



the **On track** project

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PROJECT REPORT

AUGUST 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success of the On Track Project is dependent on the support and efforts of a large number of people and we would like to extend our thanks to the following: the staff at all participating Colleges and HEIs; our Steering Group, chaired by Eleanor Harris; all the staff at the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum; and our tutors and mentors. We would also especially like to express our thanks to Mitch Brown of Glasgow College of Nautical Studies, Alistair Campbell of Cardonald College and Jenny Rees formerly of Glasgow Caledonian University, all of whom demitted from our Steering Group this year and all at On Track wish them well.

PREFACE

Central to the widening access agenda is the opportunity given to all to fulfil their learning aspirations to the highest level at which they are capable of achieving success. The role played in this by the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum On Track Project, through its work in supporting those seeking to progress from College to University, is especially important given the recent Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) report which indicates both an increasing level of student drop out from Scottish Higher Education Institutions and that the HEIs also perform less well than the rest of the UK when it comes to widening access to young people from poorer backgrounds. The value of the On Track Project in these circumstances is seen in the opportunity it gives potential university students currently studying in further education institutions to hear and experience first hand from tutors and mentors the challenges they are likely to face in making the move from College to University, what steps they themselves can take and the support there is in place to help them 'bridge the gap'. It is essential that this type of support continues if Scotland is to truly widen participation to higher education.

Eleanor Harris
Chair, On Track Steering Group
Depute Principal, Cardonald College

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2005 the Scottish Funding Council published the report of the widening participation review group, *Learning For All*. This report notes the importance of articulation routes between FECs and HEIs in respect of widening participation. However, *Learning For All* also states that transitions, such as that from college to university, can prove difficult for many learners and, as such, highlights the need for support to be provided to help students successfully negotiate these transition points.

The On Track Project was established in January 2002 by the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum (see Appendix One for further details about the West Forum) to support those students who are about to make, or are considering making, the transition from study at college to degree-level study at university or other HEI. The On Track Project supports such students by delivering a 10 hour study skills programme to groups of students while they are still at college. The various programme sessions (see Appendix Two for a full list of session topics and learning outcomes) all promote the concept of the 'independent learner', as well as providing students with the essential skills that they will require at university, such as, critical thinking, how to prepare written assignments, and referencing.

As the needs and skills of On Track participants vary we have built a great deal of flexibility into the programme in order to enable the facilitators to tailor the programme to suit the needs of each individual group. The programme is delivered by two facilitators, a postgraduate tutor and an undergraduate mentor, and where possible the facilitators are matched to a group by subject background. This subject match means that the students can more readily relate to the experiences of the facilitators, enabling them to act as 'role models' for the participants. The focus on the independent learner, the student-centred approach, and the use of current undergraduate and postgraduate students as facilitators have all proved very successful in supporting On Track participants to make the often difficult transition from college to degree-level study.

This report outlines the activity of the On Track Project during session 2005-06 and includes an evaluation of the year based on the analysis of feedback from participating students, college teaching staff, and On Track tutors and mentors.

**Yvonne Wayne
Project Director
August 2006**

STEERING GROUP AND PROJECT STAFF

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¹ On Track Steering Group membership as of August 2006

PROJECT OPERATION 2005-06

At the end of session 2004-05 we decided to carry out a major review of the On Track Tutor's Pack and a development team of project staff and senior tutors was formed. The development was heavily informed by the findings of the evaluation that was carried out at the end of session 2004-05 and the material that was developed included:

- A glossary of university terms
- An online university library catalogue activity
- Material on the purpose of lectures
- Material on the advantages gained from entering university via college

In addition to developing the above we also reviewed and improved every session topic. We also colour-coded the entire pack to make it more user-friendly.

The recruitment process for new tutors and mentors was opened after the Easter holidays. We had initially hoped to be able to complete the recruitment process before the start of the academic term to enable us to deploy the new facilitators during the October-December run of the programme. However, there was a limited response before the end of the summer holidays and the selection process had to be postponed until October. As part of our development process we also reviewed the training programme and included an induction session for all new recruits that was held before the main training sessions. The purpose of the induction session was to familiarise new tutors and mentors with the aims and operation of On Track, complete all paperwork, and answer any questions. The induction sessions and full training programme were held in November/December and the new recruits started working with groups from January onwards.

In 2004 Deb Kemmer carried out an independent evaluation of On Track and one of the recommendations contained in her report was that in order to maximise participation we should design an open introductory session for all HN students. As such, we wrote to all the colleges in the Forum at the beginning of the academic year to offer this session. Two colleges accepted the invitation and both sessions were attended by a large number of students and a number of groups were timetabled in both colleges. In addition, we also gave a number of presentations to college staff and wrote to HN course leaders twice during the year to offer them the programme. As a result of these activities, throughout academic session 2005-06 we worked with a total of 55 groups in 17 of the 20 colleges in the Forum (see Appendix Three for a full list of participating colleges and groups) and a total of 533 students enrolled on the programme.

An internal evaluation of session 2005-06 was conducted between May and June 2006. Feedback was collected from participating students, college teaching staff, and project tutors and mentors and the results of that evaluation are outlined in this report.

MENTOR CASE STUDY



Irene McDonald
On Track Mentor, November 2005 - Present

At the initial meeting with On Track, I was slightly daunted at the prospect of working as a student mentor to further education students. I felt under qualified and left the meeting thinking that I would not return. My belief was that I did not possess the necessary skills to guide and encourage other students about their abilities, let alone work alongside others at a much more advanced level than myself! However, at home I started reading through the On Track pack I had just been given, I found to my amazement that it was easy to follow, explained the function of the project and furthermore was completely user friendly! I decided to give it a go. This decision was one of the best I have made. Why?

The postgraduate tutor I was assigned to work with was fantastic. He noted my preliminary apprehension and dispelled it within moments of meeting him. I found both my co-worker and our students friendly, interesting, and eager to hear about university life. By way of design, the programme runs like clockwork and we found that its versatility is central to meeting current student needs or concerns. Feedback from the students during our closing sessions was consistent amongst the various institutions we worked in. Students voiced a newfound confidence, a real belief in their own ability and they also expressed their gratitude for our delivery of the programme. In turn, I was able to thank them for raising my confidence levels and for participating with such enthusiasm.

In sum, On Track is designed so that a rapport between students and tutor/mentors is quickly built and this makes an excellent learning environment for all.

STUDENT EVALUATION

The student evaluation was conducted by means of a questionnaire which was distributed to students at the end of their last On Track session and we received a total of 211 completed questionnaires. We are unable to calculate an accurate response rate as the actual number of questionnaires distributed is not known. However, if we use the number of students who received a certificate to calculate an approximate response rate, the rate is around 55%.

Our annual evaluation process remains of great importance to the project and we always take account of the views expressed in the development of our materials. The questionnaire distributed to the students asked a variety of questions about all aspects of the programme. Overall the results once again demonstrate that students were overwhelmingly positive about their participation in the programme and felt that the skills they have learned and the confidence they have gained will aid them once they articulate to degree-level study. For the first time this year we have looked at the responses given by students by broad subject areas. Students often gave very different responses regarding what they considered to be the most valuable part of the programme depending on what broad subject area they were studying. This demonstrates that the flexibility we have built-in to the programme is crucial as it enables tutors to tailor the programme to suit the needs and skills of the group they are working with. However, it has also indicated a possible need to develop some more subject related materials for science and computing students.

The full results and commentary are outlined below.



On Track session at North Glasgow College

Overall Ratings of the On Track Programme

Participating students were asked on a scale of 1-5 how they rated the various aspects of the On Track Programme. With 5 being the highest rating of 'Very Good', 3 indicating 'Neutral' and 1 indicating 'Poor'.

The scores outlined in the table below are the average scores for this session. The average scores for the previous two sessions (2004-05, 2003-04) are also listed.

| Aspects of the On Track Programme | 2005-06 | 2004-05 | 2003-04 |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| The content of the On Track sessions | 4.41 | 4.44 | 4.23 |
| The tutors | 4.59 | 4.61 | 4.63 |
| The usefulness of the whole programme | 4.48 | 4.50 | 4.40 |

Although there is a slight reduction in the average scores compared to the previous session, they remain high and once again indicate that students feel they have benefited from their participation in the programme.

