HEIRNETWORK

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

University of Brighton

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH: STRENGTHENING HIGHER EDUCATION FUTURES

10 and 11 September 2020
Online, hosted by the University of Brighton

13th Annual HEIR Network Conference

Proudly sponsored by explorance.

INTRODUCTION

A warm and virtual welcome and thank you for joining us for the Higher Education Institutional Research (HEIR) Network's 13th annual conference.

The University of Brighton is delighted to be this year's host and we hope that the new online format has enabled many more delegates and HEIR Network supporters, past and present, to be able to join us for what will be a very special event.

We have an outstanding selection of keynotes, with contributions from Professor Sir Chris Husbands, Nona McDuff, Eliza Kozman, and David Kernohan, as well as a wide range of stimulating breakout sessions from across the globe.

The HEIR Network annual conference has always been a fantastic opportunity for HE institutional research enthusiasts and practitioners to come together as a community to exchange knowledge, information and ideas. Of course, this year, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we took the decision to move the event online rather than postpone or cancel. Thank you to all of our presenters and facilitators for agreeing to continue and participate in the revised format.

The theme this year, agreed before the pandemic took hold is, I**nstitutional Research: Strengthening HE Futures**, and is designed to focus on the role of institutional research and of those HE professionals involved in IR, data analysis and evaluation, in strengthening and supporting the future of higher education and higher education institutions. The theme seems even more critical now.

We have four key strands running through the event, which highlight the many ways in which institutional research increasingly plays a pivotal role in supporting institutional effectiveness and helping support and strengthen HE futures:

- **Enhancing Learning Lives** – using institutional research to drive improvements in student engagement and learning experiences.
- **Enriching Data Stories** – transforming institutional research and data into insights and narratives to drive action.
- **Influencing Policy** – applying institutional research to inform and influence policy and strategy formation.
- **Learning from Crises** – how institutions have responded and evolved in response to the recent COVID-19 crisis.

On behalf of the HEIR Network Group and the University of Brighton Conference Planning Group, we hope you find the event enjoyable and useful and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Rachel Bowden
Head of Evaluation and Policy Department, University of Brighton

University of Brighton

Professor Debra Humphris took up post as Vice Chancellor at the University of Brighton in December 2015.

In 2017 Debra was elected to chair the Universities UK student policy network and was subsequently returned in March 2018 to serve a further three years. In addition, she chairs the UCEA clinical academic staff advisory group (CASAG). From 1st September 2019 Debra took up the role of Chair of the University's Alliance.

Debra joined the University of Brighton from Imperial College in London, where she held the position of Vice Provost (Education) between 2012 and 2015. As an openly LGBT senior leader in higher education, Debra is passionate about equality and diversity.

Professor Ruth Whittaker Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students)

Ruth is a Professor in Learning Practices. Enhancing the student experience and progression pathways to Higher Education has been integral to her institutional, national and international work for over 25 years. This has included ensuring that sector and institutional strategy and systems enable the successful participation of any learner, regardless of their background, who has the potential to benefit from HE.

As PVC Education and Students, Ruth provides strategic leadership for the academic dimensions of the student experience. She is responsible for the implementation of the university's Education and Students Strategic Plan and related KPIs including the National Student Survey and the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework.

Rachel Bowden is Head of the Evaluation and Policy Department at the University of Brighton and Chair of the HEIR 2020 Brighton Conference Planning Group.

Rachel joined the University of Brighton 25 years ago, as a Research Assistant in the University's Education Research Centre, supporting the then Vice-Chancellor, the late Professor Sir David Watson with his research in higher education policy and management. She has worked in a number of different roles in strategy and planning and was Deputy Director of the Strategic Planning Office for over 10 years.

Rachel has also led the University's engagement in a number of national institutional research projects, including What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme (with Advance HE) and the HEFCE-funded collaborative Postgraduate Support Scheme – Postgraduate Experience Project. She is a member of a number of sector groups, including the AGCAS Data Insights (Graduate Data) Group.

HEIRNETWORK

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

The UK and Ireland Higher Education Institutional Research (HEIR) network was established in 2008 to bring together institutional research (IR) enthusiasts and practitioners working in the UK and Ireland higher education sectors.

