

**LTC15D192**

**Title:** Academic Induction/Transitions Liaison Group  
**Author:** HUM Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching Quality (Dr Clive Matthews)  
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### **Issue**

To report to members on the first year of operation of the Academic Induction/Transitions Liaison Group.

### **Recommendation**

Recipients are invited to receive this report.

### **Resource Implications**

There are no additional resource requirements arising directly from this report.

### **Risk Implications**

Supportive induction/transition programmes are known to influence retention, progression, Good Honours and student satisfaction. In addition, retention forms an important KPI for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) outlined in the Government's recent Higher Education and Research White Paper, *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (May 2016). Hence, it is important that the University has a forum for monitoring induction/transition programmes across the Institution and, wherever possible, disseminating good practice and seeking further enhancements.

### **Equality and Diversity**

There are no issues identified arising from this report.

### **Timing of decisions**

This report is for information only.

### **Further Information**

The establishment of the Academic Induction/Transitions Liaison Group was approved by LTC on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2015 as part of a suite of recommendations following the Review of Student Academic Induction (LTC14D223).

For further information please contact Dr Clive Matthews, incoming Academic Director of Taught Programmes, (x3430, [clive.matthews@uea.ac.uk](mailto:clive.matthews@uea.ac.uk)).

### **Background**

The University has long recognised that successful support for students navigating through the various transitions encountered in their university career has an important impact on their engagement, motivation, persistence and sense of self-efficacy with resultant greater enjoyment, confidence and academic achievement. To this end LTC initiated a Transitions Project in 2009 (LTC09D082) and a Review of Academic Induction in 2014 (LTC14D223). The latter review made a series of recommendations, approved by LTC in June 2015, including the introduction of School Induction/Transition Co-ordinators, the use of an Academic Induction checklist as a tool to help Schools plan and structure their

induction/transition (I/T) programmes and the establishment of an Academic Induction/Transitions Liaison Group. The purpose of the latter is to co-ordinate I/T programmes across the University as well as identify and disseminate best practice (both within the University and the sector), identify areas for future enhancement, and keep abreast of the latest research. In this first year of operation the Liaison Group met five times (November 2015, February, March, April and June 2016).

The importance of the Academic Induction/Transitions Liaison Group has taken on a more significant role with the recent publication of the Government's Higher Education and Research White Paper, *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (May 2016) with retention forming an important KPI for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Further, the *Teaching Excellence Framework Technical Consultation* paper flags various concerns of the Liaison Group as potential components of the institutional narrative submission:

- Learning Environment: "Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at supporting the transition into and through a higher education course";
- Student Outcomes and Learning Gain: "Impact and effectiveness of initiatives aimed at understanding, assessing and improving retention and completion."

The following sections report on a number of issues and best practice identified by the Liaison Group which will be of interest to LTC.

### **Student Surveys**

The Arrivals section of the Student Experience Survey (SES), taken by non-Finalists, includes three questions relating to I/T. The 2016 survey indicates a degree of dissatisfaction with the University's I/T programmes with only 66% answering positively to the question: "My induction prepared me adequately for what to expect from my course and University in general." Further these figures have been decreasing over the last few years (from 72% in 2014 and 68% in 2015). Satisfaction is somewhat higher with the pre-arrival website (70%) and the content of the *General Student Handbook* (73%). These results indicate considerable room for improvement.

Some insight into these results may be gleaned from the verbatim comments reported as part of the Student Union *Quality Conversations* initiative. The most common adjective describing induction talks, in particular, was "boring" even though there was a recognition that they were mostly necessary: "induction [talks] are long, boring and a bombardment of info"; "found them boring and rushed". That said, not all found these talks overly helpful: "[I] was sent to talks that weren't relevant"; "I wish my Introduction course was more relevant to me" (from SES verbatim comments).

It is worth noting that the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) which will replace the SES from next year does not include I/T questions. It will, therefore, be necessary to find alternative ways of gathering student feedback on these matters. This may include the focus groups interviewed as part of the BIU's Arrivals Experiences of New Students. At a very minimum, I/T should be compulsory item on an Autumn semester SSLC agenda with the relevant minutes being reported to the Chair of the Liaison Group.