As has been the case in previous sessions the highest rated aspect of the programme is the tutors which once again highlights how much participating students appreciate the opportunity to speak to current or recent university students and to ask them questions about what it is like at university.

The questionnaire also offered students the opportunity to rate campus visits. However, as most campus visits take place after the completion of the programme, most students who attend a visit have already completed a questionnaire. Nonetheless, verbal feedback from students and college teaching staff indicates that the campus visit element remains a very popular aspect of the programme, with many students expressing that they felt more confident about attending university after visiting the various support services available to students and meeting departmental staff.

Most Valuable Features of the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to students asked them the following question:

Which features of the On Track Programme did you find most valuable?

The questionnaire listed the various elements of the On Track Programme and asked students to tick a maximum of three options. However, approximately half the respondents ticked more than three. The most common options ticked and the percentage of respondents that indicated them are outlined in the following table.

| Elements of the On Track Programme | % of respondents |
|---|------------------|
| Referencing | 47 |
| Written Assignments and Essays | 46 |
| Lectures and Note-taking | 42 |
| Academic Terms and Deconstructing Questions | 40 |
| Exams and Revision | 37 |
| Critical Thinking | 35 |
| Advice from Tutors and Mentors | 26 |
| Learning Styles | 24 |
| Reading Lists and Using Library Resources | 20 |
| Information Gathering and Reading | 20 |
| Information about Universities | 19 |
| Oral Presentations | 18 |
| Marking Schemes | 14 |
| Conceptual Thinking | 10 |

As has been found in all previous evaluations, the elements of the programme most valued by the students are those aimed at preparing them for university-level assignments. The most notable result this year is that for the first time the topic of Referencing has been rated by the students as the most valuable element of the programme. The popularity of Referencing was also noted by the tutors and many remarked that a number of students had been aware of the importance of correctly referencing work at university and had asked many questions about both referencing and plagiarism.

The element of the programme that the students noted as being of least value was Conceptual Thinking. As outlined in the tutor evaluation below, the tutors also felt that this section was problematic as they stated it was often difficult to impress on the students how this section related to university.

As the above was a closed question, the questionnaire also provided students the opportunity to make any other comments regarding the most valuable features of the programme and outlined below is a representative sample of the comments given by students:

They were all interesting!

Enjoyed the advice from tutors.

Received loads of encouragement from...[the tutors]...with regard to uni. It was very helpful to talk to university students about other matters not detailed above.

It was very useful hearing from students attending university at present, also from a university graduate about their experiences of university.

All students should take part in On Track. It gives an insight to what going to uni is about and reduces apprehensions students may have before taking exams, presentations etc.

Receiving personal experience from tutors has been beneficial as it gives a true taste of how university works.

Would have ticked more of the above boxes, however only 3 asked for, but advice from tutors was invaluable.

Most of the facts above were valuable, therefore would have ticked more than three.

It was extremely helpful to hear personal accounts from people who have experienced the same situations as myself.

Although only 3 are highlighted above, all the points were useful, as was the inspiration gained from the tutors' own experiences.

I found the list of 'university words' very helpful.

The whole course was valuable.

Didn't get opportunity to go on a campus visit.

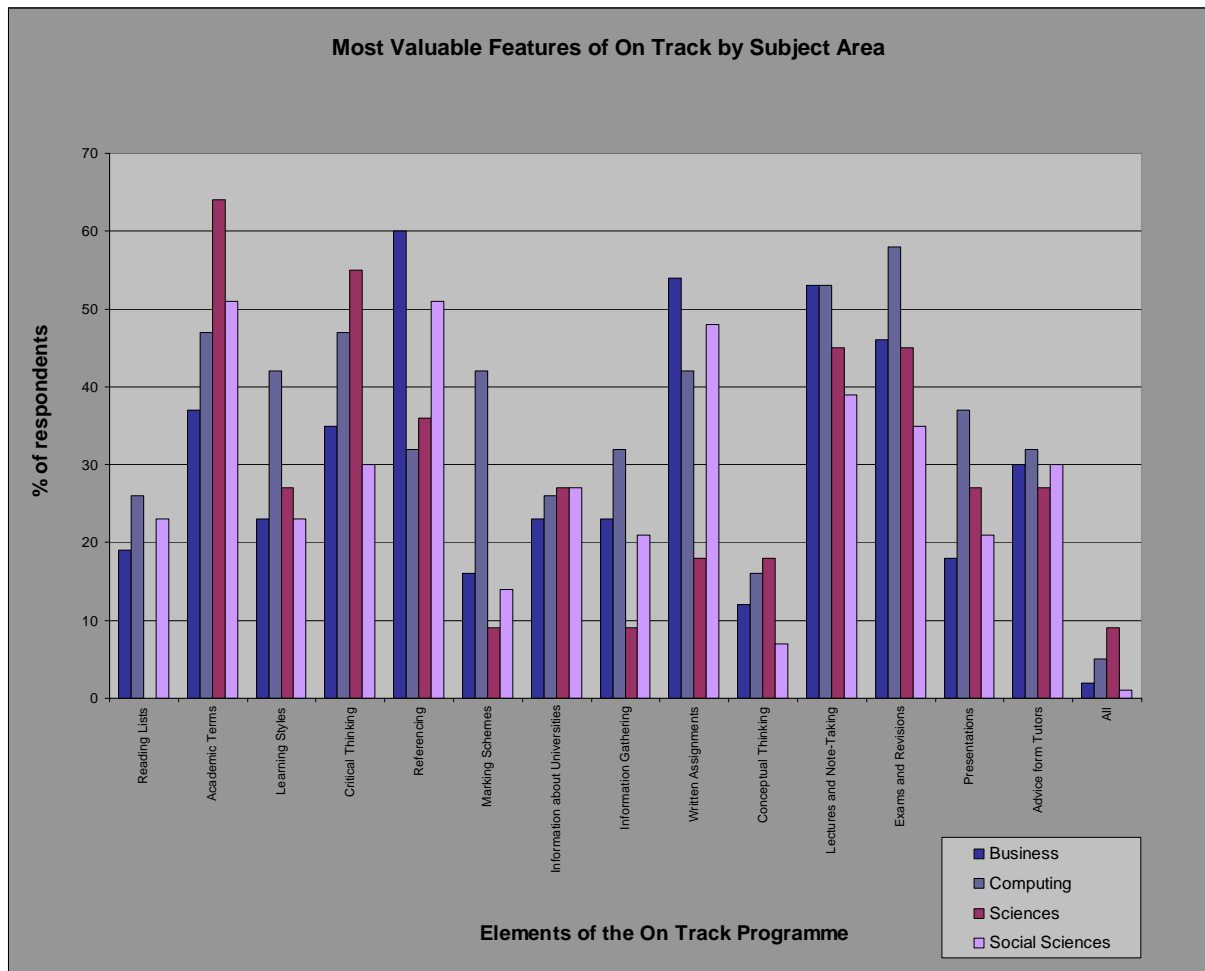
On Track is a very worthwhile experience...Some of the information was invaluable and much appreciated.

I found it difficult which three to choose as I have been helped by more than this.

All aspects of this course have been very helpful and I feel much happier about the transition between college and uni.

Most Valuable Features by Subject Background

One of reasons that we have always built a great deal of flexibility into the On Track programme is that we work with students from a broad range of subject backgrounds. As such, we thought it would aid our programme development and training to ascertain whether there were any major differences in the features of the programme that students from different subject backgrounds found most valuable. Students were categorised into four broad subject areas² namely, Business, Computing, Science, and Social Science and the results are outlined in the following graph.



² There were a number of students who did not readily fit into one of the four categories used in this analysis, such as health care students and sports students. As such, their responses were not included in this analysis.

The most notable result is that many of the features noted by science students differ significantly from other subject backgrounds. For example, no science students noted Reading Lists as being of value, as compared to around 20 per cent of students from all other subjects. Also, a significantly smaller percentage of science students noted Written Assignments and Information Gathering, whereas a larger percentage highlighted Academic Terms and Deconstructing Questions as being of value than any other subject grouping. There are various reasons why there are such notable differences between science students and students from other subject backgrounds, such as student and tutor priorities and how the subject is taught and assessed at university. However, as outlined in the tutor evaluation below, some tutors who worked with science groups stated that although there is dedicated material for science students in the On Track pack more could be developed and this comparative lack of subject-specific material may account for some of the differences in results. As such, as part of our development work this year we will address the need to develop more subject related material.