The HEIR network believes that IR is playing an increasingly important role in enhancing learning and teaching practice and providing timely and relevant evidence to aid management decision making at all levels within UK and Irish higher education institutions.

The network is coordinated by a voluntary Planning Group that focuses on supporting the network through providing networking opportunities and facilitating host institutions in organising the annual HEIR conference.

What we do
The activities of the network are focused on achieving the following four objectives:

1. To build an IR community in the UK and Ireland that can help individuals develop their knowledge and expertise and contribute to the building of capacity for IR across the sector
2. To be a forum for discussion around contemporary issues and for sharing ideas, experiences, practices and solutions to issues and problems
3. To inform HE policy and practice through engaging directly with policy-makers
4. To work with other bodies to aiming to impact on HE policy and practice

Check out the Network's website and join the mailing list
www.heirnetwork.org.uk

KEYNOTE BIOGRAPHIES

Nona McDuff is the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Students and Teaching at Solent University. She was awarded an OBE for her services to diversity in higher education and is a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She has served as a panel member of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) as the widening participation expert and was part of the ministerial Social Mobility Advisory Group convened to widen access and improve success for disadvantaged and under -represented groups. As chair of the Higher Education Race Action Group (HERAG) with over 400 members, Nona was invited to address the All Party Parliamentary Group on Higher Education on diversity in academia where she challenged the ministers to take active steps to promote social justice through education. Nona's research interests include inclusive curricula and differential attainment.

Professor Sir Chris Husbands is a university leader, academic, educationist and public servant. He has served as Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University since January 2016. Prior to joining Sheffield Hallam, Chris was Director of the Institute of Education (2007-2015) and then Vice-Provost at University College London (2014-2015). Sir Chris is also Chair of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) and Chair of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Board, Yorkshire Universities Board, and the Doncaster Opportunity Area Partnership Board. In addition, he was appointed to the board of UUK in August 2019.

Eliza Kozman is Deputy Director (Research) at the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) which is an affiliate What Works centre set up to tackle inequality in higher education. Formerly, she worked for the Behavioural Insights Team where she designed and implemented a range of research projects with a focus on reducing inequality in education. Eliza is undertaking a PhD at University College London where her work focuses on how role models can help tackle identity-based barriers to education. Eliza has a strong interest in social mobility and a background in higher education policy.

David Kernohan is an Associate Editor of Wonkhe. Until June 2016, he worked at Jisc as a programme manager and senior codesign manager, after being seconded from HEFCE in 2006. He has also worked for the University of Glamorgan (now the University of South Wales). As Associate Editor, David has responsibility for the development and delivery of a variety of editorial content. His key areas of wonkishness include teaching quality enhancement policy, funding policy, sector agency politics and history, research policy, and the use of technology and data in Higher Education. David has written for Wonkhe since foundation, and also maintains a personal blog.

PROGRAMME - THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER

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09:00 – 09:15	**Arrival and registration** House keeping		
09:15 – 09:25	**Welcome from the Network** Matt Hiely-Rayner, Director of Strategic Planning & Change, Bucks New University Rachel Bowden, Head of Evaluation and Policy Department, Chair of HEIR 2020, University of Brighton		
09:25 – 09:35	**Opening address:** Professor Ruth Whittaker, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education & Students, University of Brighton		
09:45 – 10:30	**KEYNOTE 1** **David Kernohan, Associate Editor, Wonkhe**		
10:40 - 11:10 Breakout 1	**1a**	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Julie Hughes, Jenni Jones and Debra Cureton, University of Wolverhampton** Developing the Role of Academic Coach: The Impact of the Third Space Professional in the Wonderland of Academic Success
	1b	**Enriching Data Stories**	**Elza Lourens, Stellenbosch University** Graduate employability – turning pressures into possibilities?
	1c	**Influencing Policy**	**Anthony Mansfield and Santanu Vasant, University of East London** Establishing a Dialogue on Strategic Thinking
	1d	**Learning from Crises**	**Nigel Page, Kingston University London** COVID-19's potential to redefine perceptions of teaching excellence in higher education
11:10 – 11:20	**Refreshment break:** online networking		
11:20 - 12:05	**KEYNOTE 2** **Eliza Kozman, Deputy Director (Research), Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO)** Addressing equality gaps with evidence and evaluation		
12:10 - 12:40 Breakout 2	**2a**	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Ken Mavor, University of St Andrews** Student approaches with assessment feedback: effects of individual differences and social identity factors in predicting engagement and avoidance behaviours.
	2b	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Celine Heffernan, Dublin City University** From likert-scales to lunches: Opening the door for constructive and meaningful staff-student dialogue
	2c	**Enriching Data Stories**	**Aluisio Segurado, University of São Paulo; Institutional Research Office** Assessing social impact of the university of São Paulo: a valuable learning experience
	2d	**Influencing Policy**	**Marthie Cronje and Florence Harvey, University of Southampton** A collaborative approach to developing an evidence-based Access & Participation Plan
12:40 - 13:00	**Plenary:** reflections/take-aways from breakouts (facilitated)		
from 13:00	**Online networking:** non-facilitated - breakout social		

