

## Equality Analysis (EA)

### Student Services

#### Enhancing the first year student experience

##### A. Policy/practice details

1. The title of the policy being analysed.

Enhancing the undergraduate first year student experience: supporting student transition into higher education

2. Please explain the main purpose of the policy being analysed.

Our students enjoy access to a wide range of academic, extra-curricular and employment related opportunities. The proposals attached aim to enhance the opportunities for them to develop a sense of belonging within their department and across the wider University community, and to manage effectively the key transitions they will encounter during their first year, as outlined in Appendix A of the attachment.

They will provide a clearer framework within which students can plan and manage their overall student experience to make best use of the opportunities available to them. They will also support the conversion, retention and achievement of all students, but particularly those from international and non-traditional UK family backgrounds.

3. Who will be affected?

All first year undergraduate students, student ambassadors/volunteers and staff.

4. Aspects of the policy that particularly impact on equality and diversity.

The QAA has identified the first year of higher education as “critical” for laying the foundations of academic study, and a key time for “learning how to cope with the demands of a new environment and personal responsibilities”. A large body of international and UK research evidence backs this up, including the recent report of the What Works? Student Retention and Success programme, initiated and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and HEFCE.

We know from this research that students from UK family backgrounds without prior experience of UK higher education find the transition into Universities particularly challenging, as do many international students who may have experience of very different educational systems.

Therefore, the focus of these proposals on enabling all students to develop a sense of belonging and to understand and manage their overall university experience more effectively may be of particular benefit to these students, as long as they are developed with their needs and views in mind.

## B. Analysis

5. Please indicate evidence used and the process by which you have arrived at your conclusions.

The proposals have been developed drawing on the research referred to above, as well as the views of students and staff gathered over a number of years through surveys relating to Student Induction. The proposals have been through a series of iterations drawing on discussions with staff and students, both individually and through forums, such as the Student Experience Forum, the Student Support Forum, the Senior Tutors Forum and the Induction Working Group.

6. Risk of adverse impact on protected groups.

	High impact	Medium impact	Low impact
Age		x	
Disability		x	
Gender		x	
Pregnancy/Maternity		x	
Race/ethnicity		x	
Religion/belief		x	
Sexual Orientation		x	
Transgender		x	
Marriage/civil partnership			x

## C. Mitigating potential adverse impact

7. Conclusions and recommendations for amendments to the policy/practice. *Please give an outline of the key actions based on any gaps, challenges, priorities and opportunities you have identified.*

The risk of adverse impacts on protected groups is generally considered low. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that a higher proportion of disabled and BAME students have difficulties developing sense of belonging and making the transition into higher education. Therefore, their potential adverse impact has been assessed as medium to highlight the particular challenges associated with these groups that must be addressed through the implementation of these proposals.

Diversity has been identified as a specific theme to address in the materials and activities being developed. Staff leading on the implementation of these various proposals will be asked to undertake more detailed Equality Analyses to inform their planning. They will be expected to draw on the views of students in general, and disabled and international students in particular, as well as staff, to help review and inform the development of each of the specific proposals that have been approved.

8. Timescale for implementation of changes or introduction of new policy.

The changes contained within these proposals will be implemented over the next two and a half years.

#### **D. Publication**

9. Final reporter:

Mark Ames

Head of Student Services

10. Date:

21 May 2012

11. Review date:

July 2014

## **Enhancing the undergraduate first year student experience: supporting student transition into higher education**

### **1. Background**

The QAA has identified the first year of higher education as “critical” for laying the foundations of academic study, and a key time for “learning how to cope with the demands of a new environment and personal responsibilities”. A large body of international and UK research evidence backs this up, including the recent report of the What Works? Student Retention and Success programme, initiated and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and HEFCE. [http://www.actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files\\_mf/phfhighereducationreportfinalmar122.pdf](http://www.actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files_mf/phfhighereducationreportfinalmar122.pdf)

Key areas identified for improvement include:

- pre-arrival information and interaction to engage and help prepare students both in terms of academic and social induction and preparing for life on campus;
- information overload when students first arrive;
- support for student transition beyond initial induction;
- developing a sense of belonging;
- involving experienced students in supporting the transition of new students;
- personalising the student experience through contact with academic and other staff.

Our students enjoy access to a wide range of academic, extra-curricular and employment related opportunities. However, it is clear from student feedback that further improvements are needed in the areas identified above. Therefore, the following proposals, developed through consultation with students and staff, and approved by the Vice-Chancellors Group, will help ensure progress is made.

### **2. Aims**

These proposals are intended to enable all students to:

- prepare more effectively during the pre-arrival period for their transition into higher education
- develop a sense of belonging within their department and across the wider University community
- manage effectively the key transitions they will encounter during their first year.
- plan and manage their overall student experience to make best use of the opportunities available to them.

These proposals are also intended to enable the University to:

- maximise the efficient and effective use of existing institutional resources through increased collaboration between academic departments, central services and the Students' Union.
- develop the use of digital technologies to support this work.
- support the conversion, retention and achievement of all students, but particularly those from international and non-traditional UK family backgrounds.

### 3. Objectives

- a) **Develop on-line induction modules**, relating to the practical aspects of student life, generic academic skills, extra-curricular activities and development, and employability; focusing on the key transitional issues students will encounter during their first year and associated resources. These modules will be developed with departmental, central services and Students' Union input.

This will enable students to prepare themselves pre-arrival and be a resource throughout their first year. By providing this information in advance, academic departments can then focus on more interactive, two-way conversations and activities in initial induction that help students develop a sense of belonging and begin to personalise their experience.

- b) **Extend department-based induction**, through a timetabled programme of induction activities that extends from pre-arrival to the end of the first year; allowing the key transitional issues to be highlighted and addressed in a more measured, proactive and developmental manner. The handover point between the Recruitment and Admissions Office and departments will be clearly identified.

Students will be more likely to value and engage with induction activities timetabled by their department. The Student Experience Officers will play a key role in coordinating and supporting this development.

- c) **Extend peer mentoring**, so all first year undergraduate students have the opportunity to benefit from the experience and support of their more experienced fellow students in relation to the key first year transitions.

Student Services will prioritise more staff time to support the Students' Union lead in this area, and the Student Experience Officers will play a key role in coordinating and supporting this development.

- d) **Short lecture series** for undergraduate students, on communication for academic and professional purposes; to consolidate learning from on-line academic skills induction materials and highlight further resources.

The English Language Centre currently provides this for students in the School of Management and other Faculty-based programmes, and will extend this provision to other programmes which do not have similar provision in place. The lecture series will be developed in collaboration with departments.

- e) **Enhance communication** to support these developments, and ensure students are provided with information from their academic departments, central services and the Students' Union in a more coordinated, timely and interactive manner, using a range of communication platforms.

The Student Experience Officers, Student Services, Web Services and the Students' Union will provide the focus for this coordination, led by the Head of Student Services and the Chief Executive of the Students' Union as institutional leads for the transition to University strand of work.