What works? Facilitating an effective transition into higher education

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Abstract

Improving student retention and success by enhancing transition and the first year experience is widely accepted as an institutional priority. This paper draws on evidence from a three-year programme: ‘What works? Student retention and success’ in England, involving seven projects and 22 higher education institutions. This study identified the importance of student engagement and belonging. Student engagement enables belonging through: supportive peer relations; meaningful interaction with staff; developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners and, an HE experience relevant to students’ interests and future goals. The “What works” model emphasises: early engagement; having an explicit academic purpose; and developing student and staff capacity to engage/be engaging. Focusing on transition (pre-entry interventions, induction and learning and teaching in the first semester/year) this paper presents specific examples that have had an impact, and relates them to the What works model to evaluate their implementation and outcomes. It concludes with a reflective checklist to assist readers to improve transition.

Introduction

Improving student retention and success by enhancing transition and the first year experience is widely accepted as an effective institutional strategy (Kift et al 2010, Krause et al 2005 Tinto 2012, Troxel 2010 and Yorke and Longden 2008). This paper draws on evidence from a three-year programme: ‘What works? Student retention and success’ in England, which examined effective approaches to improving retention and success in English higher education institutions, across the student lifecycle and throughout the institution. The focus of this paper is on the transition period, incorporating pre-entry interventions, induction and early learning and teaching in the first semester/year. After presenting the What works? Model, the paper turns to specific examples that have made a positive impact on retention and success in English HEIs, and relates them to implementation and outcome indicators developed as part of the programme.
English context

The UK is often cited as having high rates of student retention, progression and completion compared to international comparators. It is however difficult to make such comparisons largely due to the non-standard definitions of these terms, and differing data collection practices (van Stolk et al 2007).

In the UK two measures of student retention are commonly used in respect of full-time undergraduates:

- The first is the ‘completion rate’ – the proportion of starters in a year who continue their studies until they obtain their qualification, with no more than one consecutive year out of higher education. As higher education courses take years to complete, an expected completion rate is calculated by the Higher Education Statistics Agency... A more immediate measure of retention is the proportion of an institution’s intake which is enrolled in higher education in the year following their first entry to higher education. This is the ‘continuation rate’. (NAO, 2007, p5).

In summary:

- the average non-continuation rate was 8.4% for entrants to English higher education institutions in 2009-10;
- non-continuation rates varied between English institutions between 1.2% and 21.4% in 2009-10;
- the average completion rate for students entering institutions in England in 2009-10 was projected to be 78.4%; and
- completion rates were projected to vary between institutions between 53.8% and 97.2% in 2009-10.

Duty (2012) discusses the fact that when the comparatively late (December) data census point is taken into account, and given that more withdrawal happens early on in a students’ HE career, the UK rates of retention are not significantly better than retention rates in the US four year institutions. Weko (2004) however indicates that the degree of flexibility available to students in the US seems to result in rates of retention and completion that are substantially lower than those in the UK.

What works? Student retention and success programme

There is a great deal of research about student retention and success. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) has commissioned a series of literature syntheses of relevance to this topic, in particular Jones (2008) and Troxel (2010), which synthesise UK and US literature respectively. It is however difficult to translate this knowledge into activities that impact on student persistence and success, and improve institutional outcomes, as Vincent Tinto noted at a Higher Education Academy conference on student retention:

Most institutions have not yet been able to translate what we know about student retention into forms of action that have led to substantial gains in student persistence and graduation. (Tinto 2006)

The What works? Student retention and success programme was designed in response to the National Audit Office report (2007) and the subsequent Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report (House of Commons 2008) which identified as a significant barrier to further progress the lack of evidence about what actually works to improve
student retention and completion. The primary purpose of the programme was to generate evidence-based analysis and evaluation about the most effective practices to ensure high continuation and completion rates. It was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Further details about the programme, including the final report and the seven project reports are available from: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/what-works-retention. A list of the seven projects is provided in appendix 1.

Methodology

Each project undertook extensive research using a range of methods to address their topics of investigation. Most studies combined survey and qualitative research with students, with analysis of institutional data, as well as literature reviews and additional methods to triangulate the data. The projects were provided with guidance about their evaluation methods by the Support and Co-ordination team, and the final reports were peer reviewed to ensure relevance, clarity and evidence-informed recommendations. The Support and Co-ordination team (which I was the Director of) undertook a careful reading of the reports to extract, combine and synthesise the findings.

