STEP Online

Supporting transitions and navigating pathways

17 November 2026



Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework

QAA SCOTLAND

Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

cdn
College Development Network

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Welcome

Alison Greenwood-Bell,
City of Glasgow College

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Understanding staff development for diverse learner journeys in the tertiary sector

Dr Clare Matysova, Research Fellow / Delivery lead

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Why staff development matters

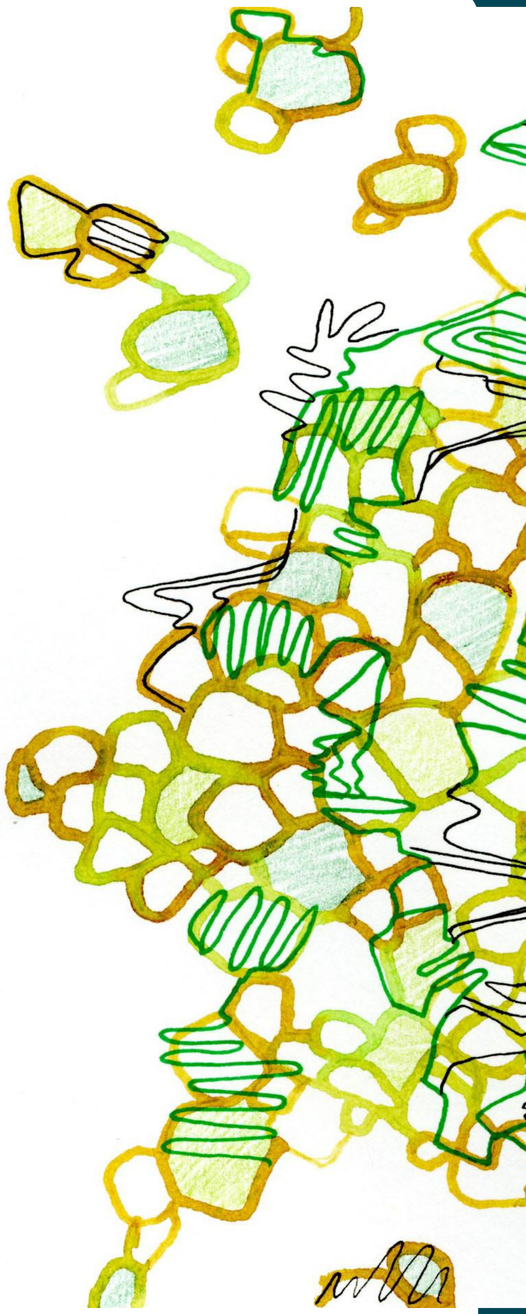
Implications of increasingly diverse learner journeys and aspirations towards greater parity between pathways for those who teach and/or support learning (educators)

Aims

- Map **educator development** across **the Scottish tertiary** sector
- Identify **educator development needs** including identifying high impact developmer activities

Outputs - State of Play report, Case studies and a 'Future Educator' resource co-crea with students

Collaboration and consultation involving 16 partners across Scotland's tertiary educa sector.



STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

A tertiary future - Questions arising

- How are staff being supported to get the basics right? What do they need right now vs. in the future?
- Can educators move easily across FE and HE professional frameworks?
- Does a tertiary approach challenge historical FE-HE hierarchies? And could it strengthen the influence of teaching?
- What does tertiary mean for educator identities?



And so it begins...(officially): My PhD topic – Exploring the potential for an integrated set of professional standards for practitioners working in tertiary education contexts and institutions: a phenomenographic investigation

Feb 7, 2026

Screenshot – Alexandra Walker blog (Feb 2026)

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How to input into the project

State of Play Report Consultation Stakeholder

We are inviting colleagues across the sector to help determine:

- whether the report reflects current educator development practice and highlight any major gaps; and
- share perspectives on the future direction of educator development across the sector.

How to respond:

👉Complete the State of Play Consultation Survey available on the STEP Staff Development project webpage

On the horizon:

- Call for high impact case studies
- Future Educator Resource

➢ Go to the STEP Staff Development project webpage to find out more

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Background to Student Transitions Projects

Alison Eales,
QAA Scotland

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

STEP Projects launched in 2024

Project	Partners
Student Success through Institutional Tertiary Alignment: Pathways, Process and Design to Enable Student Success	Abertay University, Dundee and Angus College
Transition Learning	New College Lanarkshire, SCQF Partnership, Dundee and Angus College, Fife College, SWAP
Pedagogy for Transitions: Setting Students Up for Success through Enquiry Based Learning	Dumfries and Galloway College, New College Lanarkshire, University of the West of Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University

Pedagogy for Transitions: Setting Students Up for Success through Enquiry Based Learning

Claire Mackie,
University of the West of Scotland

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Pedagogy for Transitions

Setting Students Up for Success through Enquiry Based Learning

Dr Claire Mackie, University of the West of Scotland

Dumfries and Galloway College

QAA SCOTLAND

cdn College Development Network

Abertay University

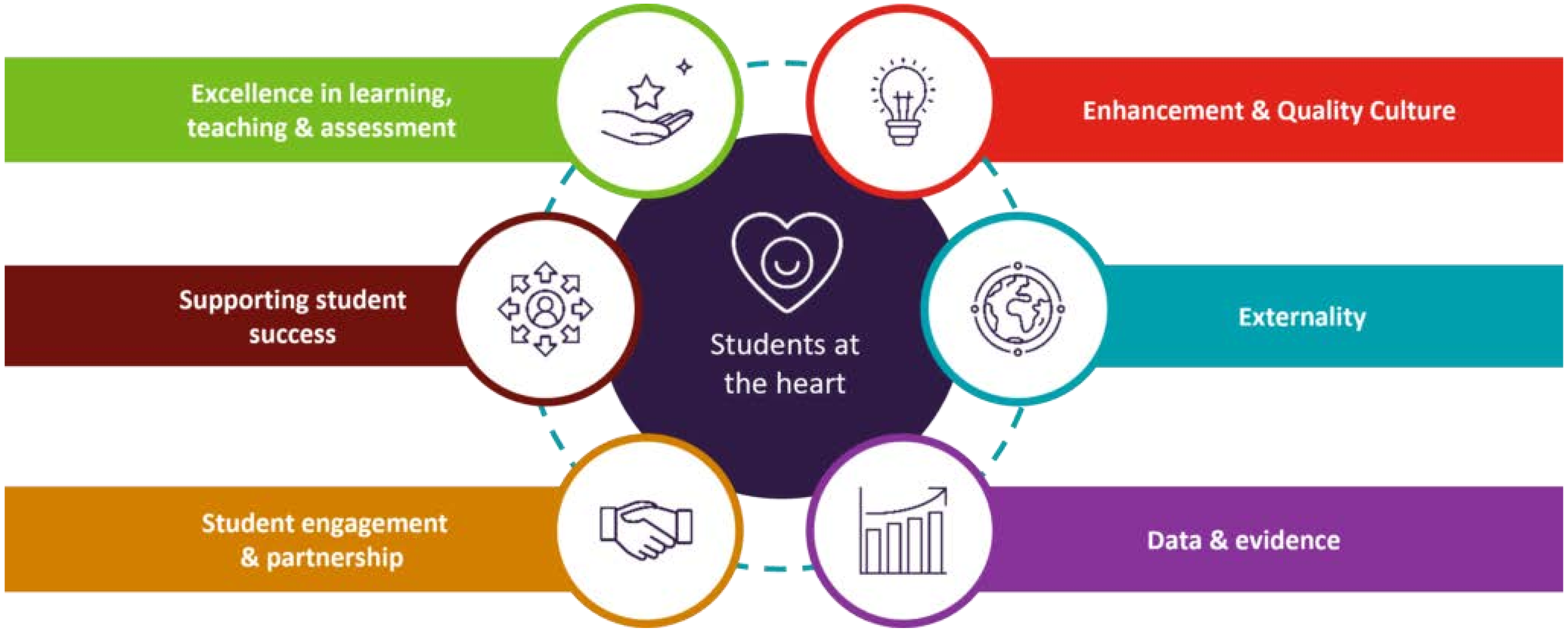
NCL NEW COLLEGE LANARKSHIRE

D&A DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

GCU Glasgow Caledonian University

UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST of SCOTLAND

From TQEF to STEP – supporting diverse learner journeys



Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (QAA Scotland, 2024)

“We are arguing for shared knowledge and practice to better align learning and teaching experiences across the sector because … the shifts across the sector, which will align to future proposed reform, indicate there is a desire for a truly integrated tertiary sector.”

