme. We discuss the difficulties of obtaining academic buy-in and the importance of finding the adequate peer learning initiative for large cohorts in Level 1. Finally, we share our strategy in the creation of central resources —such as a website, training and a university-wide community of practice— as a way to promote and connect the different peer learning and support initiatives that take place across the institution.

CROSSING BORDERS THROUGH VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

SPEAKER

Judit Háhn, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Judit Háhn is a senior lecturer and a staff tutor for first-year students at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She teaches courses in linguistics and discourse studies for pre-service teachers of English and language specialists. She is interested in all aspects of discourse and pedagogy in virtual exchange.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

In my talk, I will report on the advantages of virtual exchange in the way it develops global citizenship through the experience of collaborative online international collaboration. I will draw on both students' reflections and my observations as a teacher of virtual exchange projects.

PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

Virtual exchange (VE), or the use of technology to connect students from different countries for the purpose of learning and collaboration (O'Dowd 2018), is an increasingly popular trend in higher education. It is a form of internationalization at home, which allows for intercultural dialogue and teamwork through the computer screen. Students from two or more higher education institutions collaborate online for a few weeks or months under the facilitation of their educators. VE started in the field of foreign and second language education but has recently gained ground in other subjects, both within and across disciplines. The arrangement offers an ideal learning and socializing opportunity also for students who are in the early years of their studies.

In my talk, I will explore the advantages of virtual exchange, including the development of global citizenship through increased cultural understanding, accessibility, language development, and online collaboration. VE also enhances the feeling of interconnectedness among the participants in an online international context. The experience is especially important to students in their early years of studies because it can give them a deeper understanding of interculturality, diversity, and inclusiveness before they start their exchange studies. Additionally, VE experiences can also be particularly valuable for students who may not have the opportunity to study or travel abroad.

As a teacher, I co-designed and co-facilitated several collaborative online international projects for my students at the University of Jyväskylä in Central Finland. VE was either part of my courses or offered as a separate project. The collaborations involved students and colleagues from all over the world, including Poland, the Czech Republic, Japan, Singapore, Netherlands, Iran, Spain, and Turkey. In this presentation, I will share the beneficial aspects of VE from the students' perspective, drawing on their end-of-project reflections that were written in the form of learning diaries. As pointed out by many of the students, VE offers a great opportunity for them to feel connected with their peers from

different parts of the world. The projects also raise students' awareness of diversity and (in)equity in intercultural online collaboration through learning-by-doing and reflection.

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IT WAS KIND OF AWKARD OVER ZOOM – UNDERSTANDING THE COVID-19 HIGHER EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

👤 SPEAKERS

Teneisha Ellis, Abertay University, Scotland

Teneisha is a PhD Candidate in Psychology at Abertay University in Dundee, Scotland. With her extensive experience working in the Education Abroad field in the United States, she has been examining the experiences of international students who participated in Study Abroad programs during the 2020 Pandemic through the lens of self-determination and identity theory.

Andrea Cameron, Abertay University, Scotland

Andrea's research focuses on the student experience, and she has published work concerning curriculum development, student wellbeing, reflective practice, and closing the awarding gap for those from widening participation backgrounds. Initiatives she had led related to academic tutoring, integrating equality and diversity into the curriculum, staff profiling, and accelerated degrees.

Corinne Jola, Abertay University, Scotland

Dr Corinne Jola's research is interdisciplinary, merging science, learning, and the arts (dance/theatre). She has published widely and led pedagogic projects examining the impact of learning environments. Corinne is the international exchange co-ordinator for the university's Psychology students and leader of the departmental Research Group for Development, Evolution and Learning.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Students new to university can face numerous cultural challenges, which can be more pronounced for international students. This presentation will explore insights gained by interviewing international study-abroad students during the pandemic. Their cultural, social, and educational perspectives will be provided.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

International exchange students experienced unexpected modifications in how their study abroad programs were delivered during the pandemic, making it a very different overseas experience. All first-year students can experience untested social rules and novel learning approaches; however, as a result of the pandemic-related changes, international students were faced with additional challenges as they had to learn to adapt independently to a different cultural environment while learning about these new education systems online (Wilczewski et al., 2021). The aim of this study was to learn from the individual lived experiences of 13 international students and reflect on the transferable learning points that could be applied to any student new to university. Further, the students' insights may be useful for analysing strategies for dealing with uncertainty in a new educational

landscape, including online and blended programs, which are becoming increasingly popular in higher education (Xie et al., 2022).

An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach was used and enabled an exploration of how the students navigated alternate modes of delivery and building relations with their peers during the 2020 pandemic. Four meaning units encompassed the students' accounts: Functioning in Ambiguity, Language and Culture, Reshaping Community, and Alternative Experiences in Intercultural Interconnectivity. These meaning unitst offer insights regarding adapting online education programs and virtual classroom experiences for students in the future. Notably, the pandemic highlighted previously untapped personal resilience, which this cohort deployed while they reshaped what community meant for them and rebuilt their sense of belonging in social groups. Those teaching and interacting with students could consider developing practical and sustainable teaching strategies that foster a sense of belonging in these online spaces. We specifically suggest that such strategies could be considered for any new student cohort - be it first-year students, international students, or advanced entry students. Based on our findings, we also suggest that it could be of benefit to pre-emptively provide these cohorts with tools that foster confidence in their individual coping strategies (Neenan, 2009).

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Parallel 5.6 (20-Minute Presentations), Room 3511

CONNECTING FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE STUDENTS TO THE WORLD: THE "INTERNATIONAL BOOK CLUB" APPROACH

👤 SPEAKERS

Emerson Case, California State University, USA

Emerson Case is a Professor of English at California State University, Bakersfield, where he teaches courses in linguistics, literacy, language theory and acquisition, second language writing, and rhetorical theory. He formerly served as CSUB's First-Year Experience Director.