As stated above, Referencing was highlighted as the most valuable feature by students overall. However, the breakdown by subject background shows that although it was popular with all subject backgrounds, a much larger percentage of social science and business students highlighted it than science and computing students.

Other notable results are that computing students noted Marking Schemes much more than any other group of students and that social science students highlighted Critical Thinking less than any other subject grouping, especially science and computing students.



On Track Tutor/Mentor evaluation session

Suggested Changes to the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to students asked them the following question:

Which parts of the On Track Programme would you change?

i)

ii)

| Suggested changes to programme | *% of respondents |
|--|-------------------|
| Length of Programme | 48 |
| Change day/time sessions were timetabled for | 30 |
| Issues relating to content of programme | 19 |
| Issues relating to presentation of programme | 15 |
| Include more information on universities | 4 |
| Integrate into college work | 4 |

** These figures represent the percentage of the students who gave a response to this question, not who completed a questionnaire.*

Only 13% of respondents suggested changes to the programme, which is the lowest percentage ever. This reduction suggests we can be confident that our annual development work, which is heavily informed by student feedback, has improved the programme.

Addressing the actual suggested changes, the most-cited suggestion is to change the length of the programme, with the majority of respondents requesting that the programme be longer. A number of students have also requested that the day and/or time when the sessions are held be changed. As a rule the least popular day/time for On Track sessions is one when the students would otherwise not be in college and the most popular being in a free slot between other classes.

Length of the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to students asked them the following question:

Do you think the programme should be:

longer

shorter

it's fine as it is

| Length of Programme | % of respondents |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Longer | 27 |
| Shorter | 6 |
| Fine as it is | 66 |

Once again the majority of students have indicated that the current length of five 2-hour sessions plus an optional campus visit is the most popular length for the programme. However, over a quarter of respondents have indicated that they would prefer the programme to be longer. Despite this we still believe that approximately 10 hours classroom time remains the optimum length for the programme. Nonetheless, as it is always our aim to be as flexible and student-centred as possible we will continue our practice of allowing the option of extending the programme by an extra session if required.



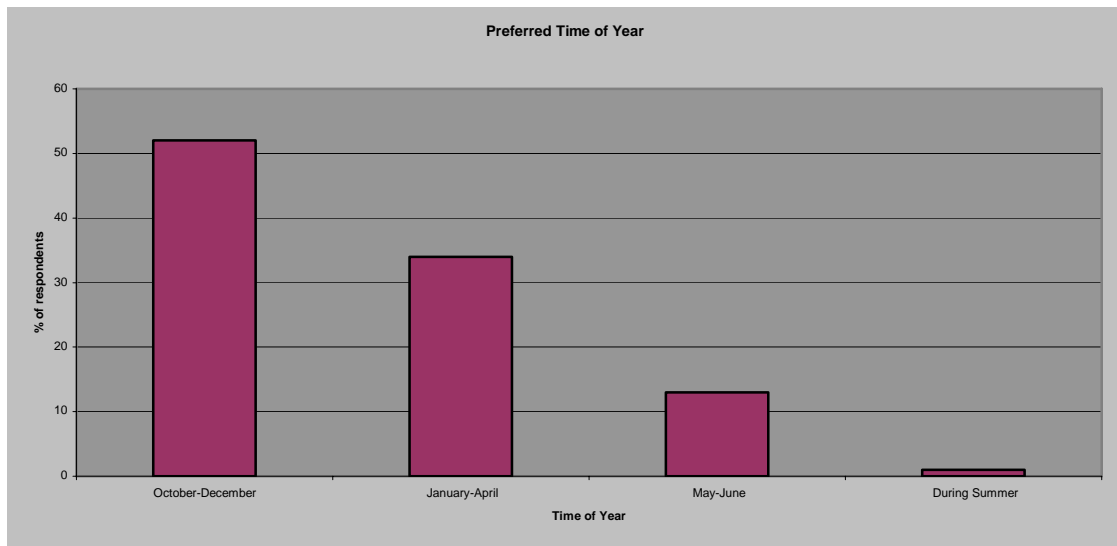
On Track session at North Glasgow College

Best Time of Year for the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to students asked them the following question:

When would be the best time of year to run the programme – i.e. which months?

The months indicated by students were grouped into four categories and the results are outlined below.



Over half of the respondents indicated that they would prefer to attend the programme between October-December. Although students were not asked to indicate any reason for their answer, many stated that they would prefer it during this time as it was before the deadline for UCAS applications. Another reason given by some students was that if they attended On Track nearer the beginning of their college course it would have helped increase their confidence levels.

Any Other Suggestions/Comments

At the end of the questionnaire, students were given the opportunity to offer any other suggestions and/or comments about any aspect of the programme. Listed below is a representative sample of the comments made:

On Track was very informative and has been very helpful for my progression to university.

Would have liked more time for general discussions about university and campus visit before making decisions about where to apply.

I enjoyed the information given, but I thought that the course should be longer...

...I'll be keeping these notes for reference! Thanks.

This course was really good and I enjoyed chatting with people with experience of university life.

I have found this course very helpful and now know what to expect at University.

I think running the programme earlier would convince people that they could cope at university.

I really enjoyed the programme and I felt the information I was given has really helped me and made me feel more comfortable and less nervous about going to university. So thank you.

Have found...[the tutors]...to be a great source of information. They have given lots of helpful advice and handouts which I am sure will be well used by myself when attending university.

...intend to use my On Track folder as my university bible.

If maybe the course was on a bit earlier – some people may not be panicking about going to university.

Great opportunity and very useful for students going to university.

These sessions have been really helpful with the transition into Uni life.

The course was very useful for helping find out more information about university. The tutors were very helpful and friendly.

I found it very helpful and makes university seem less scary and have an idea of what it will be like.

TUTOR CASE STUDY



Bill Buckingham

On Track Tutor, April 2002 - Present

It was the last session, we had finished everything up according to plan, and I asked if anyone had any questions as the students were doing their feedback forms. Being a task oriented individual, I was expecting something to do with the course material. However, someone piped up and asked if I thought I had developed personally as well as academically during my involvement in Higher Education, and did I consider myself a better person for it. Well, I wasn't expecting that one, not least because it was something that had never crossed my mind! However, after a bit of frantic, on-the-spot reflection I decided that the answer was yes and yes, which seemed to satisfy them, although I didn't get away until I'd answered half a dozen spin off questions. All in all, it gave me a bit of food for thought as well as keeping me on my toes!

Having fielded that one we were clearing up and one student hung back until everyone had gone. He was a regular attendee and while a little quiet, had nonetheless played a full part in the sessions. Anyway, he announced that he was holding an offer to study history at university, and had all but made up his mind not to take the place because he didn't think he could do it. However, attending the On Track course and especially hearing the inside stuff about how things actually work, he had changed his mind and was going to accept the offer.

The moral(s) of the story? No matter how well prepared you are the students will always throw you a curve when you least expect it, the learning process is very much a two-way process, and your attitude and demeanour can be just as important as the course content. And, trite though it sounds, incidents like the last one are the icing on the cake that really makes the job worthwhile.

COLLEGE TEACHING STAFF EVALUATION

The college staff evaluation was also conducted by means of a questionnaire, which was distributed towards the end of the academic year. The college staff surveyed were the members of teaching staff who organised the programme for their students.

All the questions asked on the questionnaire were open-ended, and the response rate for the college staff evaluation was 62%.

The full results of the college staff evaluation are outlined below.

Please Note: Some paraphrasing has been required to summarise and categorise responses.

Most Useful Parts of the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to college staff asked the following question:

What part(s) of the programme did you think were most useful?

Nearly a third of respondents stated that all parts were useful. However, the remaining respondents highlighted several elements/aspects of the programme as being particularly useful and most of these respondents cited more than one aspect.