### **Students as Co-creators**

Induction/transition programmes are directed at students and yet they are not, as a rule, used to co-create this experience in ways that may make it more relevant to their needs. As noted, various types of feedback are gathered which help in the planning process and in a number of cases student-based groups play a significant role in the induction programme – for example the Law Society in LAW. It would be beneficial to include student representatives in each School's planning process for the next year.

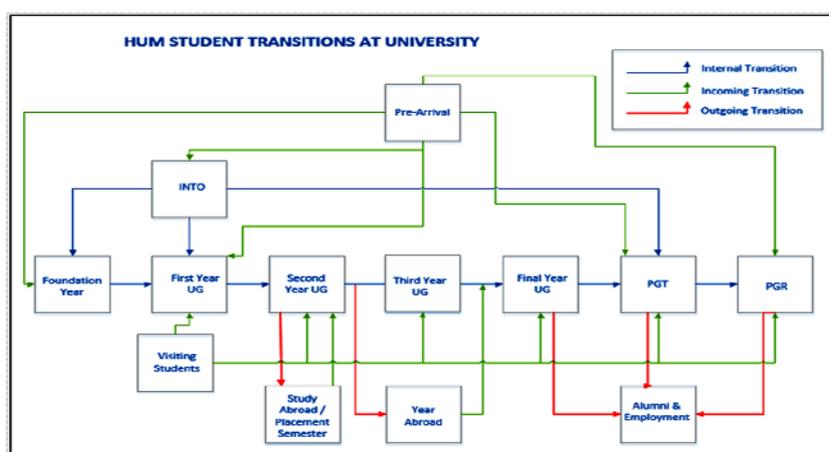
Another approach is to allow students to guide the direction of the induction process themselves, "student-generated induction", by allowing them to raise the issues that most concern them. Typically these concerns would then be answered by returning students. A

central tenet of student-generated induction is that it allows for the development of an increased sense of identity to the institution, something that has long been recognised as aiding retention.

Student-generated induction has been actively promoted by Dr Nicholas Bowskill and a number of colleagues have attended workshops led by him which have been very positively received. It is hoped to invite him to UEA during the next academic year. It is worth noting that LAW will be exploring student-generated induction as part of their 2018-17 programme following discussion in the Liaison Group.

### HUM Transition Project

The most radical rethink of I/T is currently to be found with the ambitious HUM Transitions Project. This is a Faculty-wide initiative which aims to provide continuous support for all (including returning) students throughout their career at UEA. The overall plan is holistic – with a number of events happening at Faculty-level – although each School is responsible for its particular delivery. The plan recognises a large number of transition types:



Student needs have been categorised into 5 themes and all activities and events provided as part of the Transitions programme are aimed at supporting the delivery of one, or more, of these:

- *Social/Relationships* – making friends and developing support networks;
- *Institutional Integration* – UEA orientation, finding out how things work, finding out about information sources, where to go for information/help and who key people are;
- *Celebrating HUM/Interdisciplinary* – building confidence in choices and the value of the humanities. Finding out about, celebrating and showcase of UEA HUM achievements and research;
- *Study Skills* – understanding and developing the skills required to for study. Enabling reflection on learning and becoming a more active participant in the process of learning;
- *Employability/Opportunities* – essential to support students to develop their graduate attributes. Finding out about, and taking advantage of, opportunities to develop confidence, skills and experience. Improving employability, awareness and preparedness for the future.

It is recognised that these requirements will need to be met at different times spread across the whole of the academic year and not just in Week 1:



The Liaison Group provides an important forum in which to disseminate and discuss best practice around the University. For example, the use of video podcasts on the New Student web pages for CHE and NBS were recognised as adding a more personal touch to pre-arrival materials. On a somewhat different note it was noticed that Schools vary widely as to which day they schedule meetings with Academic Advisers; the advantages and disadvantages of different days caused a wide ranging discussion.

In addition the 2015 *Learning and Teaching Day* was devoted to Student Transitions (LTC14D230). The associated web page (<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/csed/learning-and-teaching-day>) includes a booklet of abstracts, materials from many of the presentations and reports by session chairs on each presentation. This is a valuable resource showcasing many examples of innovative practice within the University.