PROGRAMME - FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER

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09:00 – 09:15	**Arrival online** House keeping		
09:15 – 09:30	**Welcome to day two** Professor Debra Humphris, Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton		
09:30 – 10:15	**KEYNOTE 3** **Nona McDuff OBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor Students and Teaching, Solent University** Using data to drive action to narrow the BAME attainment gap.		
10:20 - 10:50 Breakout 3	**3a**	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Siobhán Nic Fhlannchadha and Nóra Trench Bowles, StudentSurvey.ie & Irish Universities Association** What the Irish Survey of Student Engagement tells us about the student experience of internationally domiciled students studying in Irish higher education institutions
	3b	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Ken Mavor, University of St Andrews** Identity incompatibilities in the HE student experience: impact on learning, academic self-handicapping and social mobility
	3c	**Enriching Data Stories**	**Gemma Mansi, Hilary Orpin and Cathy Molesworth, University of Greenwich** The NSS and overall student satisfaction: how to get it right!
	3d	**Influencing Policy**	**Ray Bachan, University of Brighton** Grade Inflation and Grade Adjustment in UK Higher Education
	Poster sessions		
	3e	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Nigel Page, Kingston University London** The use of hackathons in the biosciences to support the development of creativity and innovation as an implicit part of the student experience
	3f	**Influencing Policy**	**Nigel Page, Kingston University London** Will COVID-19 be a driver for making real and positive changes for commuting students?
	3g	**Learning from Crises**	**Jennifer Taylorson and Margaret Adamson, The University of St Andrews** EA Guide for Good Practice in Online Teaching and Learning: Developing a Foundation for Transformative CPD
	3h	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Karen Campbell, Glasgow Caledonian University** Utilising Appreciative Inquiry for a whole curriculum enhancement
10:50 – 11:00	**Refreshment break:** online networking		
11:00 - 11:45	**KEYNOTE 4** **Professor Sir Chris Husbands, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University, Chair of TEF, Chair of HESA Board** What next? Higher Education after COVID		
11:50 - 12:20 Breakout 4	**4a**	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Eilidh Harris, University of St Andrews** UG Transitions Toolkit: Supporting pre-arrival reflection and enhanced transitional student experience
	4b	**Enhancing Learning Lives**	**Sheelagh Heugh and Nigel Page, Kingston University London** Overcoming the hurdles to student engagement; challenges facing two modern urban London universities
	4c	**Enriching Data Stories**	**Gráinne McDonagh, RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences** CampusTIES (Transnational Insights and Engagement System)
	4d	**Enriching Data Stories**	**Penny Jones and Explorance, University of Brighton & Explorance** Developing a one size fits all approach to module evaluation...how good does our solution look on all shapes and sizes?
	4e	**Learning from Crises**	**Debra Cureton, University of Wolverhampton** Creating a Postgraduate Researcher Community: A Response to Crisis during the Covid-19 Pandemic
12:20 - 12:30	**Plenary:** reflections/take-aways from breakouts (facilitated)		
12:30 - 12:40	**Evaluation Plenary:** conference evaluation with Explorance		
12:40 - 13:00	**Open session:** strengthening **HEIR** Futures The Future of the Network		
13:00	**Close of conference**		

Please note programme is subject to change

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KEYNOTE 1

David Kernohan

Date	Thursday 10 September
Time	09:45 – 10:30
Title	Details to follow
Abstract	Details to follow

BREAKOUT SESSION 1

1a

Presenter: Julie Hughes, Jenni Jones & Debra Cureton - University of Wolverhampton

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: Developing the Role of Academic Coach: The Impact of the Third Space Professional in the Wonderland of Academic Success.