(Christie *et al*, 2016)



(Robertson and Cunningham, 2023)

Independent learning

‘Deficit’ model for college students



Needs collaborative research across sector



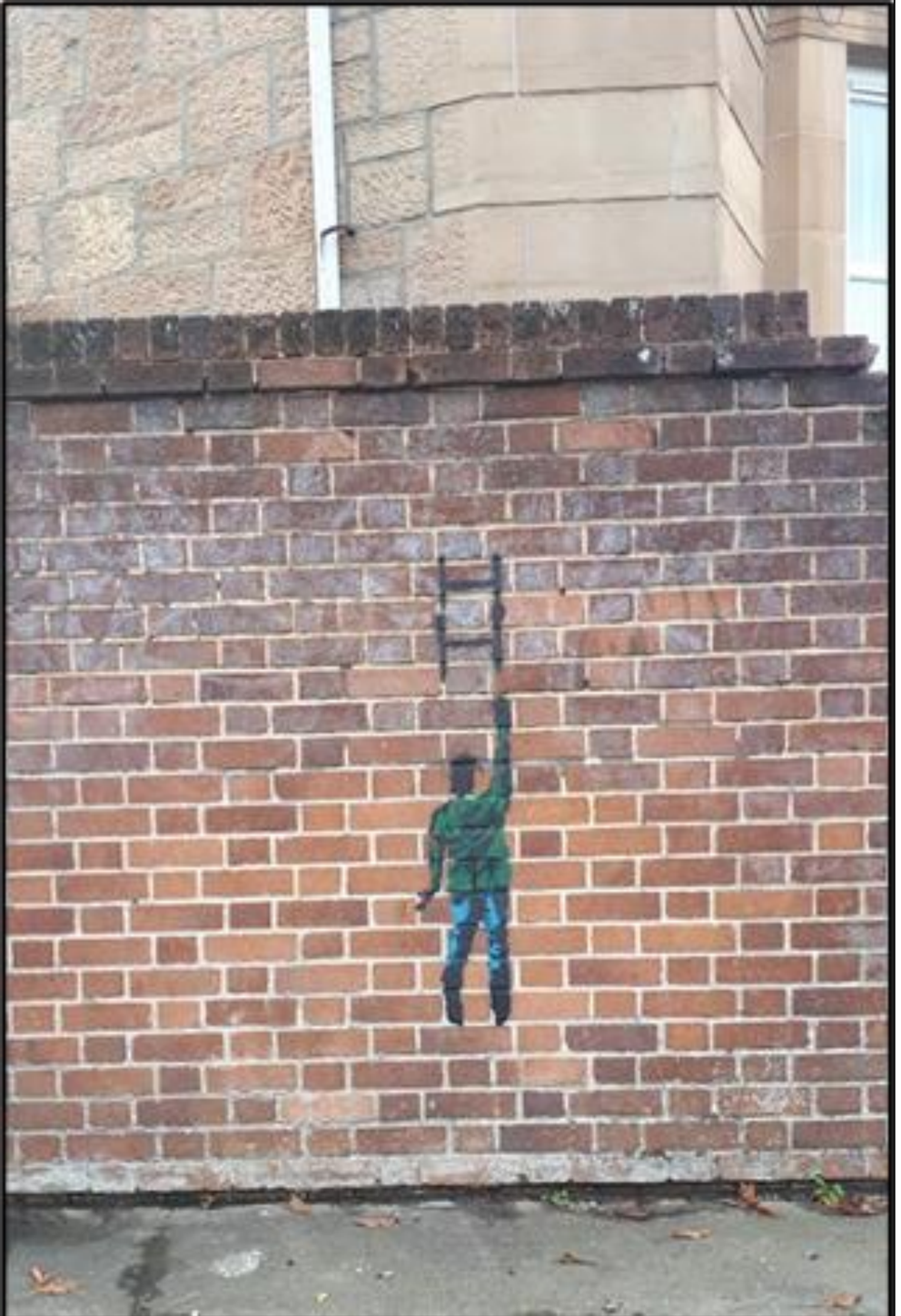
Different approaches to teaching in FE and HE



(Meharg *et al*, 2017)

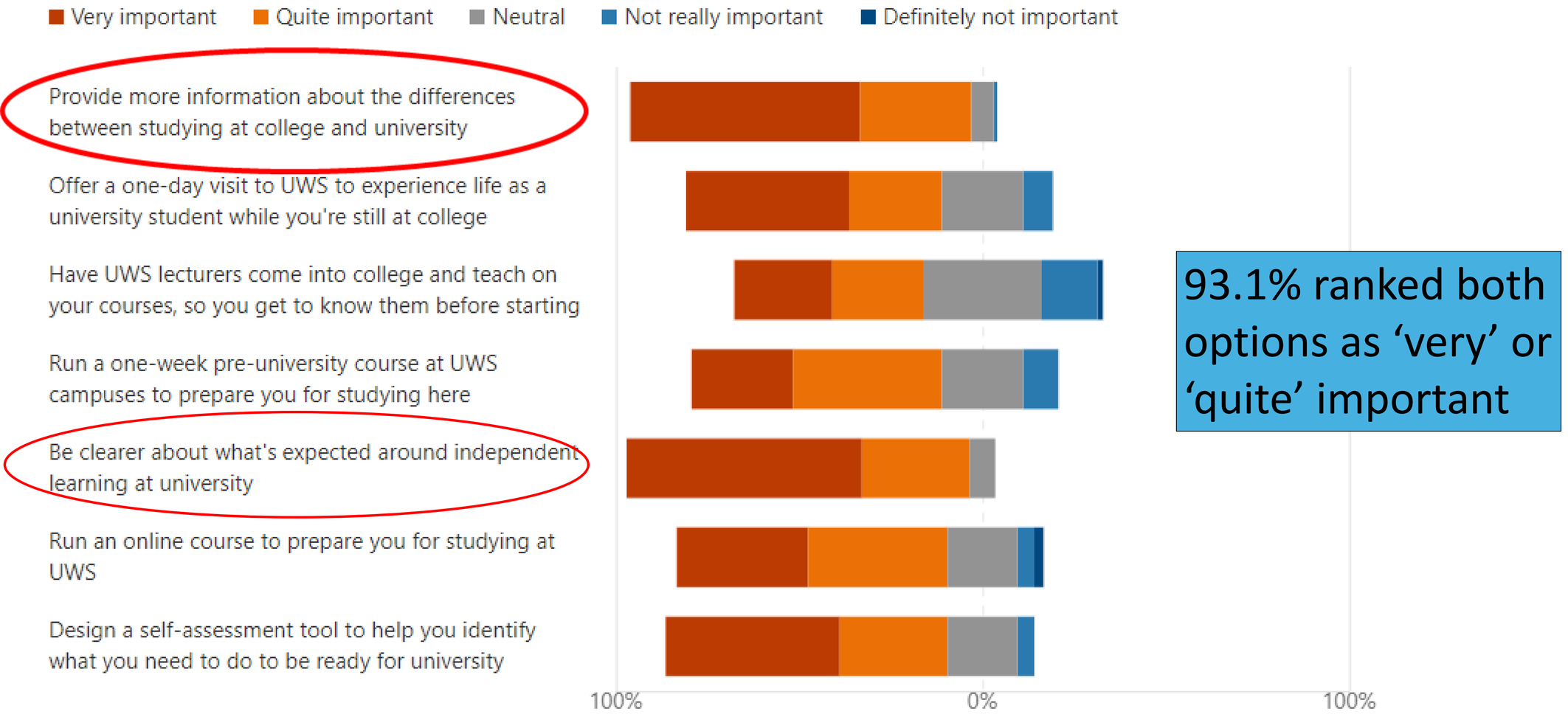
(Doyle, 2019)