### **Library Initiatives**

The Library has been keen to develop materials to be used as part of various transition processes. Most notable amongst these materials is Digital Voyager, a four week, online, stand-alone course aimed at supporting students in developing information and digital literacies. Digital Voyager has been well-received by students.

Dr Emma Coonan and Jane Helgesen are currently exploring how the Library can further develop materials which can be integrated into more discipline-specific School I/T activities ([https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/12537912/lt2016\\_coonan\\_helgesen\\_adapted.pdf/65b69e3a-cc10-4851-b5c9-218d484e503c](https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/12537912/lt2016_coonan_helgesen_adapted.pdf/65b69e3a-cc10-4851-b5c9-218d484e503c)). These materials will be partially delivered via Blackboard but will also include blended delivery.

### **Blackboard Site**

There is a dedicated Blackboard site for the Liaison Group inherited from the Review of Academic Induction. The site contains information ranging from details of each School's current induction programme, student focus group discussions, sector initiatives and examples of some of the most important literature on the subject. This is a valuable resource. There is an issue, however, of who is responsible for keeping the site up-to-date.

### **Attachments**

Appendix A: Terms of Reference

Appendix B: Student Academic Induction Checklist

## APPENDIX A

### **Academic Induction/Transitions Liaison Group**

#### **Terms of Reference**

1. To ensure a more coordinated and consistent approach to induction and transitions related support across the University.
2. To collect and monitor information and activities relating to Induction and Transitions support within the University, and to identify areas for future enhancement.
3. To identify and disseminate best practice within UEA across Schools.
4. To keep a watching brief on developments in Induction and Transitions support within the wider HE sector, and to disseminate examples of innovatory practice across the University.
5. To identify high quality research into aspects of Academic Induction and Transitions support and to ensure these are made accessible to key staff responsible for planning/coordinating Induction/Transition support at School and programme level.
6. To oversee the ongoing development of the Academic Induction & Transitions Blackboard site, so that the latter continues to evolve as a repository of practice, and drive-up the quality of Induction/Transitions.
7. To develop across the University a strong 'partnership' with students such that students become important 'co-producers' of the Academic Induction and Transitions support provided in future.
8. To ensure that the concept of 'Transitions' is embraced and made concrete across all Schools such that the diverse needs of different types of students are reflected in the support provided.
9. To report to Student Experience Committee on an annual basis, flagging areas of best practice, aspects of recent enhancement, areas for future development, etc.

APPENDIX B

**Student Academic Induction Checklist**

Staff coordinating planning of Induction should use this 25-point 'Checklist' as a tool to help them think-through and address key elements of the Academic Induction & Transitions support in their School of Study. The Induction/Transitions checklist is not intended to be a prescriptive list of things that must be included – rather, it is intended to provide a helpful reference point to inform their programmes at School and/or Course level.