Situating the What works programme in the literature

Research exploring the reasons for student withdrawal tends to conclude that there is rarely a single reason why students leave. In most cases, the picture is complex and students leave as a result of a combination of inter-related factors. Indeed, What works Project 5 found an average of 2.1 reasons per student. The retention research synthesis (Jones 2008) identified the following five categories of reasons why students withdraw: poor preparation for higher education; weak institutional and/or course match, resulting in poor fit/ lack of commitment; unsatisfactory academic experience; lack of social integration; financial issues and personal circumstances. Survey data from the What works projects identified three key reasons why students think about leaving: academic issues; feelings of isolation and/or not fitting in; and concern about achieving future aspirations. These three groups of reasons overlap with the first four categories identified by Jones.

Surveys undertaken by What works project teams found that between 33% (1/3) and 42% (2/5) students think about withdrawing from HE. This was based on seven institutional surveys and responses from a total of 1,574 students. This suggests that a significant minority of students consider withdrawing, and thus improving student belonging should be a priority for all programmes, departments and institutions.
Jones (2008) points to the following types of approach that improve student retention and success: pre-entry information, preparation and admission; induction and transition support; curriculum development; social engagement; student support, including financial support; and data and monitoring. With the exception of financial support (which was not explicitly examined and did not arise through survey and qualitative research), the What works findings do not contradict previous learning from the literature. The individual projects and the synthesis of findings do however point to the overarching importance of students having a strong sense of belonging in HE, which is the result of engagement. Engagement is most effectively nurtured through mainstream activities with an overt academic purpose that all students participate in.

Belonging

At the individual level ‘belonging’ recognises students’ subjective feelings of relatedness or connectedness to the institution (Vallerand, 1997), which may relate ‘the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the [school] social environment’ (Goodenow 1993a, p. 80). Belonging is characterised by regular contact and the perception that interpersonal relationships have stability, affective concern, and are ongoing (Baumeister and Leary (1995). Thus interpersonal relations are essential for satisfying the need to belong.

Work based on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. Reay, David and Ball, 2001) provide insights into the idea that institutions have their own ways of doing things, or habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This makes it harder for some students to feel like they belong than others, as what Bourdieu terms their ‘cultural capital’, or their social and cultural practices and their tacit knowledge, are deemed less appropriate or inappropriate, and they may be more inclined to withdraw early (Thomas 2002).

Engagement

Engagement develops relationships with others and promotes connectedness. Kuh (2009, p683) has defined student engagement as “the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities”. Based on an extensive review of the literature, Osterman (2000) indicates that satisfaction of the need for belonging in educational environments is significantly associated with students’ academic engagement. This is supported by much literature from the US and Australia (Trowler and Trowler 2010). Chickering and Gamson (1987) summarised the evidence into seven effective practices in undergraduate teaching and learning, which are largely mirrored in the What works findings. Social engagement can be seen to create a sense of belonging and offer informal support through interaction with friends and peers (Tinto 1993, Thomas 2002, Wilcox et al 2005). Social engagement takes place in the social sphere of the institution, including social spaces, clubs and societies, the students’ union and in student accommodation and through shared living arrangements. Engagement in the professional service sphere includes participation in academic, pastoral and professional development services. These services often contribute to developing students’ capacities to engage and belong in higher education and beyond.
What works model: nurturing belonging

The What works? model puts academic engagement and belonging at the heart of improving student retention and success. The model (figure 1 below, from Thomas 2012) embodies the following findings:

- **Early engagement**: Engagement to promote belonging must begin early and continue across the student lifecycle. (This is represented by the arrow underneath the diagram).

- **Engagement in the academic sphere**: Engagement and belonging can be nurtured throughout the institution (academic, social and professional services), but the academic sphere is of primary importance to ensure all students benefit. (This is represented by the overlapping coloured circles, the academic sphere being the largest).

- **Developing the capacity of staff and students to engage**: The capacity of students to engage and staff to offer an engaging experience must be developed, thus a partnership approach in which everyone is responsible for improving student engagement, belonging, retention and success is required. (The capacity of students and staff are represented by the two black circles, labelled respectively).