Potential challenges during the transition from FE to HE



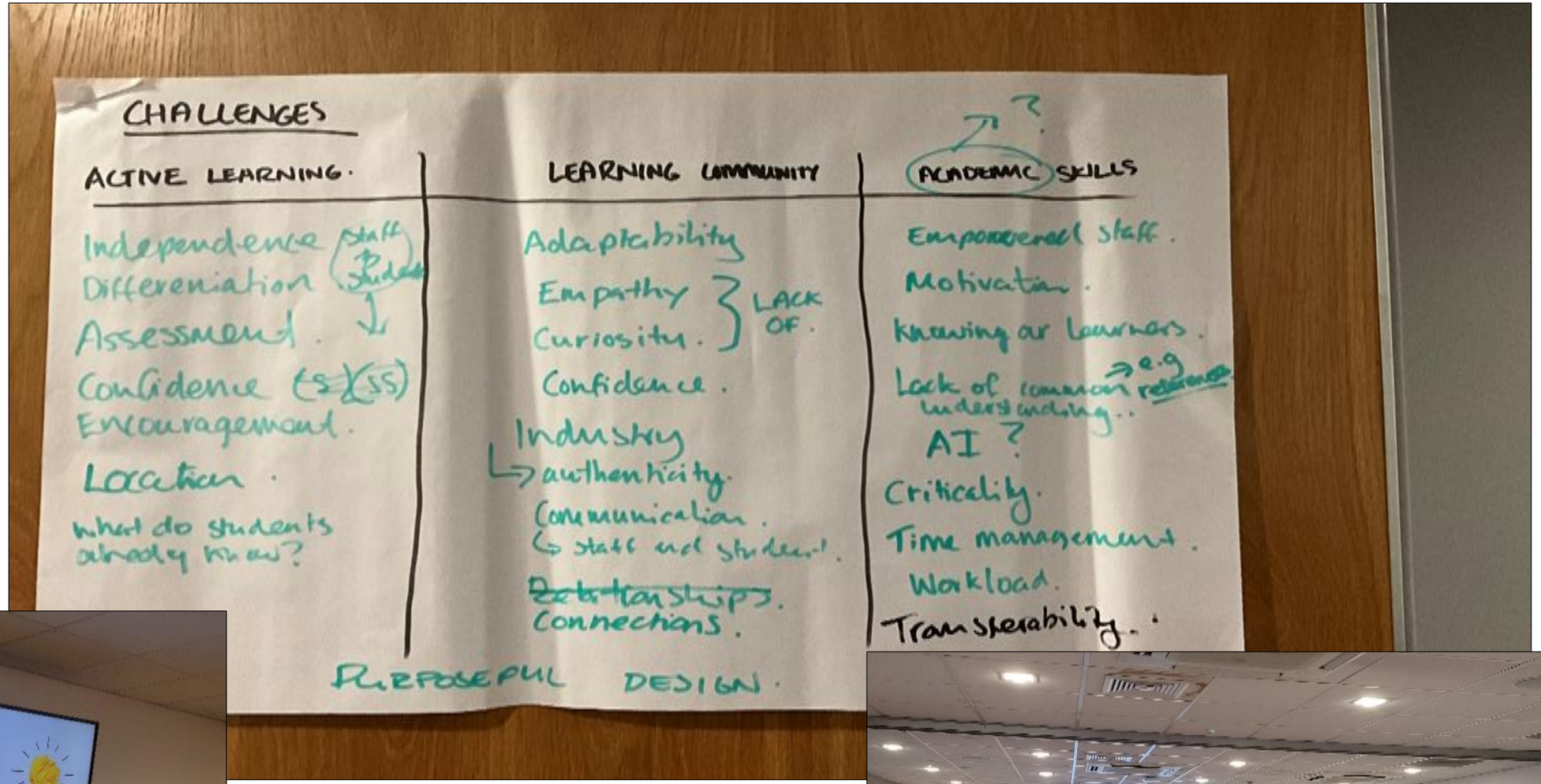
“… for the longest time it always felt like constantly reaching for a ladder that wasn't long enough to reach where I wanted to get to, if you understand, so to me [this picture] just perfectly encapsulates all those feelings - the struggle and the fear of the unknown.”

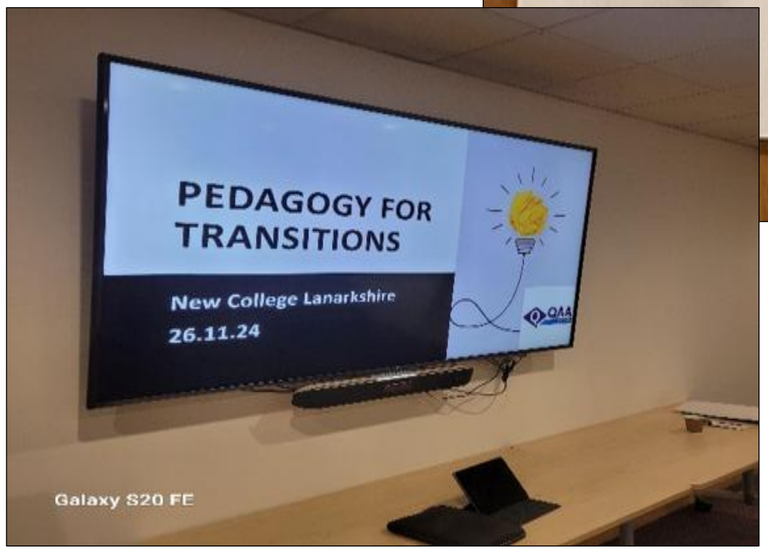
Natalie (Computing student, UWS;
articulated into second year)



93.1% ranked both options as ‘very’ or ‘quite’ important

Q: What more could be done to help people moving from college to studying at UWS?





Workshop One
November 2024
New College Lanarkshire





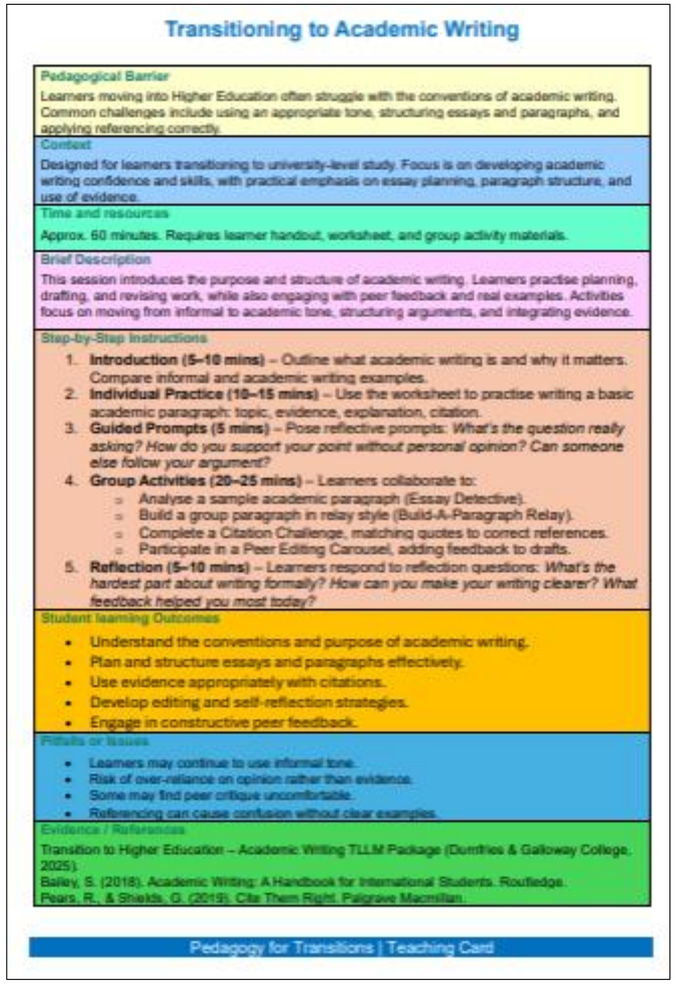
Workshop Two
April 2025
New College Lanarkshire