Abstract: In 2019, The University of Wolverhampton implemented a new role for third space professionals called the Academic-Coach (AC). The AC focuses on the pastoral care and personal tutoring of Level 3 and 4 students, with the aim of supporting the transition from L3 to L4, encourage retention, success and the development of a sense of belonging. This presentation considers the development of the role, and will draw on some early finding from the evaluation of the role to discuss the positive impact of the role. The role has been evaluated by considering: - The journey of the AC in defining and shaping of Academic-Coaching. - The impact of ACs on L3 and L4 students' experience of learning with the University of Wolverhampton - The impact of ACs in the teaching arena and Lecturers' attitudes toward the role (in progress). - Quantitative analysis of students' data - Student case studies.

Key words: Academic-coach, retention, success, belonging, level-3, level4-transition

1b

Presenter: Elza Lourens - Stellenbosch University

Track: Track 2 - Enriching Data Stories

Title: Graduate employability – turning pressures into possibilities?

Abstract: The assumption that high-level skills are essential in a knowledge-based economy has led governments to increasingly focus on the role of higher education to produce employable graduates. Also, students (and parents) expect a return on their investment by them being able to secure appropriate employment after graduation. This presentation reports on a qualitative study that explored the transition of 46 graduates from four higher education institutions into first-time employment. The data revealed that graduates experienced these transitions as complex and challenging, and that they felt unprepared for the world of work. I conclude that a more focused, holistic and collaborative approach by higher education to preparing graduates for transition into first-time employment is required. This study's narrative provides insight into some actions required by higher education in support of producing employable graduates.

Key words: Employability, graduates, transition, higher education contribution, first-time employment

1c

Presenter: Anthony Mansfield & Santanu Vassant - University of East London

Track: Track 3 - Influencing Policy

Title: Establishing a Dialogue on Strategic Thinking

Abstract: Higher Education is experiencing a volume of change that forces its leaders to be strategic in their approach to university management. At present, the research literature focuses on the implementation of strategic plans, visions, and or institutional reorganisation, which are tools that prepare a university for the future. However, an interest in how strategic thinking and strategy creation beyond the realms of an executive board is not as prevalent.

HE occupies a precarious position with many pressures: first, Government attitudes towards HE seeking an evaluation of impact and value for money (calculated through complex data models); secondly a new regulator (Office for Students) charged with adopting a robust relationship; thirdly the sector suffers from negative public perceptions of the academy at large: and finally this is notwithstanding the current public health crisis. Such environmental factors can give rise to an emerging orthodoxy in HE in which strategy is designed by more stable and established universities. However, Post-92 institutions – particularly those situated in London – experience additional disruptive forces that impact on strategy. Post 92 London universities can witness a regular change in leadership on executive boards (VCs to PVCs), and dynamic student recruitment rounds, which impact on financial scenario planning. These trials can hinder an institution's staff and their ability to provide an effective, inclusive and collaborative learning environment for students. Plans need to triangulate to institutional strategies (Education, Research or International), that can emerge only to disappear.

This conference paper will outline the University of East London's Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and Strategic Planning departments journey in discovering strategic staff – those in Learning and Teaching roles – confidence and anxiety in strategy through surveys and semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, we have developed a strategic thinking workshop from which we will pilot this summer and intend to expand to the broader institution depending on its success (workshop running end of July). The workshops are planned to support strategic staff members in managing the turbulence and in providing an excellent learning & teaching environment for our students. These workshops will also be evaluated with post-activity surveys and semi-structured interviews to become a stable part of the leadership training for our institution.