- **Institutional management and co-ordination**: At the senior level the institution must take responsibility for nurturing a culture of belonging and creating the necessary infrastructure to promote student engagement, retention and success. This includes the use of data to underpin student retention and success. (This is represented by the largest black circle, labelled institutional management and co-ordination).
The What works projects examined alternative interventions and approaches to improving student retention and success. The meta-analysis suggests that the exact type of intervention or approach is less important than the way it is implemented and its intended outcomes.

**Outcomes**

Belonging is achieved through interventions that result in:

- Supportive **peer relations**.
- Meaningful **interaction between staff and students**.
- Developing **knowledge, confidence and identity** as successful HE learners.
- An HE experience which is **relevant to interests and future goals**.

**Implementation**

Interventions that result in the outcomes above, and increased belonging, retention and success should be planned and informed by the following principles:

i. **Mainstream**: interventions and approaches to improve student retention and success should as far as possible be embedded into mainstream provision to ensure all students participate and benefit from them (see Tatum and Rasool 1996). This will improve the retention of some students and contribute to
maximising the success of all students. An ‘opt-out’ rather than opt-in approach should be the norm, and particularly attention should be paid to students who opt-out, and additional support provided if necessary.

ii. **Proactive**: activities should proactively seek to engage students, rather than waiting for a crisis to occur, or the more motivated students to take up opportunities. Students who most need support are the least likely to come forward voluntarily (Baumgart and Johnstone 1977, Bentley and Allen 2006, Chickering and Hannah 1969, Dodgson and Bolam 2002 and Eaton and Bean 1995). If students have to opt in it is important to making it transparent how students can and should engage, and why.

iii. **Relevant**: activities need to be informative, useful and relevant to students’ current interests future and aspirations; the potential benefits of engaging should be explicit to students.

iv. **Well timed and appropriate media**: early engagement is essential, other information may be better delivered at a later date or via an alternative media as students needs will differ from each other and over time. Some activities benefit from taking place over time, rather than one-off opportunities.

v. **Collaborative**: activities should encourage collaboration and engagement with fellow students and members of staff.

vi. **Monitored**: the extent and qualify of student’s engagement should be monitored, and where there is evidence of low levels of engagement follow-up action should be taken.

**Effective transition**

This section draws on the empirical findings from the What works programme with a focus on pre-entry interventions, induction and learning and teaching in the first semester/year. It will not focus on findings relating to assessment and feedback, academic development and support, engagement in the social sphere, or engagement with professional services.

**Pre-entry**

Based on a review of the literature Thomas (2011) finds that pre-entry interventions contribute to improving retention and success in HE in the following ways:

a) Providing information, knowledge and skills to improve pre-entry decision making and retention.

b) Developing expectations and academic preparation pre-entry to enhance transition, retention and success.

c) Fostering early engagement to promote integration and social capital.

UK and Australian research (McInnis *et al.*, 2000; Yorke, 2000; Krause *et al.*, 2005; Harvey and Drew, 2006) indicates that students have insufficient information to inform pre-entry decisions and this impacts negatively on retention and success. Students have insufficient information about: HE in general; different institutions; disciplines and specific courses. Pre-entry information and preparation for higher education includes the provision of information to inform choice and shape expectations about higher education, the institution and the course to improve retention (Yorke and Thomas 2003, Dodgson and Bolam 2002). Poor institutional and course choice can impact on the extent to which a student develops a sense of belonging to their programme and institution. For example, Project 5 found that the most common reason for thinking about leaving was ‘course related issues’ (43% in
two institutional surveys and 24% in the third, N= 365 reasons cited by 320 students thinking about leaving).

Many students feel under-prepared for higher education, and find that their academic experience is not as they expected it to be, and this may lead to early withdrawal (Richardson, 2003; Forrester et al., 2004; Long and Tricker, 2004; Quinn et al., 2005). At one institution (Project 7) between 65% (n=92) and 74% (n=105) of students reporting feeling only partially or not at all prepared, and this contributed to feelings of dislocation on arrival. At another institution (Project 3) 34% (n=113) of survey respondents who had withdrawn reported being 'disappointed by the amount of teaching and contact hours with staff provided on my course', and this was at least of some influence in their decision to leave, and a major influence for 12% (n=40).