Introducing ‘Teach Less, Learn More’

Workshop outputs: four thematic domains identified

Active Learning	Independent Learning
Academic Practices	Learning Environment

- Cultural shift – move away from passive pedagogies to active, student-centred learning approaches
- Broadening of initial project scope beyond Enquiry Based Learning – now “Exploring the role of pedagogy in supporting successful student transitions”



Transitioning to Academic Writing

Pedagogical Barrier

Learners moving into Higher Education often struggle with the conventions of academic writing. Common challenges include using an appropriate tone, structuring essays and paragraphs, and applying referencing correctly.

Context

Designed for learners transitioning to university-level study. Focus is on developing academic writing confidence and skills, with practical emphasis on essay planning, paragraph structure, and use of evidence.

Time and resources

Approx. 60 minutes. Requires learner handout, worksheet, and group activity materials.

Brief Description

This session introduces the purpose and structure of academic writing. Learners practise planning, drafting, and revising work, while also engaging with peer feedback and real examples. Activities focus on moving from informal to academic tone, structuring arguments, and integrating evidence.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. **Introduction (5–10 mins)** – Outline what academic writing is and why it matters. Compare informal and academic writing examples.
2. **Individual Practice (10–15 mins)** – Use the worksheet to practise writing a basic academic paragraph: topic, evidence, explanation, citation.
3. **Guided Prompts (5 mins)** – Pose reflective prompts: *What's the question really asking? How do you support your point without personal opinion? Can someone else follow your argument?*
4. **Group Activities (20–25 mins)** – Learners collaborate to:
   - Analyse a sample academic paragraph (Essay Detective).
   - Build a group paragraph in relay style (Build-A-Paragraph Relay).
   - Complete a Citation Challenge, matching quotes to correct references.
   - Participate in a Peer Editing Carousel, adding feedback to drafts.
5. **Reflection (5–10 mins)** – Learners respond to reflection questions: *What's the hardest part about writing formally? How can you make your writing clearer? What feedback helped you most today?*

Student learning Outcomes

- Understand the conventions and purpose of academic writing.
- Plan and structure essays and paragraphs effectively.
- Use evidence appropriately with citations.
- Develop editing and self-reflection strategies.
- Engage in constructive peer feedback.

Pitfalls or Issues

- Learners may continue to use informal tone.
- Risk of over-reliance on opinion rather than evidence.
- Some may find peer critique uncomfortable.
- Referencing can cause confusion without clear examples.

Evidence / References

Transition to Higher Education – Academic Writing TLLM Package (Dumfries & Galloway College, 2025).
Bailey, S. (2018). Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students. Routledge.
Pears, R., & Shields, G. (2019). Cite Them Right. Palgrave Macmillan.

Pedagogy for Transitions | Teaching Card



Igniting the spark of Independence

Pedagogical Barrier

Challenges in working independently. Difficulties in researching information. Challenges with paraphrasing research findings effectively

Context

Online/in person, any subject

Time and resources

One hour. Computer/ipad/phone, notebook, pen.

Brief Description

This strategy provides learners with a targeted reading resource (e.g. website, eBooks) and a specific concept to elucidate.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. provide a targeted reading resource. 2. Give a clear and specific concept for learners to consider and explain. 3. Guide learners to actively engage with the text by identifying and highlighting sections that directly relate to and explain the given concept. 4. Instruct learners to create comprehensive notes, paraphrasing the highlighted content to demonstrate their understanding of how the text explains the concept. 5. Encourage learners to get into pairs/small groups to explain/share their findings

Student learning Outcomes

Promotes active reading, critical analysis, and the synthesis of information into their own words.

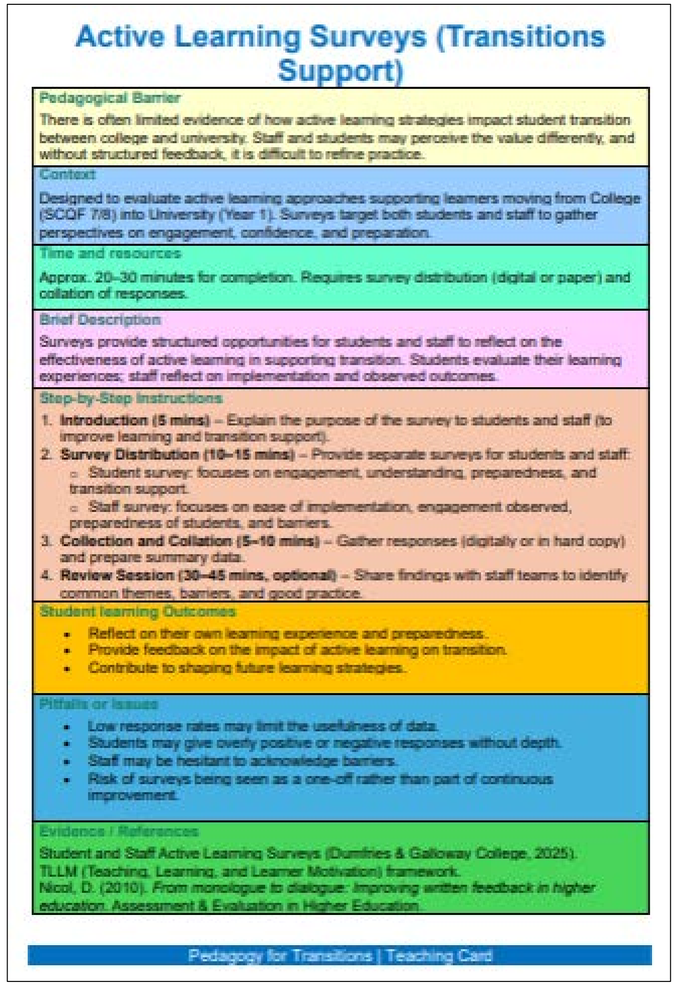
Pitfalls or Issues

links to reading not working, internet access/computer or device access. Use downloadable readings, for in class print out readings. Ensure learners have access to suitable device.

Evidence / References

Based on a focus to improve adult literacy skills. Education Scotland, (2016) Scotland's Adult Literacies Curriculum Framework Guidelines: learning, teaching and assessment.

Lyndsey Craig Dumfries and Galloway College, 2025



Active Learning Surveys (Transitions Support)

Pedagogical Barrier

There is often limited evidence of how active learning strategies impact student transition between college and university. Staff and students may perceive the value differently, and without structured feedback, it is difficult to refine practice.

Context

Designed to evaluate active learning approaches supporting learners moving from College (SCQF 7/8) into University (Year 1). Surveys target both students and staff to gather perspectives on engagement, confidence, and preparation.

Time and resources

Approx. 20–30 minutes for completion. Requires survey distribution (digital or paper) and collation of responses.