The answers given and the percentage of college staff that cited them are outlined below.

| Aspect of the Programme | % of respondents |
|---|------------------|
| All of it | 31 |
| Referencing | 31 |
| Written Assignments and Essays | 19 |
| Lectures and Note-taking | 16 |
| Tutors and Mentors | 13 |
| General University Information | 13 |
| Campus Visit | 9 |
| Material Relating to Progression from College to University | 6 |
| Exams and Revision | 6 |
| Library Information and Activities | 6 |
| Deconstructing Academic Questions | 6 |

Least Useful Parts of the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to college staff asked the following question:

What part(s) of the programme did you think were least useful?

The answers given and the number of college staff that cited them are outlined in the table below.

| Part(s) of the Programme | No of respondents |
|---|-------------------|
| No Response/None – All Useful | 22 |
| Issues related to presentation of programme | 3 |
| Design/Content of session on Lectures and Note-taking | 2 |
| Critical Thinking Activity | 1 |
| Group Activities | 1 |
| Introduction too long | 1 |
| Programme should be longer | 1 |
| General information about universities | 1 |

Suggested Changes/Additions to the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to college staff asked them the following question:

Are there any changes you would suggest, or anything you feel should be included?

Fifty percent of the college staff who returned questionnaires suggested changes and/or additions to the programme, which is 15% less than in session 2004-05. The suggestions made and the number of respondents who made them are outlined in the table below.

| Suggested Changes/Additions | No of respondents |
|---|-------------------|
| Include campus visit and university lecture | 5 |
| Change time programme is held | 3 |
| Programme should be shorter | 2 |
| Include university interview skills | 2 |
| Changes to how programme is presented | 2 |
| Emphasise need to be independent learner at university more | 1 |
| Include more information on student finance | 1 |
| Redesign Lecture and Note-taking session | 1 |

Length of the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to college staff asked them the following question:

Do you think the programme should be longer or shorter, or is it the right length?

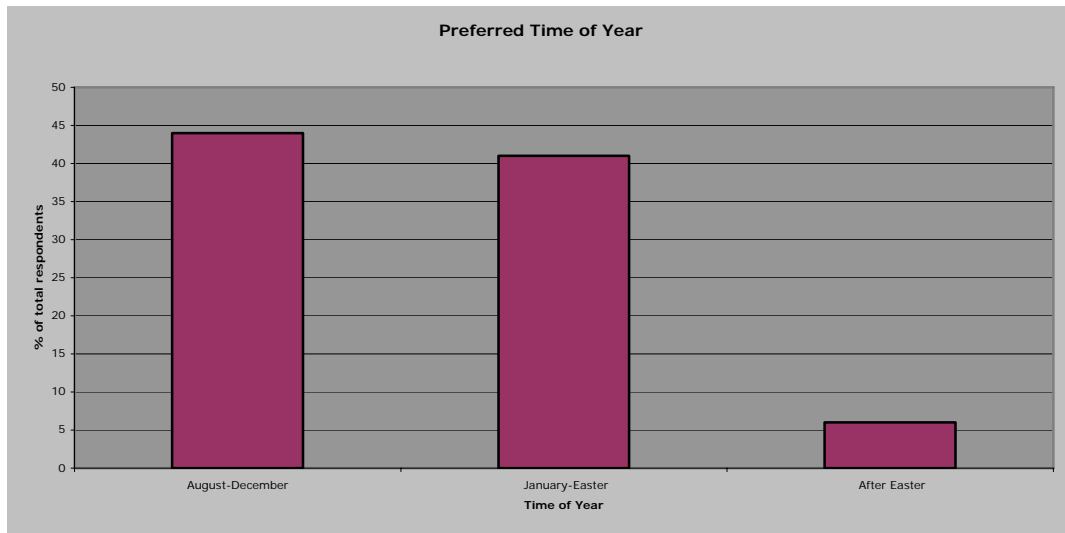
| Length of Programme | % of respondents |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Longer | 16 |
| Shorter | 10 |
| Right Length | 74 |

Best Time of the Year for the On Track Programme

The questionnaire distributed to college staff asked them the following question:

What do you think would be the best time of year to run the programme?

The results are outlined below:



Other Suggestions and Comments

At the end of the questionnaire college staff were given the opportunity to offer any other suggestions and/or comments about any aspect of the programme. Listed below is a representative sample of the comments made:

A very well run project. Look forward to your staff working with our students in session 2006/07.

A very worthwhile course.

Very helpful. Students were very supportive and keen for it to continue for future students.

I'd like to congratulate the tutors for their dedication and professionalism.

Time keeping of deliverers should be emphasised during training.

Students thought that support provided by staff was excellent...

I thought the staff were outstanding – they made a very positive impression.

Students enjoyed – a lot of group discussion.

The programme was very valuable to all students.

Students would prefer tutorials by tutors with experience in relevant subjects.

Appreciated the input of the 'On Track' staff. Personal stories of coping with childcare and studies acted as relief to students.

All students on the program have commented on its usefulness and how it has reduced their fears of progression to HE.

Not structured enough. Too drawn out. Contradictory at times.

Great in that it allayed any fears of university...

Students felt On Track was 'superb'

Having a current full-time university student as a presenter is a great idea.

More funding/financial advice

TUTOR CASE STUDY



Mairi Stewart

On Track Participant, April 2003

On Track Tutor, November 2005 - Present

My experience with On Track has been two-fold. As an HND student at James Watt College I took part in the On Track programme and found it to be a positive and rewarding experience. The information that was presented combined with useful handouts and the On Track tutor/mentor's own academic experiences all helped to alleviate any fears and misconceptions that I had about going on to degree-level study. I also found that my self confidence grew as the course proceeded and ultimately the prospect of making the jump from FE to HE did not seem such an ordeal, indeed I felt that it was something well within my capabilities.

I have been working as an On Track tutor since November 2005 and again this has been a very positive and rewarding experience. Having the opportunity to deliver such a well designed and flexible course has been a pleasure. Also being able to share my own experiences from college and university with students has proved to be a very beneficial and gratifying adventure. The students with very few exceptions seemed to embrace the course and genuinely seemed to get a lot from it. To hear comments from students like, for example, "University seems more do-able now that I've done On Track" and "I don't feel so scared about moving on to university now as I feel equipped especially with having some great handouts to take with me", really made the whole experience worthwhile for me. Tutoring with On Track also gave me practical experience of lesson planning, delivering information, and managing students in a classroom setting which all helps me develop my skills and provides a good foundation on which I can hopefully build a career in adult education and adult literacy.

Thus for me, both as a student and as a tutor, On Track has proven to have been a practical, rewarding and beneficial programme that aids and enables many students to make that tricky and daunting transition from FE to HE more smoothly.

TUTOR/MENTOR EVALUATION

The tutor evaluation was completed by a series of group evaluation sessions, six in total, during which tutors were given the opportunity to discuss:

- General Issues
- Student Concerns
- What Elements of the Programme Worked Well
- Areas for Improvement

General Issues

Over the course of the evaluation sessions the tutors expressed that they had very much enjoyed working for the project this year and most reported very positive feedback from the students. Many of them stated that the most rewarding aspect of working with the students was witnessing the increase in confidence in many students who had initially expressed concerns about their academic abilities.

At the end of session 2004-05 the On Track Tutor's Pack underwent a major overhaul and as well as developing the programme material, the pack was also colour-coded in order to make it more user-friendly. Tutors were overwhelmingly positive regarding the new pack and this was especially the case for returning tutors who stated that the colour-coding of the pack had been a major improvement.

Student Concerns

To aid any future development of the programme we were interested in finding out from the tutors what were the main concerns that students expressed during their initial discussions with them about university. Tutors stated that the main worry for many students was a 'fear of the unknown'. Most students had no experience, even second-hand, of university and, as such, had very little idea of what to expect in terms of assessment requirements and workload. Moreover, this lack of knowledge had often resulted in the development of 'myths' about university, such as a widespread belief that there is no support available to students should they experience any difficulties. The tutors stated that they were able to allay such fears and dispel any myths through such practices as sharing their own experiences, showing students university timetables and assessment requirements, and sourcing relevant past papers.

The most prominent academic concern expressed by students was that they did not possess the ability to study at degree-level at university. On Track tutors have a great deal of experience of working with students who suffer from a lack of confidence and through delivering the programme and sharing their own experiences with the students they are able to help build their confidence.

What Elements of the Programme Worked Well

As stated above, tutors were very positive about the entire programme this year. Nonetheless, the evaluation sessions did highlight a number of elements that the tutors stated worked especially well and these were; Deconstructing Academic Questions, Referencing, and Critical Thinking.