A number of projects (Projects1, 4, 5 & 7) found that students often have unrealistic expectations, and it is important for staff to make expectations explicit (Projects 4 & 6). Unrealistic expectations tend to relate to the academic experience, assuming it will be the same as school or college and being under-prepared to be autonomous learners with responsibility for organising and structuring study. Challenges also relate to lecture format, size of classes and the impersonal nature of HE study, and not knowing what is expected in assessments, especially as they receive less support and feedback with assessments than they were used to.

Students valued meeting staff and students from institutions to provide them with information about the institution and the learning experience prior to entry. Students at one university (Project 3) talked about the benefits of student ambassadors (existing HE students) as they were perceived to provided more genuine insights into the HE experience, having recently been new students themselves (see also Austin and Hatt 2005).

Analysis of the What works evidence suggests that the most effective pre-entry interventions combine the roles:

a) Providing information  
b) Informing expectations  
c) Developing academic skills  
d) Building social capital (links with peers, current students and staff that can subsequently be used for information, support and links to others)  
e) Nurturing a sense of belonging

Example 1

The Welcome Lunch and Study Skills Summer School for mature students at the University of Hull were pre-entry initiatives that achieved these objectives, and were shown to contribute to student engaging, belonging, retention and success.

The Study Skills Summer School is a free, two day, non-residential course for mature students. It is open to both new and continuing students and it focuses on academic and transferable study skills in tandem with social elements. The Welcome lunch is for mature students, and which aims to let them learn more about the University and meet other new and existing students. The students are seated according to the
programmes they will be studying, and interaction is encouraged through activities such as a quiz about the University.

The targeting of mature students facilitates a sense of camaraderie as students form networks with peers on their course; and having an academic purpose makes it easier for students to justify attending.

In terms of outcomes, the focus groups with students indicated that students developed long-term friendships; allowed them to get to know programme staff; increased their confidence and skills and created a strong cohort identity and sense of belonging. Analysis of the institutional data suggested that students who attended the events had better rates of retention and progression to level two than students who did not participate.

...I felt much more able when I realised ‘we all were learning this’ and I wasn’t the only one, and I now had people to share this with and keep me going [...] and they did when I needed it. (Student)

**Induction**

Effective induction is central to an effective transition into higher education, and subsequent retention and success (Crossling et al 2008 and Harvey and Drew (2006). Induction activities have an impact on retention and success through:

a) Socialisation and formation of friendship groups, which provide a support network and promote social integration.

b) Informing expectations of HE and helping students to be effective learners by developing their confidence and their academic skills.

c) Developing relationships with members of staff, allowing students to approach them subsequently when they need to.

According to three institutional surveys (Project 2), the majority of students (70%, n=262) felt confident that they had the ability to succeed in their chosen area of study, but most (75%, n=281) were worried about making friends when they started at university. For many students the ‘academic shift’ from studying at school or college level to studying at a higher level can be very challenging, indeed many experience a type of ‘academic culture shock’ (Quinn et al 2005). Students who did not feel that they understood the differences between learning at school/college and higher education were far more likely to think about leaving (62%) than those who felt they did understand (35%), (Project 5, p62). Staff in HEIs agreed that many students do not know what is expected of them when they arrive at university, and that they can play an important role to help students understand course and institutional expectations (Project 4).

The What works projects found that effective induction programmes have the following elements:

a) Take place in the academic sphere with other students from the same programme.

b) Take place over an extended time period.
c) Use ice breakers to help students get to know each other.
d) Involve small group work.
e) Providing students with informal opportunities to get to know their teaching staff or tutors.
f) Provide information on-line and readily accessible to students.
g) Engage students in the process of understanding the academic expectations and procedures.

Example 2

The T-shirt induction activity in the School of Chemical Engineering and Advanced Materials at Newcastle University helped students to get to know staff and each other and form groups, which they then worked in during the first semester. The aim of the event was to deliberately stimulate interaction. Each student is given a T shirt, a marker pen and a clear set of instructions: each person is required to draw representations of their interests onto their shirt and to then find others with similar interests and form groups. Participants were given explicit directions regarding the intended mix of gender and ethnicity for each group (here staff could intervene to steer students away from their ‘comfort zones’ and towards wider interaction).

The evaluation found that students had formed close social bonds with peers. This contributed to their sense of belonging in the department in particular, and the university more generally.