Brief Description

Surveys provide structured opportunities for students and staff to reflect on the effectiveness of active learning in supporting transition. Students evaluate their learning experiences; staff reflect on implementation and observed outcomes.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. **Introduction (5 mins)** – Explain the purpose of the survey to students and staff (to improve learning and transition support).
2. **Survey Distribution (10–15 mins)** – Provide separate surveys for students and staff:
   - Student survey: focuses on engagement, understanding, preparedness, and transition support.
   - Staff survey: focuses on ease of implementation, engagement observed, preparedness of students, and barriers.
3. **Collection and Collation (5–10 mins)** – Gather responses (digitally or in hard copy) and prepare summary data.
4. **Review Session (30–45 mins, optional)** – Share findings with staff teams to identify common themes, barriers, and good practice.

Student learning Outcomes

- Reflect on their own learning experience and preparedness.
- Provide feedback on the impact of active learning on transition.
- Contribute to shaping future learning strategies.

Pitfalls or Issues

- Low response rates may limit the usefulness of data.
- Students may give overly positive or negative responses without depth.
- Staff may be hesitant to acknowledge barriers.
- Risk of surveys being seen as a one-off rather than part of continuous improvement.

Evidence / References

Student and Staff Active Learning Surveys (Dumfries & Galloway College, 2025).
TLLM (Teaching, Learning, and Learner Motivation) framework.
Nicol, D. (2010). *From monologue to dialogue: Improving written feedback in higher education*. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education.

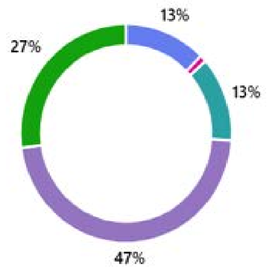
Pedagogy for Transitions | Teaching Card

Sample of 'Pedagogy for Transitions' teaching cards

Pilot results - students

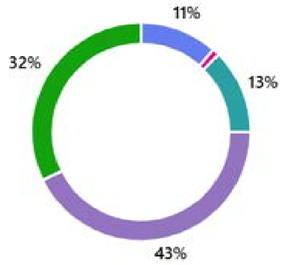
1. **The teaching activity helped me understand the topic more clearly.**

Strongly disagree	12
Disagree	1
Neutral	12
Agree	45
Strongly agree	26



2. **I felt engaged and involved during the session or activity.**

Strongly disagree	11
Disagree	1
Neutral	12
Agree	41
Strongly agree	31



"This method of learning... has made it significantly more entertaining and morale-boosting... making it less likely for me to forget."

"Less listening and reading, more practical work."

Pilot results - staff

- 100% of participants agreed the teaching card model had a positive impact on their teaching practice
- 71% said the shared pedagogies “improved immediate engagement” from students

> “Working collaboratively with FE and HE professionals provided valuable opportunities to exchange perspectives on the FE–HE transition. Actively incorporating the student voice offered meaningful insight into learner experiences and informed approaches to better support progression into higher education.”

Workshop Three – December 2025, New College Lanarkshire

Key project recommendations

- Publish and iterate prototype Teach Less, Learn More cards through existing tertiary partnerships
- Develop digital resource to support access, engagement and collaboration across sector
- Establish a shared FE / HE glossary of academic terminology and expectations
- Build practitioner communities of practice
- Support development of FE practitioners into Advance HE Fellowship
- Develop deeper, multi-year study across existing tertiary partnerships to test and evaluate longitudinal impact of pedagogical change

(Pedagogy for Transitions project, 2026)

Next steps …

- Building on STEP project:
  - Collaboration
  - Longevity
  - Impact

- NCL implementing ‘Teach Less, Learn More’ as signature pedagogy

- Incorporate project recommendations

NCL NEW COLLEGE LANARKSHIRE

UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST of SCOTLAND

Research implications

- Longitudinal research into new approach
- UWS and NCL collaborating on research

NCL NEW COLLEGE LANARKSHIRE

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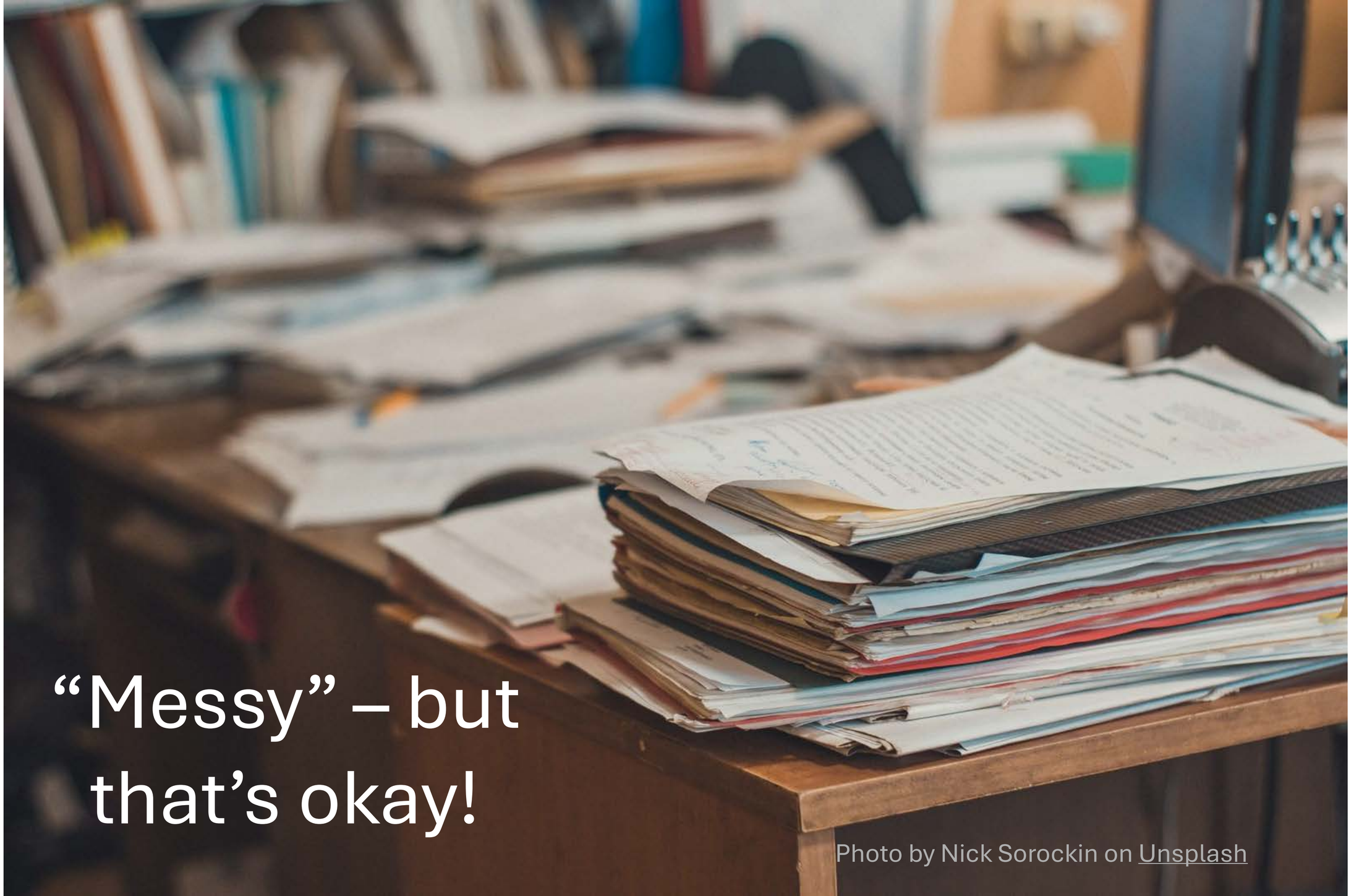


Photo by Nick Sorockin on Unsplash

Thank you for listening!

Any questions?