**25-POINT INDUCTION CHECKLIST**

N°	List of Issues for Planning Purposes
1	<b>Welcome from Head of School?</b>
2	<b>Opportunity to meet academic and support staff of the School?</b> E.g. This might include key role holders (e.g. Senior Advisor, Course Directors, Teaching Director) as well as local support staff.
3	<b>Opportunity to meet with advisers (singly or in small groups)?</b>
4	<b>Opportunities to meet with students from other cohorts, or other years (e.g. cross-cohort activity)?</b>
5	<b>Are any elements of Induction student-led or student-generated?</b> (i.e. by PAL mentors/Officers, or by School Reps?)
6	<b>Have existing students been consulted about the content/shape/focus of the Induction programme?</b> – e.g. Student reps (via SSLCs) and other students will often have useful and valuable ideas to offer based on their own experience of the Induction programme the year before....
7	<b>Have students had opportunities to receive briefings from colleagues in central services?</b> DOS <input type="checkbox"/> Careers <input type="checkbox"/> Year Abroad <input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> LTS <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Security <input type="checkbox"/>
8	<b>Briefing by members of the UEA Union of Students?</b> – e.g. purpose of the UUEAS, services provided, opportunities to be involved in societies, sports, guidance service, student representation and identities of School reps etc.
9	<b>Briefing and overview of the course by Course Director/Module Organisers?</b> Clear overview of the salient features of their chosen programme of study – with the particular features of each Stage of study clarified, and optionality clearly explained. Distinctive elements like placements etc. need to be outlined, as well as frequency of lab session, lectures, PBL sessions, seminars, workshops etc. The concept of research-led teaching needs to be 'unpacked' and explained. Exploration of Course Handbook?
10	<b>Subject-specific taster sessions?</b> – e.g. introducing 'themes' associated with subjects, or problems that might be explored. These session sit outside of formal module content and delivery of the latter. They are about engaging students, inspiring them early-on and triggering their interest and curiosity.
11	<b>Opportunity to explain expectations of student engagement?</b> i.e. level of commitment (e.g. study hours) and standards expected regarding assessment (e.g. marking scales/criteria). Exploration of mutual expectations in Student Charter?
12	<b>Briefing on assessment tasks?</b> – e.g. number, types, rationale and links to disciplinary understanding and transferable skills etc. Links between formative and summative assessment and provision of feedback/feed-forwards etc.
13	<b>Introduction to key academic and study resources?</b> – e.g. e-Vision, Blackboard, IT Labs, Science labs, key software, hardware etc.
14	<b>Explanations of key University policies and regulations?</b> – e.g. policy on plagiarism & collusion, policy on attendance, word counts, penalties for late submission, policy on extenuating circumstances etc.
14	<b>Is there is healthy emphasis on active learning and group-based activity?</b> – e.g. in formative assessments, informal learning activities (Quizzes, treasure hunts etc)?
15	<b>Are students provided with opportunities to explore:</b> Peer learning and issues associated with groupwork? <input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>Issues associated with Reflective learning? <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The meaning and use of critical reading, thinking and writing? <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Professionalism <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Developing resilience <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Time management strategies <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Employment opportunities on campus (Convenors, Ambassadors, PAL mentors, Union outlets etc) <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>16</b>	<b>Is there opportunity to discuss careers and preparation for the world of work?</b> – e.g. clear sense of the ‘graduate attributes’ they will develop whilst on their course, and how their course will prepare them for employment? Ways in which assessments build transferable skills?
<b>17</b>	<b>Has the Induction programme been designed specifically to address the needs of particular groups of students?</b> Such as: International students? <input type="checkbox"/> Mature and/or part-time students <input type="checkbox"/> Students with caring commitments <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled students <input type="checkbox"/> Students on Joint Degrees programmes <input type="checkbox"/> (Wherever possible dedicated sessions/briefings should be provided for Joint Degree students, and clashes between schools should be avoided).
<b>18</b>	<b>Is there provision of basic academic skills training?</b> – e.g. referencing, citation, plagiarism awareness, essay design, academic writing skills etc.
<b>19</b>	<b>Have students an opportunity to learn about student peer mentoring systems available in their school (e.g. PAL), and beyond (e.g. in DOS)?</b> – e.g. student ‘buddy’ systems, peer feedback systems (e.g. in HUM).
<b>20</b>	<b>School and campus tours?</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Have a minimum of 3 days been set aside for Induction in Week 1?</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Have other Induction activities been planned for subsequent weeks?</b> - e.g. training on plagiarism awareness led by PO?
<b>23</b>	<b>Are appropriate uses made of digital/mobile technology (other than VLE)</b> – e.g. social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) before, during and after induction to support integration and to build a sense of belonging?
<b>24</b>	<b>Have small-scale formative assessment tasks been set early-on in order to ensure that students receive early feedback on their performance?</b> –e.g. these might be very informal, but allow students either a chance to work together or to test-out their level of understanding, use of resources or sources etc.
<b>25</b>	<b>Have students had opportunities to engage with any of the following?</b> Self-reflective skills audit? <input type="checkbox"/> Good Learner Inventory? <input type="checkbox"/> Online plagiarism awareness tests? <input type="checkbox"/> VARK or other learning styles tests? <input type="checkbox"/> Belbin or other team roles tests? <input type="checkbox"/> Online Library training module? <input type="checkbox"/>