First year is bad because you don’t know anyone here basically....if you don’t set up the design group you have got to make friends, where are you going to make friends kind of thing.....well you wouldn’t usually......and if it was all individual work. You have to stick around to do the work and obviously if it is group work you are forced to meet people....(Student)

It cannot be proved that the t-shirt exercise had a direct causal impact on increased rates of progression, as rates could also have been affected by cohort diversity or other changes that may have taken place. However, evidence suggests groups are an important contributory factor. In summary:

- 81% of students (n=29) said they ‘always’ or ‘mostly’ felt they belonged in the School.
- All students either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they had formed close bonds with their peers.
- Almost all students said their friendship groups had been an influence on their sense of belonging.
- One year on 28% (n=10) of respondents were still socialising with “all” and a further 58% (n=21) with “most” of the members of their teams.
- 32% (n=12) of students report that they “spend time with friends (not team mates) working together on academic projects” and a further 44% (n=16) say
that friends have been a source of help and support when they did not understand academic work.

- Following the introduction of the T-shirt activity progression from stage 1 to stage 2 increased from below 90% (85%, n=79, in 2005/6 and 75%, n=63, in 2007/8) to in excess of 90% (94%, n=100), in 2009/10.
- Retention and progression has improved significantly despite an increase in cohort size.

**Learning and teaching**

The What works programme found that high quality, student-centred learning and teaching is at the heart of improving the retention and success of all students. The topic of learning and teaching to improve student engagement, belonging, retention and success is discussed further in the final research report (Thomas 2012). In summary, the projects found that the following factors contribute to belonging in the academic sphere:

a) **Staff/student relationships**: knowing staff and being able to ask for help. Many students find it difficult to approach academic members of staff, but they value being able to ask for clarification, guidance and feedback. Students who feel that have a less good relationship with academic members of staff are more likely to think about leaving. Good relationships are based on informal relationships that recognise students as individuals and value their contributions.

b) **Curricular contents** and related opportunities: providing real world learning opportunities which are interesting and relevant to future aspirations motivate students to engage and be successful in higher education.

c) **Learning and teaching**: group based learning and teaching that allows students to interact with each other, share their own experiences and learn by doing. A variety of learning experiences, including work placements, and delivered by enthusiastic lectures were found to be important too.

b) **Assessment and feedback**: clear guidelines about assessment processes and transparency about criteria and feedback to assist students to perform better in the future. Students who have a clear understanding about the assessment process and expectations have higher confidence levels and are less likely to think about leaving early. An understanding of assessment should be developed early, and students need to have positive relationships with staff so that they can ask for clarification. Feedback on assessment needs to be helpful to students, and they need to be guided how to use it to inform future assessment tasks.

e) **Personal tutoring**: as a means of developing a close relationship with a member of staff who oversees individual progress and takes action if necessary, including direct students to appropriate academic development and pastoral support services.

f) **Peer relations and cohort identity**: having friends to discuss academic and non-academic issues with, both during teaching time and outside of it, and a strong sense of cohort identity. Friends and peer relations can have a range of positive impacts on student experience, but this is only recognised by some students and staff. Facilitating social integration in the academic sphere is particularly important as it develops cohort identity and belonging to the programme; some students do not have opportunities to develop friendships in other spheres. Academic staff can promote social integration through induction activities, collaborative learning and teaching, field trips, opt-out peer mentoring and staff-organised social events.
g) A sense of belonging to particular a place within the university, most usually a departmental building or a small campus, or a hall of residence. A space in the academic department can offer students are place to spend time on campus and to work and socialise with other students.

Example 3

Problem-based learning in groups at the Department of Psychology at the University of Sunderland has been introduced to encourage early group formation and facilitate academic interaction and social engagement. A specific module has been designed for the first degree programme to ensure students maximise the benefit to be gained from problem based learning. This requires students to work in groups of eight. They work collaboratively on problems and scenarios, receiving guidance and facilitation from academic staff only when necessary. This guidance can include discussing individual contributions to the task for assessment purposes, and in the early stages is more about coaching students through the process.

The evaluation indicates that students saw the problem-based learning activities as a structured way to get to know staff and to meet other students and begin working together on academic projects. Friendships in the classroom extended into private study and social spheres. Students also valued being able to relate their studying to their own experiences and interests. Students felt a stronger sense of belonging and retention rates from level 1 to level 2 improved from 77% to 85%.