Please email claire.mackie@uws.ac.uk if you'd like to discuss this further

Student Success through Institutional Tertiary Alignment: Pathways, Process and Design to Enable Student Success

Luke Millard, Abertay University
Jane Roscoe, Dundee and Angus College

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Student Success through Institutional Alignment: Removing the Barriers between College and University

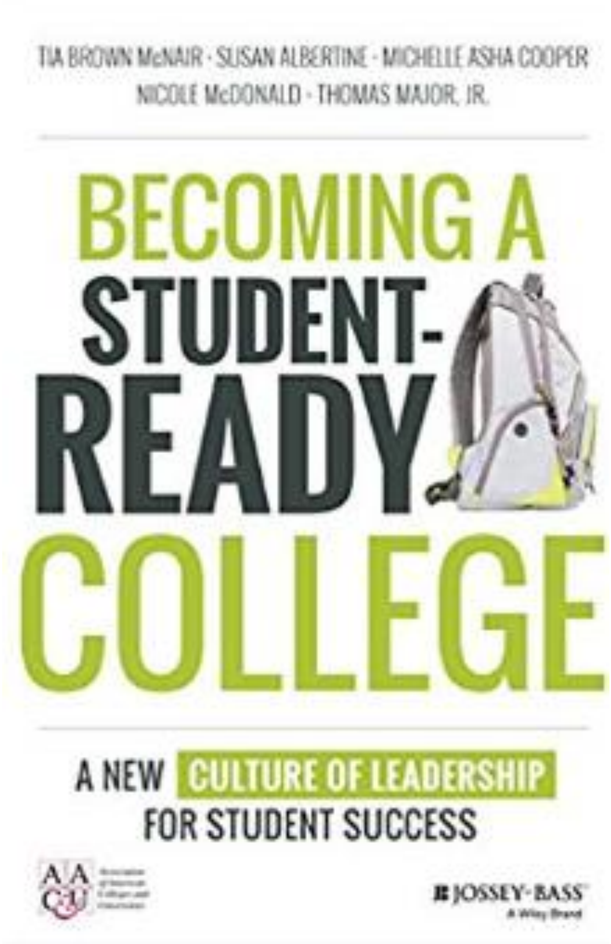
Jane Roscoe
Director of Curriculum Partnerships
Dundee and Angus College

Luke Millard
Vice Principal: Learning and Teaching
Abertay University

QAA Scotland Enhancement Theme Resilient Learning Communities



- What will our learning communities look like? And what can we do now to prepare for them?
- **Who are our current and future students and how will they want to learn? How can we gain a clear understanding of their needs? What information do we need to enable us to best support their learning?**
- **How can we capitalise as a sector on the attributes students bring?**
- How do we ensure we are able to support our diverse learning communities? What might this mean for our staff and our infrastructure?
- How should we anticipate, influence and respond to the changing external environment? How can we engage with our stakeholders and ensure we are influencing strategy and policy both in Scotland and beyond?



The Challenge

"*Are we understanding of the challenges and obstacles that students face today, and do we see these challenges not as reflecting students' deficits,* ***but as reflecting the deficits of our institutions*****……**"

(McNair et al 2016:81)

Context

520 of Abertay's students originally studied at Dundee and Angus College. This is around 15% of the total Abertay student population.

University wanted to make Abertay the natural home for all qualified Dundee and Angus College students…..(an extension of college?)
The College wanted to see more of its students achieve successful student outcomes and to create student pathways that would help recruitment.

Both partners also wanted to enable the regional ambitions of Dundee and Angus and support the movement of students and their families out of poverty

Abertay University

DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

Student Success through Institutional Tertiary Alignment: Pathways, Process and Design to **Enable Student Success**

To enable students to be successful there needs to be **greater cohesion and alignment across the educational sectors** as to how that individual student is prepared to succeed and learn as they transition. In particular, Colleges and Universities need to be challenged to **remove the intended and unintended barriers** that persuade the less confident student that the next stage of their learning journey is not for them.

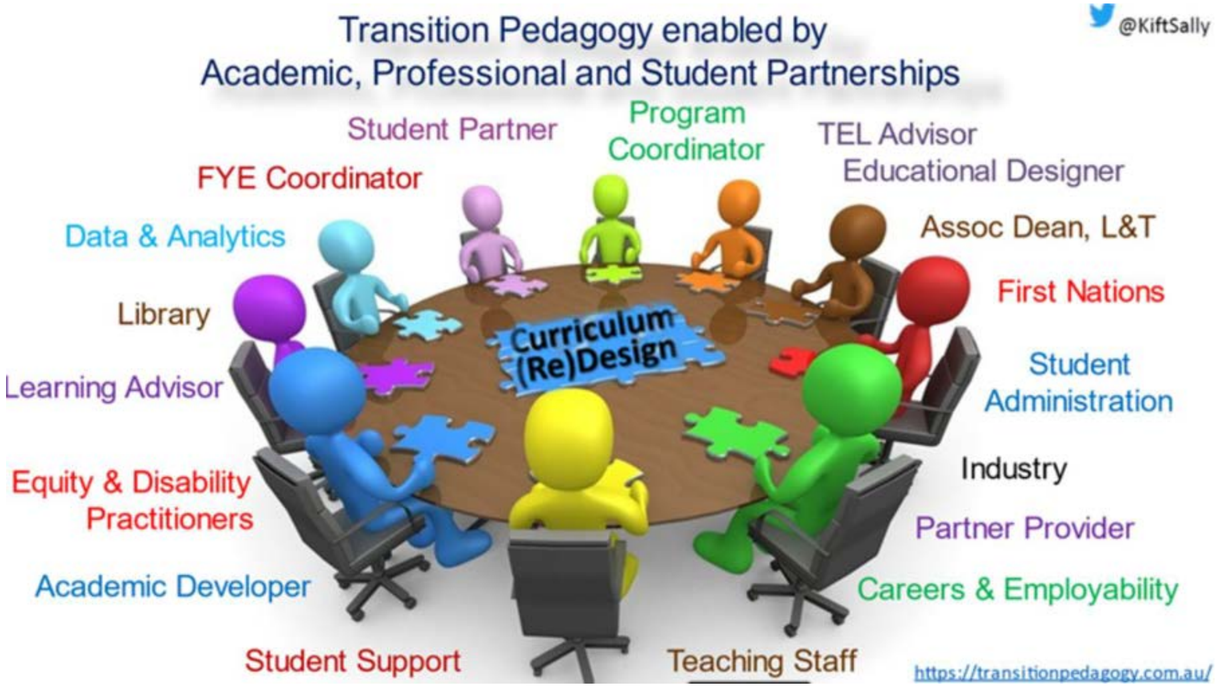
This project will bring two partners, Dundee and Angus College and Abertay University together to systematically and procedurally review how students are enabled to succeed as they prepare for and transition from college into and through university. The task will deliver a cross-institutional consultation and development process that can be shared with others so that they can learn from and adapt within their own partnership process.