As has been the case in previous years the tutors all stated that students very much appreciated the opportunity to see genuine examples of university material and work. Tutors stated that the use of such materials allowed students to more readily relate the sessions to both their current and future studies. Moreover, as mentioned above, the viewing of such material also helped to increase student confidence as they helped to inform the students of the workload and assessment requirements they would face once they articulated to university.

Areas for Improvement

Tutors stated that the Independent Learner diagram, which is contained in the introductory session, should be reviewed as many feel that it contains too much information and often serves to worry the students. Suggestions from the tutors included retaining the information included in the diagram but redesigning how it is presented, reducing the amount of information, or moving it to a later point in the programme when the students are more confident about the prospect of university.

Despite an overhaul of this section last year, tutors have continued to express concern regarding the usefulness of Conceptual Categories. They stated that although students enjoyed taking part in the activities in this section, it is still proving difficult to establish a link between the activities and university.

It was suggested that the section on Learning Styles could be reviewed. Although tutors felt it was valuable to discuss learning strategies and styles with the students, many of them felt that the emphasis on deep, strategic, and surface learning did not adequately convey to students the importance of employing effective learning strategies at university.

The tutors who worked with science and computing students felt that while there was material in the pack specifically for these students there was nonetheless a bias towards material for arts and humanities students and more science and computing related material should be developed.

Finally, it was felt that the session on Lectures and Note-taking should be revised to contain a mini-lecture, as well as information on Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), such as Blackboard, as many university students are able to download lecture notes from VLEs prior to their lectures.

MENTOR CASE STUDY



Hayat Munir

On Track Mentor, November 2005 - Present

Hi, my name is Hayat and I am an Undergraduate Mentor for the On Track Project. After completing my Highers and being accepted for university to gain a degree in Optometry I had high expectations of university life. However, after starting university I quickly realised the difference between university life – ranging from meeting deadlines, completing coursework and support available from lecturers – and High School. It was at this stage I realised that I had not been given proper advice or adequate support to ease my transition into university.

My own experiences at university taught me a great deal and I presume a lot of people joining university have similar experiences. Only recently I have joined the On Track Project where I work with a team of great people. It has provided me with a fantastic opportunity to share my experience with those who are making this journey at present and to help those in the future, so they do not experience the difficulties I endured during my early years at university.

Furthermore, the programme has also enabled me to enhance my own skills in every aspect of my daily life from time management to communicating with groups of people from diverse backgrounds. I believe the On Track Project is a true asset for those who wish to continue their education and make the transition to university, as it provides essential support that was not there for me.

CONCLUSION

Session 2005-06 marked the busiest year yet for On Track with a total of 533 students from 55 groups in 17 colleges enrolling on the programme and 71% of those students were awarded a certificate for their participation in On Track (certificates are awarded to those students who attend three or more sessions).

Once again the evaluation results indicate that it has been another successful year for the project. The overall ratings of the programme by students remain high and the number of suggested changes from students, college teaching staff, and tutors alike is lower than in previous years. A further positive we can take from this year's evaluation is the positive and enthusiastic attitude towards the programme and the students expressed by our tutors. However, despite this, the evaluation still highlighted a number of challenges for On Track as we begin our preparations for session 2006-07.

Maintain standards while expanding operations. Although the reduction in the overall ratings of the programme from last year is negligible, it nonetheless serves as a timely reminder that we must not be complacent and must continue to strive to develop the programme. It is especially important that we aim to maintain standards as we continue to expand our operations and larger numbers of students enrol on the programme.

Develop more dedicated science and computing related material. The flexibility that we have always built-in to the programme may account for some of the differences in the most valuable features of the programme highlighted by students from different subject backgrounds. However, it was also noted by some of our tutors that worked with science and computing groups that it would be useful to have some more material specifically for use with these students. As such, a large part of our development of the programme this year will be aimed at providing this material.

Maximise participation in the programme. This year a record 533 students enrolled on the programme. However, it is our aim to ensure that On Track is available to all students that may benefit from the programme and would like to participate. One method that we found to be successful in maximising participation was to run an open introductory session, as it was an effective method of enabling students to make an informed choice as to whether or not to participate. We were only able to organise two such sessions this year and we aim to continue and expand this practice in the forthcoming session.

Increase retention. The retention rate for students this year was 71% and the retention rate over the last three runs of the programme has also been approximately 70%. Having examined our records, the main point of withdrawal for students is after the first session. We can surmise that the reasons for such withdrawals include that these students do not intend to articulate to university or feel they are already well prepared for the transition. However, we believe it would be useful to devise a method of following up students who

enrol on the programme and then withdraw in order to ascertain why they have decided against participating further. We can then use this information to develop methods to reduce the withdrawal rate.

Continue to develop an effective method of organising campus visits. It has always been our practice to offer a campus visit to all groups and over the years we have organised a large number of successful campus visits. Our normal practice in previous sessions was to organise visits on a group-by-group basis. However, we experienced a number of problems organising visits in this manner. For example, we have often had to arrange visits for a small number of students and on occasion had to cancel at short notice after some students found themselves no longer able to attend. Also, we sometimes found that only one or two students per group were interested in attending a visit meaning that it was not feasible to organise visits (this may account for the small number of college teaching staff who indicated in their feedback that their students did not get the opportunity to attend a campus visit). Therefore, in order to address these problems we attempted to pilot a new system of campus visits this year by organising set campus visit days that a number of different groups would attend. We had limited success with this pilot, one pre-organised visit was attended by a number of groups and was successful, while another had to be cancelled. However, having successfully run one such visit we believe that this would be the most effective way to proceed and will aim to organise more such visits in the forthcoming session.

Recruit more undergraduate students. It remains very popular and effective when we are able to pair a postgraduate tutor with an undergraduate mentor to work with groups, and although we have always recruited a large number of excellent undergraduate students we would still like to increase this number. We have taken steps in the past to increase the number of applications from undergraduates and although the number of applications has increased it still remains lower than applications from postgraduate students. Therefore, we will aim again this year to target undergraduates and increase the number of mentors in our pool.

We are now in the process of preparing for session 2006-07 and the above challenges will inform both our development work and our operations during the forthcoming session. On Track has worked with in excess of 1500 students since we first ran our pilot programme in 2002 and we once again look forward to working with those students who are about to make the transition from college to degree-level study in 2006-07.

TUTOR CASE STUDY



Sarah Honeychurch
On Track Tutor, October 2002 - Present

I began tutoring for On Track in October 2002 because I needed some extra cash and the rate of pay looked good. To be honest, I was initially dubious about the possibility of teaching anybody how to be a better student – I'd never had any help myself and assumed that everybody had to muddle through as I'd done and learn for themselves. However, the support materials were comprehensive, to say the least, and I spent my time during training and before my first group reading the tutors' materials and realising just how much there was to say to potential university students.

My first time in a classroom was scary. I'd never taught before and I was terrified that I'd dry up, stutter, that the students would be bored ... needless to say I didn't sleep well the night before. Well, of course, I needn't have worried – my fellow mentor (who was as new and as nervous as I was) was great fun to work with, the lesson plans worked, and the time with the class passed all too quickly. As the weeks progressed I could see the benefit of the course we were delivering – and it changed my mind about what could be taught.

The most important thing, I think, is to inspire students with confidence in their own abilities – and I think the course On Track offers does that particularly well. The slightly informal style of delivery allows plenty of time for FE students to ask questions and voice their worries, while at the same time passing on techniques that work. And – from a tutor's point of view – it is so satisfying to teach a short course and watch just how quickly students can develop and come out of themselves by the end.

It's also helped me. I began tutoring in my University department soon after beginning with On Track and I work mainly with first year students. I soon realised that most of them had never had the formal teaching that On Track provides and that I could incorporate some of the techniques we teach into tutorials. I think I'm a better tutor now – and I also enjoy tutoring more as my confidence has grown.

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ABOUT THE WEST FORUM

The West of Scotland Wider Access Forum (West Forum) is one of four Regional Forums, established in January 1999, to take forward social inclusion and widening access initiatives in the West of Scotland. The West Forum is a highly collaborative venture between Further and Higher Educational Institutions, schools, local authorities and other relevant organisations.