Key words: Strategy, Leadership, Academic Development, Horizon Scanning, Strategic Planning, Impact

1d

Presenter: Nigel Page - Kingston University London

Track: Track 4 - Learning from Crises

Title: COVID-19's potential to redefine perceptions of teaching excellence in higher education

Abstract: Last year (HEIR2019), I reviewed and opened debate about the interpretation and differences in student and staff perceptions in defining/measuring teaching excellence set against the backdrop of tuition fees, NSS and TEF. Subsequently, COVID-19 has struck bringing an abrupt curtailment of face to face teaching and assessment; and what has seemed the collapse of the traditional bricks and mortar model. For many staff and students, this will tear longstanding perceptions of what a university should be and redefine the student experience. There are no doubts overtures of either complete online/blended learning has led to discussion to value for money, concern over differential experiences and attainment. This session reviews the recently unchartered waters from alternative assessments, no detriment policies, role of professional bodies, and the complexities of scheduling teaching activities in the era of social distancing. We'll consider and debate lessons learnt and COVID-19's potential to change long-standing perceptions of HE.

Key words: COVID-19, redefining teaching excellence, student and staff perceptions

KEYNOTE 2

Eliza Kozman

Date Thursday 10 September

Time 11:20 - 12:05

Title Addressing equality gaps with evidence and evaluation

Abstract Equality gaps exist at every stage of the HE journey – from entry through to continuation, success and progression. Providers invest substantially in activities designed to address these gaps but we are lacking a robust evidence base which can help practitioners and administrators identify, implement and refine the most effective approaches. Eliza will discuss some of the existing research on this topic and how further evidence and evaluation will be critical to addressing equality gaps across the sector.

BREAKOUT SESSION 2

2a

Presenter: Ken Mavor - University of St Andrews

Co-author: Adam Lord & Lillian Smyth

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: Student approaches with assessment feedback: effects of individual differences and social identity factors in predicting engagement and avoidance behaviours.

Abstract: Traditional approaches to assessment feedback have focused on teachers' feedback approaches, but recent interest has shifted to students approaches to feedback. Winstone, Hepper, and Nash (2019) explored the role of individual difference variables (personality, learning motivations, and feedback orientation) on feedback engagement behaviour. We argue that in addition it is essential to take account of the social nature of the student experience and the impact of peer norms. We conducted an online study (N=330 UG students) to assess the relative contribution of individual and social processes in predicting feedback engagement. In addition to the same individual variables, we included measures of identification with academic discipline, and perceptions of peer beliefs about feedback. Discipline social identity significantly reduced feedback avoidance, and peer norms were a strong predictor of both avoidance and engagement. We discuss the importance of student social processes in understanding and improving feedback engagement.

Key words: Assessment feedback literacy, Feedback orientation, Student approaches to feedback, Peer norms on feedback engagement

2b

Presenter: Celine Heffernan - Dublin City University

Co-author: Aisling McKenna

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: From likert-scales to lunches: Opening the door for constructive and meaningful staff-student dialogue

Abstract: Formal student survey and student representation on formal decision-making structures are traditional vehicles for the student perspective to inform Dublin City University's educational policy development and strategic decision-making. Since 2018, the University has supplemented these methods with informal dialogue opportunities through structured Staff-Student Forums. The forums take place four times throughout the teaching term across all academic Faculties and a number of support units, with participation from staff and students in equal numbers. The Forums are framed by the shared values of openness and honesty, bringing forth the spirit of collegiality that sits at the heart of DCU's culture. This paper will explore how the Forums have provided a new kind of evidence, which builds trust and improves the quality of dialogue with students as a tool for ongoing enhancement. It will also outline the role of the Quality Enhancement Offices in providing consistent oversight of process and outputs.

Key words: dialogue, representation, formal, informal, perspective, consistent

2c

Presenter: Aluisio Segurado - University of São Paulo; Institutional Research Office

Co-author: Andre Serradas, João-Vitor Campos & Cesar Albuquerque

Track: Track 2 - Enriching Data Stories

Title: Assessing social impact of the university of São Paulo: a valuable learning experience.