Agnieszka I. Kaczmarek, University of Applied Sciences in Nysa, Poland

Agnieszka I. Kaczmarek, Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Applied Sciences in Nysa, teaches courses in American culture, literature, and General English. Speaking Examiner for Cambridge English. Received a Fulbright Senior Award (2020-2021) to conduct research on mountain-travel writing at California State University, Bakersfield.

Sebastian Zatylny, University of Applied Sciences in Nysa, Poland

Sebastian Zatylny is an assistant in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Applied Sciences in Nysa, Poland. His scholarly interests include post-modern education, teaching speaking skills in English, didactics and methodology of teaching English, and modern technologies in education. He is also a passionate traveler.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Presentation examines a program that enhance FYE students' out-of-class and social experiences through an FYE common reader "International Book Club" approach. Using an online platform, the IBC paired students from Poland, Mexico, Guatemala, Argentina, and the U.S. with each other through online weekly discussion questions and weekly Zoom session discussions.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

This presentation provides an overview of a five-year project designed to enhance FYE students' out-of-class and social experiences through an "International Book Club" (IBC) approach to a first-year common reader. Extending a common reading program already in place at California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), the project create extracurricular opportunities that involve first-year students in a greater shared learning experience than they would normally be able to find on their own campuses, expanding students' worldviews, and providing peer-to-peer relationships to other FYE students throughout the world. The goal of the program is to leverage technology and online environments to support student success by helping students attain greater agency, a clearer understanding of university-level expectations, and an enhanced sense of belonging at the university level through the modeling of academic language and behavior.

Over a period of eight weeks, using both synchronous Zoom sessions and a web-based, asynchronous platform, the IBC paired students in FYE seminar and First-Year Composition courses at CSUB with their international first-year university counterparts in Poland, Mexico, Guatemala, and Argentina. Using the online platform's vlogging feature, students first recorded video introductions of themselves. Through the blogging feature, participants were provided with weekly discussion questions, based on that year's common reading text and jointly produced by Polish and American colleagues to ensure that all participants could contribute. Students in the participating countries then joined in these weekly discussions throughout the term of the project. These discussions (following Laufgraben, 2006) were intended to foster "higher-order, integrative, and reflective learning" where students could "connect what they read to what they learned previously and to the new knowledge they are acquiring in college," helping students become "the 'chief agent' in the learning process" and becoming "empowered to discover and create new knowledge around what they had learned." These collective discussions were then followed up by individualized assignments created by instructors at each of the sites designed to fit the requirements of those specific contexts. Using these more in-depth discussions, participants then joined together in weekly Zoom sessions where participants were able to share their new insights with, and learn from, those from other cultures.

Quantitative and qualitative data, gathered through surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews, will be presented. Research questions fell into two main areas. The first area focused on the reading of the text, assessing such variables as the enhancement of critical thinking abilities, greater understanding of the topic of the book, and attitudinal changes toward the topic through participation in the program. The second area focused on the university experience, including an assessment of increased understanding of preparation for, and understanding of, the academic expectations of college, enhanced connections to peers, the campus, the broader community, and the world, and heightened ability to express oneself at the university level. The presentation will finish with a short discussion of next steps.

REFERENCES

Laufgraben, J.L. (2006). Common Reading Programs: Going beyond the book (Monograph No. 44). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

INVESTIGATING ACADEMIC READING: A COMPARISON BETWEEN SIXTH FORM (FURTHER EDUCATION: AGE 16-19) AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

👤 SPEAKER

Charlotte Cartledge, University of Lincoln, England

Charlotte is a Lecturer in Developmental Psychology. Charlotte has experience in teaching and research within Higher Education and sixth-form education (16-19 years). This has provided her with first-hand knowledge of both the UK university and schooling systems and allowed her to experience the student transition into HE from both perspectives.

💬 PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Reading is an important aspect of Higher Education, yet engagement is varied across the student population. This talk discusses recent work investigating the reading habits, perceived proficiency and motivations for reading of sixth-form and undergraduate students. The talk will close with a discussion of the practical implications and future directions.

📄 PROGRAMME ABSTRACT

Academic reading is an important aspect of education at all levels, particularly in Higher Education. Previous research has highlighted that students who read more tend to achieve higher grades, are more involved in classroom discussions and generally have an improved understanding of the information covered in class. We know however that students at university tend to spend less time reading academic texts than what is expected of them (see for example, St Clair-Thompson et al., 2017) and can find it challenging to engage with independent reading. Identifying and understanding why students read is therefore important to support existing undergraduate students and prepare those transitioning to university.

The focus of this presentation is to discuss findings from a recent project which aimed to identify and understand students' reading practices. Importantly, this study involved two groups of students – those in pre-university education studying for their A-levels and current undergraduate students. Students were asked questions about their reading habits, perceived proficiency in reading ability and motivations for reading. Students were asked about reading for pleasure, as well as academic reading.

Approximately 150 sixth-form students and 100 undergraduate students took part in the survey, which was co-designed and distributed with an undergraduate student from the University of Lincoln. The results demonstrate similarities and differences between the two groups. For example, despite differences in perceived expectations and estimations of the amount of time spent reading academic texts, both groups suggest they engage in less academic reading than they should. Undergraduate students show more awareness of the links between reading and critical thinking skills, and the results indicate that, overall, they engage in deeper learning strategies than the sixth-form students who focus on learning at a surface level. Comparisons between the academic subject(s) studied and year group will also be discussed. The results also provide an insight into student expectations of their institution's role in providing them with the skills required for academic reading. The talk

will close with a discussion of the practical implications of the findings and future directions. The results could contribute to teaching practices within Higher Education and be used to prepare A-level students for further academic study.