I made [friends] through my seminars, really. I got four really good friends, and I’ve just clicked with them straight away, and then we sit together in lectures and stuff. And now I’m working on this project with them and we’ve been meeting up outside of Uni and stuff. (Student)

Conclusions

The What works programme has found that nurturing student belonging is crucial to improving retention and success in higher education. Approaches that promote belonging conform to a set of implementation principles that facilitate engagement, and achieve some or all of the common outcomes that have been found to contribute to engagement. Students however do not always recognise the value of engagement, particularly in activities that do not have an overt academic purpose. Some will prioritise some forms of engagement at the expense of engagement in a more appropriate range of opportunities. It is therefore of value to make the purpose, expectations and benefits of engaging in their learning and participating in additional activities explicit. This may involve helping students to recognise the value of independent and group study, co-curricular activities and friendships within their programme or discipline of study.

In addition to making the purpose of and expectations about engagement explicit, students also benefit from the development of academic skills to enable them to maximise their success and to help them to engage. This may involve recognising different types of skills that students have, preferred learning styles, and academic
skills development. In addition it may include a range of skills associated with communication, negotiation and social engagement to facilitate working collaboratively. Furthermore, the use of social networks and friends should be actively promoted to help students integrate and belong within higher education.

Pre-entry activities, induction and early learning and teaching can be used to develop students’ capacity to engage. In the US the idea of university experience seminars or courses have taken off as a significant way to develop the capacity of students make the transition into higher education and be successful there. There is now a large body of evidence that points to the impact of these courses on student retention (see Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, and for a specific example Evenbeck and Ross 2011, which reports a 9% improvement in retention for participating compared to non-participating students when background characteristics are controlled for).

If transition is viewed not so much as a time for giving students information, but rather focuses on developing their capacity to engage and belong this could be a useful way to review current induction provision, perhaps focusing on the capacity to develop supportive peer relations; meaningful interaction with staff; knowledge/skills, confidence and identity as a successful HE learner and an HE experience which is relevant to interests and future goals. Such an approach would complement wider work in HEIs and the HE sector as a whole on student engagement

**Implications for institutional policy and practice: Effective transition to improve retention and success checklist**

The following reflective questions are intended to assist practitioners and institutions to critically review their approach to transition and work towards a more effective process. Transition includes pre-entry activities, induction and first semester/year learning and teaching.

1. To what extent is transition work focused on social engagement and developing social capital (contacts or networks to draw on), rather than on provision of information?
2. How early are you starting to build meaningful relationships with and between students, so that they know who to ask if they need information or support?
3. To what extent do your transition activities have an overt academic purpose? Could the academic element be increased?
4. In what ways are academic members of staff involved in transition activities? Do you have sufficient structured opportunities for students to get to know members of staff? Is this sufficient to enable students to get to know staff and be able to ask for information or support?
5. To what extent do pre- and post-entry transition activities facilitate students getting to know peers from the same course or programme? Is there a structured approach to encourage mixing outside of their comfort zones?
6. Does your transition programme make the benefits of academic and social engagement explicit to students and provide them with skills and opportunities to engage?
7. To what extent do transition activities build on and relate to students diverse interests, experiences and backgrounds?
8. In what ways is the relevance of the course or programme of study to students’ future aspirations made explicit both pre- and post-entry?
9. Have you reviewed the implementation and outcomes of your transition activities using the framework presented in this paper?
Appendix 1

The seven projects who undertook the programme of research and evaluation from 2008–11 were:

Project 1: A comparative evaluation of the roles of student adviser and personal tutor in relation to undergraduate student retention
Anglia Ruskin University with Peterborough Regional College, College of West Anglia

Project 2: Pathways to Success through peer mentoring
Aston University with Bangor University, Liverpool Hope University, London Metropolitan University, Oslo University College Norway, Oxford Brookes University, University of Sheffield and York University Canada

Project 3: ‘Belonging’ & ‘intimacy’ factors in the retention of students
University of Leicester

Project 4: Dispositions to Stay: The Support and Evaluation of Retention Strategies Using the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI)
Northumbria University with Universities of Bedfordshire and Manchester

Project 5: HERE! Higher education retention & engagement
Nottingham Trent University with Bournemouth and Bradford Universities

Project 6: Comparing and evaluating the impacts on student retention of different approaches to supporting students through study advice and personal development
University of Reading with Oxford Brookes University

Project 7: Good Practice in Student Retention: an Examination of the Effects of Student Integration on Non-Completion
University of Sunderland with Newcastle University and University of Hull
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