The West Forum established the On Track Project in January 2002 to support its work in the area of FE/HE articulation. On Track is now one of many projects implemented by the West Forum and outlined below are the aims and operation of the West Forum and details of current Forum projects³.

Members of the West Forum

20 West of Scotland Further Education Colleges (FECs):

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Anniesland College | Glasgow College of Nautical Studies |
| Argyll College | James Watt College |
| Ayr College | John Wheatley College |
| Barony College | Kilmarnock College |
| Cardonald College | Langside College |
| Central College of Commerce | Motherwell College |
| Clydebank College | North Glasgow College |
| Coatbridge College | Reid Kerr College |
| Dumfries and Galloway College | South Lanarkshire College |
| Glasgow Metropolitan College | Stow College |

8 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs):

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Bell College | Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama |
| Glasgow Caledonian University | University of Glasgow |
| The Glasgow School of Art | University of Paisley |
| The Open University in Scotland | University of Strathclyde |

Associate Members include:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Careers Scotland | SWAPWest |
| Scottish Agricultural College | |

³ The list of West Forum Projects and contact details is correct at time of writing.

Strategic Objectives of the West Forum

In April 2001, the West Forum developed a number of strategic objectives and a policy statement that have been used to guide the work of the Forum, to date.

Policy Statement

The West Forum will seek to support member organisations in their efforts:

- to widen access to higher education in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions;
- to provide appropriate information and guidance for students and potential students;
- to improve student retention;
- to facilitate student progression from one programme of study to another; and
- to support students in transition between the sectors

The West Forum will encourage and facilitate collaboration between member organisations in these activities where this is appropriate and will provide for the exchange of information on these activities in the West of Scotland. It will provide opportunities for member organisations across the two sectors to learn from one another and to identify good practice.

The West Forum recognises that support for students within Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions is a vital factor in the success of widening access to higher education and enabling students to progress and to achieve their full potential.

Strategic Objectives

The strategic objectives of the West Forum are:

- to improve recruitment of students to higher education programmes in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland from those areas and groups where there is low participation in higher education;
- to assist institutions with the improvement of retention of such students in higher education;
- to maximise the achievement of such students;
- to facilitate progression of such students from one programme of higher education to another with the maximum feasible credit transfer.

The West Forum recognises that these objectives are quantifiable. It will seek:

- to establish baselines in these areas;
- to set timed targets for quantified improvements in these areas; and
- to evaluate the achievements of those targets.

These targets remain set in line with Scottish Funding Councils' targets for the West of Scotland region. However, the West Forum is aware of the difficulty of accessing data for the measuring of progress towards quantifiable targets. It is also aware that many of the goals are long term and it will be some time before it will be possible to measure positive outcomes. The priority targets must be increasing applications to higher education from non-traditional groups, increasing the number of HN/degree articulation routes and improving the retention of students who articulate from HE in FE to HE in HE.

It was agreed at a meeting in May 2004 that the current policy and strategic objectives serve the West Forum very well and will continue to do so. Within the West Forum, however, strategies for measuring success and for monitoring and evaluation overall must be improved. Three areas must be addressed. These lie in the area of widening access to educational opportunity for:

- black and ethnic minority groups
- deprived groups in rural areas
- the older community

It is expected that the West Forum's new initiatives and linkage to national projects will fulfil the new strategic objectives of the West Forum

What Do We Do?

The work of the West Forum falls into five broad categories:

- Research to inform the development of projects which support widening participation to higher education and to inform partner institutions and provide evidence on which they can base their own initiatives.
- Work with the school sector, in areas of low HE participation, to raise aspirations to progress to Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions.
- Work to support FE/HE articulation, retention, and completion in partner Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions.
- Work with adults and communities where participation in higher education in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions is low.
- Conferences and other dissemination events for senior managers and practitioners in partner Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions to develop the work of the West Forum, disseminate good practice, and disseminate the findings of research into widening participation in the region, together with the outcomes of rigorously evaluated pilot projects.

West Forum Projects

In September 2001, the West Forum obtained funding from the Scottish Further Education Funding Council to develop and implement a number of projects during Phase 1 (Sept 2001 – July 2004) of its operations. The Funding Council for Further and Higher Education agreed in March 2004 to fund the West Forum for the second phase of its operations (Aug 2004 – July 2008). As part of its new brief, the West Forum was asked to address three strategic areas with respect to widening participation in the West of Scotland:

- Work with the school sector in areas of low higher education participation to raise aspirations to progress to higher education in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions
- Work to support FE/HE articulation, retention, and completion
- Work with adults and communities where participation in higher education in Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions is low

Established West Forum Projects

GOALS (Greater Opportunity of Access and Learning with Schools)

Project Duration: Longitudinal project – began Year Five of operations in Aug 2004.

Area of Work: School Sector

Office Location: Central office housed at the University of Paisley. Sub-offices across all HEIs

Contact: Lorraine Judge, email: Lorraine.Judge@paisley.ac.uk

GOALS is a project that is managed and delivered by the seven Higher Education Institutions in membership of the West Forum and is delivered in approximately 300 schools across 11 Local Authorities in the West of Scotland⁴. It aims to raise awareness about higher education and encourage pupils from schools with low participation rates in HE to think about higher education as an option. It offers a continuum of activity from P6 to S6, which in turn comprises 15 elements involving a mix of in-school and on-campus events. One or more element is co-ordinated by each of the HEIs although many on-campus activities are offered across a range of HEIs. Project staff are located across all HEIs in membership of the West Forum and activities involve undergraduate and post-graduate students working with pupils. Phase 1 of the project ended in July 2004 and a revised programme for Phase 2 began operations in August 2004. Current evaluations indicate that the Project is contributing to a year on year increase in participation in HE from its partner schools. Its first year cohort of P6 pupils are entering S5 in 2006-07. GOALS works with approximately 48,000 pupils every year. For more information visit: www.goals.ac.uk

⁴ In Phase 1 of its operations, GOALS had operated in 13 Local Authorities

SWAPWest (Scottish Wider Access Programme – West Consortium)

Project Duration: Operational in the West of Scotland since 1987.

Area of Work: Work with adult and communities

Office Location: Based in the Central College of Commerce, Glasgow

Contact: Myra Duffy, email: swapwest@btconnect.com

SWAPWest is an associate member of the West Forum and although it is run as a separate organisation there is an overlap between member institutions of SWAPWest and the West Forum.

SWAPWest is a partnership of Further and Higher Education Institutions in the West of Scotland, which creates opportunities for mature students with no qualifications to access higher education. The aims and objectives of SWAPWest are:

- to raise awareness of Access and HE opportunities amongst target groups
- to support and facilitate entry to HE by individuals from the target groups
- to promote a range of opportunities for study to include diversity in level, type and mode of study
- to negotiate guaranteed progression routes for students on to an appropriate programme
- to facilitate collaboration between a range of sectors including community education, the voluntary sector, FE, and HE
- to provide high quality impartial information to students preparing for return to study
- to provide a quality service to meet the needs of its users

A SWAP Access programme builds confidence, develops core skills, develops study, offers flexible modes of assessment, is accessible to those with no or few formal qualifications, provides multi-exit routes to HNC, HND or degree studies, and guarantees progression to higher education, on successful completion. SWAP programmes have three component parts: academic content, preparation for higher education, and a student profile.

The SWAPWest website, www.swap2highereducation.com provides further information and links to partner organisations.

New West Forum Projects

The West Forum Executive Group approved a number of new projects in June 2005:

Scoping Study on Transition Support for Students with Mental Health Difficulties

Project Duration: Approx January – June 2006

Area of Work: Research: students with disabilities

Office Location: University of Paisley

Contact: Hazel Knox, email: hazel.knox@paisley.ac.uk

It is hoped that this study will provide the foundations for a project in this area.

Students in Transition - Tracking GOALS Students in Transition from School and through the First Year of Higher Education

Project Duration: January 2006 - January 2008

Project Director: Dr Lynn Walker

Project Co-ordinator: Karla H Benske

Address: University of Glasgow
Recruitment and Participation Service

12 Southpark Terrace

Glasgow

G12 8LG

Telephone: 0141 330 2709 or 0141 330 8148

Email: l.walker@admin.gla.ac.uk or k.benske@admin.gla.ac.uk

The Project aims to provide valuable information on the success of preparation and orientation courses offered through the West Forum to students participating in the GOALS Project. It will research and track students who attended GOALS schools and who then entered their first year in higher education.

