

Change and transition

Aim

This activity is designed to help participants understand the difficulties learners face on transition into HE, and at other critical points in their learning journey. It encourages participants to rethink the induction process and how they support learners throughout their study career to develop skills for learning in a digital age.

Preparation

Provide the text on the following page either as a hand-out or on 2/3 powerpoint slides.

Setting the scene

Before carrying out this activity participants might have:

- Reviewed how learners are currently supported to develop their learning skills, perhaps by using the check-list on learning literacies
- Listened to learners talking about their experience of changes and transition
- Looked at some of the STROLL mind maps, particularly the one concerning change and transition

An alternative or complement to this activity, if you have more time, would be the 'strategies of effective learners' activity.

Instructions/discussion points around change and transition

1. What three changes could you make to the induction process at your institution to address some of the difficulties learners experience?
2. What guidance would you give to the leaders of first-year modules to ensure that first-year learners develop the skills they need for higher learning?



Here are some things learners struggle with at transition points (especially into HE)

1. Students in transition to HE have very little understanding of how they will be expected to study and learn, including how they will learn with technologies. They are often no clearer after induction.
2. Students' experiences of induction show for some it is a time of uncertainty and loss of familiar processes from their previous institution.
3. Although most learners arrive with good ICT skills, and an increasing majority with their own laptops, a minority lack either. These students need special support if they are to access learning opportunities on the same terms as their peers. There is a risk that the digital divide is becoming 'narrower and deeper'.
4. Students need to deal with a much wider variety of software in HE, more choice of software, and upgrading or transferring from older to newer versions of familiar software e.g. Word.
5. Students are often over-confident about their ability to find, evaluate and re-use information from the Internet. They need careful, clear direction about how to source academically credible content, and opportunities to practice within their discipline.
6. Disabled learners are having to learn about assistive technologies at the beginning of a university career, alongside all the other challenges of transition.
7. Students need to transfer their academic practice from largely paper-based systems in school to largely computer-based systems in HE, e.g. accessing course materials online, submitting assignments digitally, computer-based assessments, e-portfolios, working with online packages rather than paper-based media.
8. There can be a clash of cultures between academic knowledge practice (critical, evidence based, peer reviewed, authority-oriented) and web-based knowledge practices that students are often more familiar with. Plagiarism is a key crunch point.
9. (Not yet observed as an issue but likely to become so in the future): the Google Generation report found that school students were much more likely to find learning content via image or video searches and to approach their learning through these media. There is likely to be a second clash here with academic practice, still very heavily text based.

Here are some ways in which we notice learners becoming more effective as they move through their careers.

1. Students report an increased use of technology as they mature in their studies and a broader range of uses.
2. As learners become more experienced, email is the tool of preference for communication; time spent online increases dramatically; mobiles and laptops are used in preference to PCs, USB sticks in preference to discs, Mac in preference to PC, digital media in preference to paper-based.
3. Students become more careful about their use of time as they mature in their studies
4. Students' research and investigation skills improve, and they make more use of academic websites, Athens; online databases and journals, the library system and academic podcasts.