‘*At student ready colleges,* ***all services and activities*** *– from admissions, to the business office, to the classroom, and even to campus security –* ***are intentionally designed to facilitate students’ progressive advancement*** *towards college completion and positive post-college outcomes’*

Becoming a student-ready college : a new culture of leadership for student success: McNair, T et al, Jossey Bass. 2016: 6

Conversations – Curriculum to Student Experience

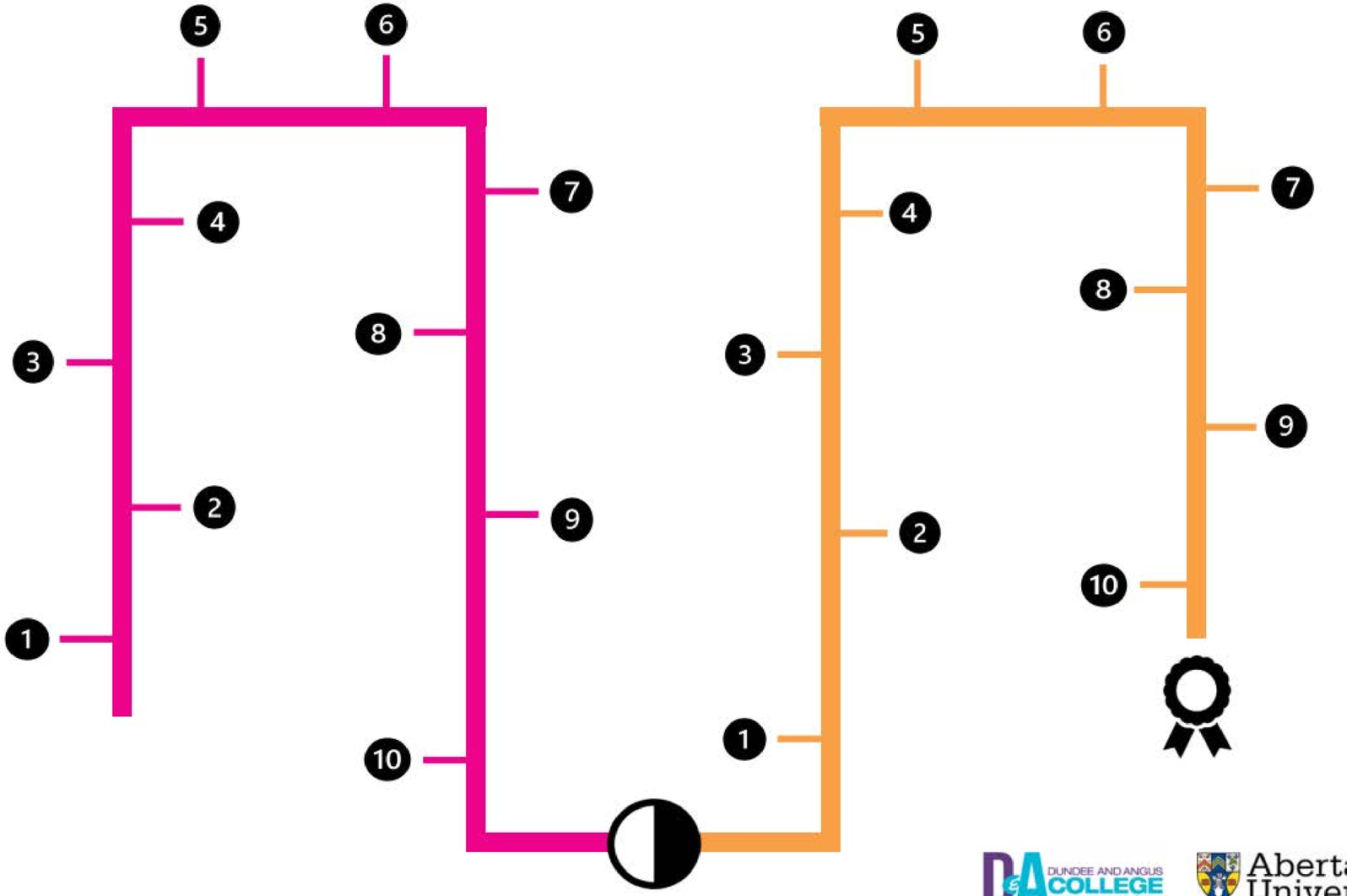




Abertay University

DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

Route Map: Overview



#BeAbertay

Blockers to innovation and change

When we think of partners – it may mean university or college partners, but it could equally refer to schools, community learning providers, employers and other organisations involved in supporting learners

So, in your own context of working across the tertiary sector, what are the issues that you and colleagues encounter that prevent you enhancing student transitions? Please vote for two.

- Lack of knowledge of staff around what the partner offers
- Systems and processes that focus on institutional, not student need
- Time and ability to innovate and encourage change
- Pressure to attract and retain learners
- Staff resistance to change

Abertay University

D&A DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

Ongoing activities

Partnership Board

DUAL mentoring project (Northwood Trust)

Student community enhancements – Student Associations

Data Sharing agreement – sharing of support plans/ key data /case studies

New Engineering offer

University Transformation Framework project with Fife College (transitions, systems, AI enhancement)

Service user collaboration potential

Relationship development and openness – culture/trust

- Student services and guidance – self directed / organic /lose control
- Admissions collaboration

Abertay University

D&A DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

Enablers and accelerators

In your own context of working across the tertiary sector, what are the things that you and colleagues do that enable you to change and innovate, so you can enhance student transitions? Please vote for two.

- Review the student transitional experience from or to your institution with key partners
- Regularly talk to staff in similar roles at partner colleges or universities
- Share data with partners to enhance the transitions offer
- Create forums for staff or students to share perspectives
- Collaborate with purpose to influence and attract support/funding

Abertay University

D&A DUNDEE AND ANGUS COLLEGE

Connected Futures: Building Integrated FE-HE Pathways through Intelligent Student Support Systems

This UTF initiative seeks to:

- strengthen access pathways to enable seamless student progression into College and from College to University and enable the development of Graduate Apprenticeships serviced by the partners;
- explore how the interface between our back-end student systems and academic services support the student journey, delivering business improvements for all partners and embracing AI-enabled solutions where relevant.

Project principles (maturity from foundations)

All activities to deliver a clear and demonstrable improvement in the learner experience

Deliverables must have the ability to benefit all partners, whilst recognising that some innovation may be delivered in institution-specific ways where this supports the wider partnership aims

Co-creation will be at the core of all designs and activities.

Responsible use of data, automation and AI: AI, automation and data sharing solutions should be used only where they are appropriate, lawful, ethical, transparent, sustainable and subject to clear human oversight.

Comfort Break
Back at 15:20

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Partnership Working in Practice: A Fair Access Perspective

Patricia Anderson, SCAPP
Kenny Anderson, SWAPWest

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Partnership Working in Practice:
A Fair Access Perspective

Patricia Anderson, SCAPP Development Manager

Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

What is SCAPP?

SCAPP

Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners

Aim

To provide a practitioners' network to support the development and professionalisation of a strong widening access and participation community in Scotland

How can SCAPP help with supporting transitions and navigating pathways?

SCAPP strengthens student experiences by supporting the people who design, deliver and influence access and transition activity.

Why Partnership Matters in Widening Access

The Fair Access Challenge Cannot Be Solved Alone

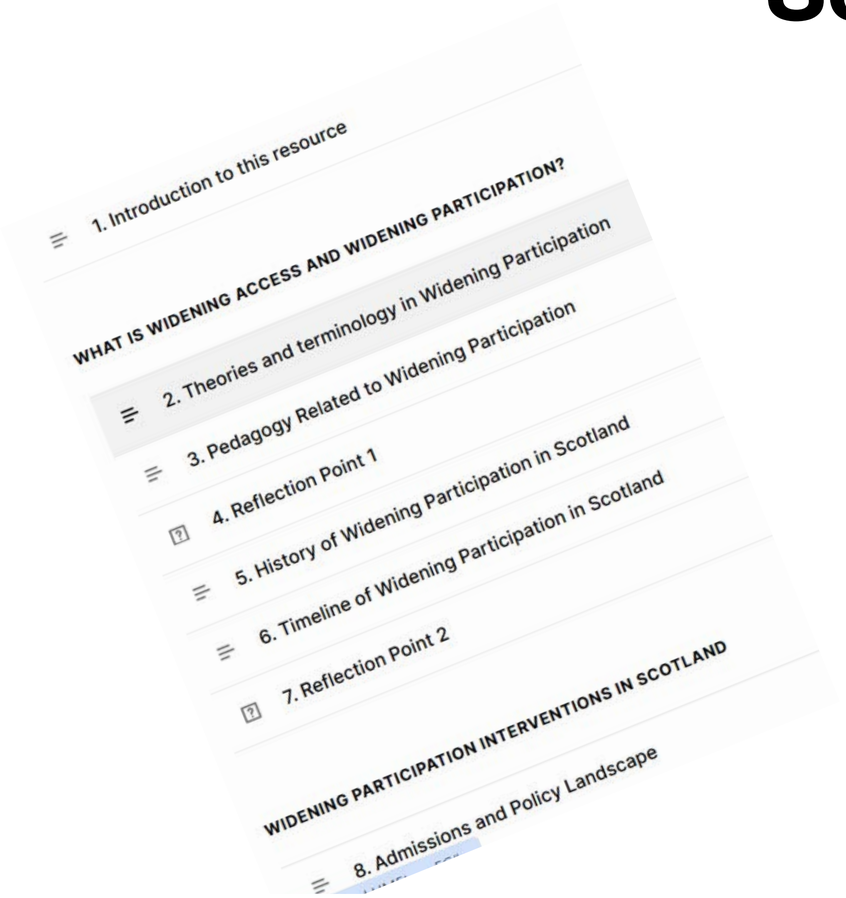
How does SCAPP help students navigate pathways