The Project's current partner institutions are:-

- Anniesland College;
- Cardonald College;
- Clydebank College;
- Glasgow Metropolitan College;
- Langside College;
- Bell College;
- Glasgow Caledonian University;
- Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama;
- University of Glasgow; and
- University of Paisley.

Other institutions have been invited to join the Project.

The Project aims to:

- Determine the challenges encountered by widening participation students in transition into various types of higher education;
- Assess the value in easing transition of the preparation courses which operate both through the West Forum and within the institutions;
- Establish the impact of preparation courses on academic progress and retention;
- Gather students' perceptions of their own levels of preparedness and of the learning strategies employed; and

- Determine students' reasons for leaving or progressing to other institutions prematurely and whether or not additional preparation might have impacted on these decisions.

Engaging with Employability

Project Duration: January 2006 – January 2008.

Area of Work: School Sector/Support FE/HE Transition

Office Location: University of Paisley

Contact: Anne McGillivray, email: anne.mcgillivray@paisley.ac.uk

The aims of this project are to research and track two specific student populations and investigate employability prospects and outcomes. The first of these populations are students who have attended GOALS schools and then entered university; the second are students who have made the transition from HNC/D study to degree award. The project will review existing literature on widening access students and graduate employability, particularly in the Scottish context. Further, it will survey graduate cohorts (GOALS and HNC/D entrants) who have completed their degree successfully at two universities in liaison with the University Careers Advisory Service and Graduate Destination Studies and explore the experience of graduates in seeking employment.

Older Adults' Engagement with Further and Higher Education in the West of Scotland: Tracking Educational Journeys

Project Duration: October 2005 – 31 July 2006 (Phase 1) July 2006 – July 2008 (Phase 2)

Area of Work: Work with Communities

Office Location: University of Glasgow

Contact: Brian Findsen, email: b.findsen@educ.gla.ac.uk

This two-phase research project (literature review, followed by longitudinal study) will focus on older adults' engagement with FE/HE in the West of Scotland. The primary focus is on older adults' educational journeys, thus connecting with a group in society historically excluded from formal provision (especially in credit programmes). The study will provide insights into the educational experiences of older adults (here defined as 50 – 65 years of age) as they negotiate formal education in FE and HE contexts. Necessarily, the stories of these participants (biographies) will intersect with key objectives of the West Forum: analysing information and guidance to students; identifying barriers and incentives for continuing study (retention); and investigating benefits for them in completing a programme (consisting of one element of 'success').

START-IT

Project Duration: August 2005 – July 2007.

Area of Work: Work with Communities

Office Location: University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus

Contact: Janice Pattie, email: j.pattie@crichton.gla.ac.uk

This innovative project aims to target additional resource and support for disadvantaged students in a rural area, to enhance learning experience, and improve retention. Further, it seeks to increase the IT skills and confidence in use of electronic resources of disadvantaged entrants, at the earliest stage of study; i.e., pre-entry access courses, or the first semester of degree study,

Ad-dition Project

Project Duration: January 2005 – December 2007.

Area of Work: Work with Communities

Office Location: University of Glasgow

Contact: Kenny Anderson, email: K.Anderson@admin.gla.ac.uk

This project aims to widen participation to higher education in its work with adults and communities where participation in HE is low by building on the successes of the udecide project. In extending the model to communities through the recruitment of local development officers, and the provision of local development officer training in udecide workshops, the project will offer links with community organisations, particularly smaller organisations where progression routes may be limited. The project will link with strategic planning groups to ensure FE and HE members are represented in strategic and operational plans, including Community Learning Plans, and will develop opportunities for partnerships where high quality information is provided or signposted.

REMIT (Recruitment of Ethnic Minorities into Teaching)

Project Duration: Operated in GOALS 2001 – 2005; will operate in the West Forum Aug 2005 – July 2008.

Area of Work: Work with Communities

Office Location: University of Glasgow

Contact: Pamela Ross, email p.ross@admin.gla.ac.uk

REMIT was established as an element within the GOALS Project in recognition of the need to attract more black and minority ethnic (BME) pupils into the teaching profession. The most significant achievements of REMIT are to have raised the awareness in the West of Scotland, and indeed across the country at large, of the stark under-representation of BME communities in the teaching profession and to have established a powerful partnership which will bring about positive change over the years ahead.

E-Grow (SWAPWest Guidance Project)

Project Duration: October 2005 – October 2006.

Area of Work: Work with Communities

Office Location: Central College of Commerce, Glasgow

Contact: Helen Cormack, email: swapwest@btconnect.com

The project aims to assist the West Forum to develop a guidance strategy; the enabling mechanism to do this being the current ‘model of good practice’ which is the SWAPWest guidance element of the SWAP programme (see above under ‘Established Projects’). There will be a number of specific outcomes from this project including a ‘toolkit’ to be accessed through the West Forum website, which will allow prospective students to determine their stage on the educational progression chart and to seek the guidance and support at the point of access which best suits their needs.

College Student Network Project

Project Duration: June 2006 – June 2008.

Area of Work: FE Retention and Progression

Office Location: Glasgow Metropolitan College

Contact: Anne Kemp, email: anne.kemp@glasgowmet.ac.uk

This project addresses the West Forum strategic objective of ‘assisting institutions with the improvement of student retention’. The project will seek to research and identify “hot spots” of poor retention in FE Colleges, by specific subject areas and courses. In order to improve student retention in those areas, the project will use peer support to build confidence in new students, those thinking about progressing to a higher level, and those students who have recently progressed, by offering first-hand advice from current (or recently graduated) students on how to achieve success and realise potential. The project will also encourage social integration which would have a positive influence upon student retention.

As a long-term aim, the College Student Network Project should develop into an integral part of the Colleges’ approach to pre-entry and on-course guidance and support. It is hoped that the outcomes of this project will be: a demonstrable increase in retention rates among new students, increased progression to more advanced study, and higher retention and success rates among those who have progressed, in areas where the retention rates have been low.

Science For All

Project Duration: April 2006 – August 2006.

Area of Work: FE Colleges

Office Location: Central College of Commerce, Glasgow

Contact: Andrew Quinn, email: swapwest@btconnect.com

The aim of this project is to maximise the achievement of students from areas where there is low participation in Higher Education and encourage applications to Science programmes, many of which, both in FE and HE, have suffered a decline in numbers. The target group are adults disadvantaged through unemployment, disability, ethnic origin or location.

In addition, it is hoped to facilitate progression of such students from one programme of higher education to another with the maximum feasible credit transfer.

Working in Health Access Network, West of Scotland Area (West WHAN)

Project Duration: April 2006 – July 2008.

Office Location: University of Glasgow

Contact: Alan Foster, email: info@whan.org.uk

Website: www.westwhan.org.uk

This work will form a central and vital part of the development, in the West of Scotland, of the Working in Health Access Network (WHAN). It will enable the extension of WHAN practice to more HEIs, FEIs and schools than would otherwise be possible. It will allow the involvement of areas not presently covered in the West of Scotland and will allow the development of more activities. It will, in particular, focus on the support and retention of students in health care courses through the training of online mentors and the enrolment of online mentees in the scheme. This work compliments the services already available for supporting such students.

Linkage to National Projects

The Open University in Scotland, “Diverse Routes to Higher Education” Project

Project Duration: August 2005 – July 2008.

Area of Work: Work with Communities

Office Location: The Open University in Scotland, Edinburgh

Contact: Lindsay Hewitt, email: L.A.Hewitt@open.ac.uk

This project, which is funded from each of the four wider access regional forums in Scotland (and, of which, the West Forum is substantially the major funder and the lead forum with respect to finance handling), aims to produce an information pack and

website www.diverseroutes.co.uk for black and minority ethnic groups, including refugees and asylum seekers. The project will complement the work of the Scottish Refugee Council and initiatives such as Fresh talent and New Roots Scotland.

The HN to Degree Effective Subject Bridging Project

Project Duration: August 2005 – December 2006.