- UCAS Updates
- SHELOA
- Pathways website
- SCAPP’s Articulation Working Group

How does SCAPP support transitions

- Adult Learner Network
- Estranged Students Working Group
- Scottish First Year Experience Network
- STEP's Appreciating Belonging and Enabling Change project

An Introduction to Widening Participation in Scotland Guide





SCAPP

Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

www.fairaccess.scot scapp@stir.ac.uk

Open Events

- Annual Conference
- Annual Conversation with the Commissioner
- PL&D Space



Insight
Webinar

Subscriber Programmes



Evaluation Matters
Community of Practice



Mentoring for Access
Practitioners Scheme



New Practitioner Network



DAPP

Development of Access and
Participation Professionals

SCAPP

Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

www.fairaccess.scot scapp@stir.ac.uk

Student Voice

We are keen to involve more students/have student voice in our sessions where relevant

Final Reflection

Partnership Working in Practice:

A Fair Access Perspective

Partnership is not an additional activity. It is how enhancement happens.

Contact Details

Patricia Anderson, SCAPP Development Manager

EMAIL: scapp@stir.ac.uk

WEBSITE: www.fairaccess.scot

LINKEDIN: Search for ‘SCAPP’

Join our mailing list here to receive our weekly **SCAPP Update** emails

Partnership Working in Practice: A Fair Access perspective. with SCAPP STEP presentation 17th November 2026

- Welcome – my name is Kenny Anderson, Director of SWAPWest
- Thanks to Patricia.
- Thought it might be useful to look at the partnership work of the programme as it relates to transition
- Focus on College to Uni transition
- First a little about Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) model

SWAP Scottish Wider Access Programme

Methodology of a classic access programme

Academic: "**no qualifications – no problem**".

Based on Qualification Scotland subject units, broad programmes with multiple progressions / specialist programmes.

Main subject areas - Humanities / Science – life and STEM / Nursing / Allied health / Childhood Practice / Medical studies. Deliver over 100 programmes. 1800 students. Delivered over one academic year August until June – full or part time

1st year entry

Requires additional elements of our programme -

Progression routes: relationship with Universities, college **profiling.**

And what we will focus on today - Guidance: preparation for higher education / study skills / admission, selection and transition.

Prep for HE our guidance model. Can be viewed https://www.scottishwideraccess.org/prep-for-he



Typical SWAP student

- Live within 10 km of college – 72%. 44% within most economically deprived areas of Scotland
- Average age - 30
- Families – 55%
- Single parents – 29%
- Disability – 26%. Ethnic minority – 12%
- Care experienced 6%



Where are we now?

'We are now graduates of psychology, sociology, politics, philosophy, law, anthropology, languages, religious studies, primary education, social work …'

Big question for SWAP

Why do some learners succeed when others don't!

Evaluation and feedback from students –

Consistently – time management

Balancing family life and study

Transformational impact of their learning experience

Project on student identity and our European project work. Led us to thinking about personal and social attributes. Managing Learning, Mindset, Self-Regulation, Wellbeing and Flexibility.



Prep for HE 2026

Academic

PHE04 Research/Sources Pt.1
PHE06 Research/referencing
PHE08 Academic Writing
PHE11 Critical Thinking Pt. 1
PHE12 Academic Writing Pt. 2
PHE13 Listening Skills
PHE15 Academic Writing Pt. 3
PHE17 Research/ Referencing
PHE28 Feedback and Exams

Personal and Social Development

PHE03 Mindset
PHE05 Balance
PHE07 Reflection
PHE09 Support
PHE19 Transition
PHE20 Celebrate Success

Not forgetting practical – induction / UCAS / funding

what remains challenging

SCAPP Evaluation matters – CoP2. Using evaluation rather than anecdote

- Awareness of PSL competencies
- Don’t forget the stuff that worries students
- Curriculum context

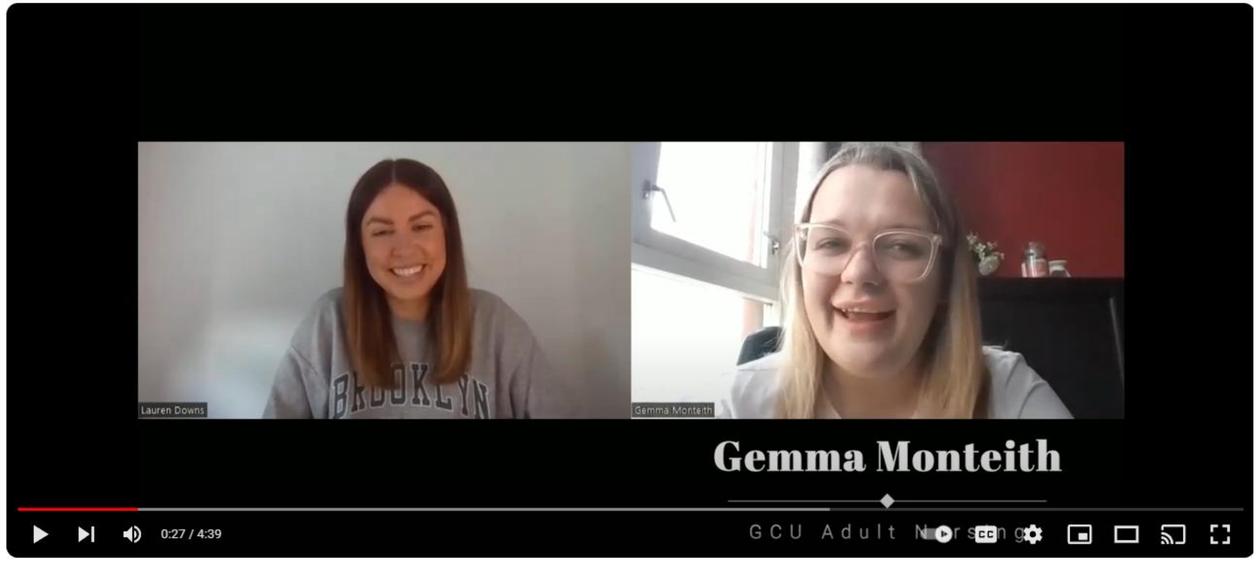
Working with learners for a number of years on authentic adult learner voice. Peer learning.

SWAP programmes work because of our college class tutors.

Feedback from our university partners and active engagement – belonging.



Prep for HE: Student Comments



Prep for HE - The Student Perspective

https://youtu.be/DE9hcgYoc8g

Please don’t hesitate to get in touch

Kenny Anderson – Director

SWAPWest
123 Flemington Street,
Glasgow, G21 4TD

tel: 0141 564 7206

email: swapwest@scottishwideraccess.org

website: www.scottishwideraccess.org

SWAP Scottish Wider Access Programme

Closing thoughts

Alison Greenwood-Bell,
City of Glasgow College

STEP Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme

Thank you

- Please get in touch – info@step.ac.uk