Area of Work: HN to Degree Articulation, Retention, and Completion

Office Location: National Co-ordinator for Widening Participation, c/o Napier University

Contact: Margaret Dundas, email: m.dundas@napier.ac.uk

The aim of this project is to promote appropriate activities that will improve the effectiveness of articulation between subject specific HNC/D programmes and degree programmes. This will be done by reviewing the current pattern of entry to degrees in the cognate area; including, the extent of credit transfer offered by different HEI programmes for similar HN programmes; providing cross-sector staff development to raise awareness and address key issues; developing subject-specific toolkits and learning resources as required; improving support mechanisms for students making transitions from HN to degrees; identifying barriers posed by professional bodies and suggesting methods of addressing these; promoting activities aimed at increasing the scope for credit transfer, and hence, entry to later years of degree: e.g., curriculum change in HN or degree programmes, transitional summer schools, and/or learning support materials.

West Forum Contact Details

Further information and copies of reports and newsletters can be obtained from:

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Website: www.westforum.org.uk

SESSION TOPICS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

INTRODUCTION

By the end of this session, students should:

- have participated in a group discussion about university and discussed why they want to go to university, what university they intend to go to, what they are looking forward to about university, and what their concerns are
- be aware of the aims of the On Track Programme
- be aware of the major differences between study in an FEC and an HEI and especially the concept of the student as an Independent Learner
- be aware of the main HEI teaching methods and techniques: lectures, seminars, labs, field work, tutorials, etc
- be aware of the main HEI assessment methods: essays, reports, exams, oral presentations, lab work, etc
- have participated in a group discussion about what the college experience can bring to university and be aware of the skills and experiences that they have gained at college that can be applied to degree-level study
- be aware of what the On Track Programme can offer in the way of advice and Essential Skills
- have had the opportunity to enrol in the On Track Programme

LEARNING STYLES AND CONCEPTUAL THINKING

By the end of this session, students should:

- be aware of the different learning styles, such as Deep, Strategic, and Surface learning
- be aware of the importance of approaches in learning at degree-level study, especially Deep Active Learning
- have been introduced to Conceptual Thinking and Conceptual Categories
- have participated in activities to illustrate creating Conceptual Categories

CRITICAL THINKING

By the end of this session, students should:

- have been introduced to the concept of Critical Thinking
- be aware of the importance of Critical Thinking at degree-level study
- be aware of how Critical Thinking is used
- understand how Critical Thinking skills can be developed
- have participated in activities illustrating how Critical Thinking is backed up by evidence and argument
- have participated in a critical reading activity

LECTURES AND NOTE-TAKING

By the end of this session, students should:

- appreciate the differences between studying in an FEC and a HEI, in particular, the need to go beyond lecture notes when writing assignments
- be aware of the importance of note-taking from the spoken word in the HEI environment
- be aware of the shape and duration of a lecture and how it fits into degree-level teaching
- have a clearer understanding of the purpose of lecture notes
- understand how to listen to a lecture in a deep active way and identify concepts, bias, etc
- have tried taking notes from a passage read by one of the tutors
- have been introduced to different note-taking and note-making strategies and their strengths and weaknesses
- have been made aware of the need to select, order, and store their notes for future reference through the SCORE acronym

INFORMATION GATHERING, READING LISTS, AND USING LIBRARY RESOURCES

By the end of this session, students should:

- be aware of the importance of independent reading in the HEI environment
- have been introduced to the SQ3R Technique for Effective Reading; and had an opportunity to practice it
- have been introduced to criteria for assessing web-based information
- have been introduced to the concept of the reading list and examined examples
- have been made aware of the range of resources held in HEI libraries – books, journals and periodicals, newspapers, web sites
- have been introduced to how libraries work – subject divisions, catalogues, indexing and retrieval systems, loan facilities

ACADEMIC TERMS AND DECONSTRUCTING ESSAY QUESTIONS

By the end of this session, students should:

- be aware of the importance of deciphering and properly understanding academic terminology
- have been introduced to the concept of deconstructing academic questions into subject/focus/command words
- have seen the process in action and practised on sample questions

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND ESSAYS

By the end of this session, students should:

- be familiar with the different types of written assignment and how they fit into HEI teaching practices
- have been introduced to the structure of the two most common formats – essays and reports
- have been introduced to the layout of an essay

- be aware of the stages involved in Essay Writing
- be aware of the existence and role of word limits
- be aware of how to express their opinion in HEI written assignments
- have had the opportunity to compare two pieces of written work, and be familiar with the features of a good essay
- where applicable, have been introduced to the structure of a Scientific Lab Report

REFERENCING

By the end of this session, students should:

- be aware of the importance of referencing in HEI level work
- understand the reason for referencing – tracing evidence, plagiarism etc
- recognise what plagiarism is; and how to avoid it
- have been thoroughly familiarised with the Harvard System of referencing as the most common style in the Arts and Humanities
- understand the concept of: footnotes, endnotes, references, bibliography
- be familiar with the form and purpose of a reference section
- have been shown the format for citing and referencing web pages

EXAMS AND REVISION

By the end of this session, students should:

- be aware of how exams fit into degree-level study
- have been introduced to typical exam formats
- have had the opportunity to examine an appropriate HEI past paper
- have been made familiar with the Six Stage plan for successful revision
- be aware of the importance of time management

- have received guidance on summarising and organising revision notes
- have had the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any areas of particular concern

MARKING SCHEMES

By the end of this session, students should:

- be aware of the main differences between FEC and HEI marking criteria
- have had explained to them how work is marked at an HEI, and what criteria is used
- be aware of the occasionally subjective nature of HEI marking
- have been made familiar with the marking process, dissemination of feedback, etc
- be aware of the difference between an Ordinary and Honours degree and how degrees are classified

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

By the end of this session, students should:

- be aware of the importance of good presentation skills in degree-level work and in wider employment environments
- be aware of what constitutes a good oral presentation
- be familiar with the various stages that contribute to the completion of a successful presentation (preparation, presenting, and reflection/evaluation)
- have had the opportunity to take part in planning and delivering a small-scale mock presentation

PARTICIPATING COLLEGES AND GROUPS

Anniesland College

HND Technical Support/Software Development
HND Multimedia

Barony College

HND Animal Care/Fish Farm and Fisheries Management

Cardonald College

HNC Health Care (Enhanced)
HNC Health Care
HND Administration/Business/Travel and Tourism/Information Systems
HND Sports Coaching

Clydebank College

HND Business Administration/Administration and Information Management
HNC Social Sciences

Coatbridge College

HND Administration and Information Management
HNC Health Care – Group One
HNC Health Care – Group Two
Access to Humanities
HNC Social Science

Central College of Commerce

HND Human Resource Management
HNC/D Business
HNC/D Social Sciences
HND Administration and Information Management

Dumfries and Galloway College

HND Computing: Technical Support

Glasgow Metropolitan College

HND Events Management
HND Journalism
HND Architectural Conservation
HND Hospitality Management
Access to Food Science

GCNS

HND Administration and Information Management
HND Business
HND Multimedia/Computing Technical Support
HND Fitness, Health, and Exercise

HND Sports Coaching with Development

James Watt College

HND Hospitality Management
 Access to Humanities (Kilwinning Campus)
 Access to Humanities (Finnart Street Campus)
 HND Social Science

Kilmarnock College

Access to Arts, Social Sciences, and Primary Education
 HNC/D Computing

Langside College

HND Supporting and Managing Learning Needs
 Access to Humanities
 HNC Applied Science

Motherwell College

Access to Humanities
 HNC Sports Coaching
 HNC Health Care (full day session)

North Glasgow College

HND Business (various specialisms)
 HND Computing/Accounts

Reid Kerr College

HND Business (various specialisms)
 HNC Professional Writing Skills
 HNC Social Sciences
 Access to Humanities
 HNC/D Electronics

South Lanarkshire College

HNC Social Care
 Access to Humanities
 HND Business/Accounting/Administration

Stow College

Access to Medical Studies
 HND Applied Science
 Access to Biology/Animal Studies/Nutrition
 HND Social Science

*A small number of groups finished before the end of the five sessions, where this has occurred it has been classified as a participating group if it ran for three sessions, three being the number of sessions a student is required to attend to be awarded a certificate of attendance.



The ON TRACK project is part of the West of Scotland Wider Access Forum