Abstract: Monitoring and evaluation of social impact (SI-M&E) is an important challenge for higher education institutions worldwide due to the lack of consensus on best practices in data collection and definition of indicators. In the current Brazilian context of political devaluation of science and education and severe economic crisis, SI-M&E is crucial for accountability of Universities' social role.

Aims: To describe lessons learnt by the University of São Paulo (USP) with data collection and analysis concerning academic performance related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Approach and Analysis: To participate in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking 2020, the Institutional Research Office at USP conducted a broad survey of academic activities held in 2018 addressing any of the 17 SDGs. A comprehensive questionnaire was distributed to Faculties, Research Institutes, and Management Offices in search of information about SDG-related teaching and extension activities, targeting the academic community or society at large. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative aspects of the initiatives were assessed by evidence available in policy documents or accessed from the internet and social media.

Results: The overall response to the survey was rewarding and provided information about educational or outreach interdisciplinary actions related to the 17 SDGs. USP performed best in SDGs 1 (no poverty), 7 (affordable and clean energy) and 15 (life on land) with achievements concerning social inclusion of underprivileged students; efficiency in clean energy consumption, and maintenance of ecosystems and biodiversity with land-sensitive waste disposal.

Conclusions: This was a unique opportunity to deepen institutional self-knowledge about USP's capability to respond to societal demands and to build a dataset to showcase significant contributions for socio-economic development towards a more sustainable world.

Key words: Social impact, University, academic performance, sustainable development, Brazil.

2d

Presenter: Marthie Cronje & Florence Harvey - University of Southampton

Track: Track 3 - Influencing Policy

Title: A collaborative approach to developing an evidence-based Access & Participation Plan

Abstract: In 2019, the Office for Students in England made substantial changes to the way in which they monitor progress towards equity of access and success for underrepresented groups at higher education providers. Institutions were provided with new guidance for their Access & Participation Plans, with significant penalties for not developing thorough, evidence-based plans and targets. This presentation will discuss the contribution of our Institutional Research (IR) team in the development of the Plan, and its subsequent implementation and monitoring, both from the perspective of the IR team itself and that of other partners in this area of work. The presenters will reflect on the project approach in terms of data analysis and insight, the successes and challenges encountered along the way, and share the lessons they will be taking forward from the exercise.

Twitter: Join us as we discuss the role of our Institutional Research team in developing, implementing and monitoring our Access & Participation Plan. We'll discuss lessons learnt both from the perspective of the IR team itself and that of other partners in this area of work.

Key words: Widening Participation, Collaboration, Data analysis

KEYNOTE 3

Nona McDuff

Date	Friday 11 September
Time	09:30 - 10:15
Title	Using data to drive action to narrow the BAME attainment gap
Abstract	Despite some success at increasing the number of BAME students accessing HE there is compelling evidence that students from backgrounds do much less well in their final degree classifications than their white counterparts, even when entry qualifications are taken into account. Known as the BAME attainment gap or the BAME awarding gap, too little attention over the years have been given to interventions to try to address it. This keynote describes the steps taken to substantially narrow the gap through an outcome focused institutional change programme. The multifaceted approach to change involves: defining the scale of the problem; using data and institutional research; engaging the university leadership and academic community; agreeing goals, interventions and outcomes/targets. The keynote describes the challenges of complex cultural change, the importance of discussing disadvantage, and highlights implications for higher education institutions seeking a sustained way to close differentials in attainment.

BREAKOUT SESSION 3

3a

Presenter: Siobhán Nic Fhlannchadha - StudentSurvey.ie & Nóra Trench Bowles - Irish Universities Association

Co-author: Denise Frawley

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: What the Irish Survey of Student Engagement tells us about the student experience of internationally domiciled students studying in Irish higher education institutions

Abstract: StudentSurvey.ie (the Irish Survey of Student Engagement) explores the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies and other educationally beneficial activities. It also explores how effectively the participating higher education institutions facilitate, encourage and promote student engagement in activities linked to learning. The survey consists of 67 questions, grouped by the engagement indicator to which they relate. In this paper, we examine the student experience of internationally domiciled students studying in Irish higher education institutions at two points in time – 2016 and 2019. These points are close to the beginning and end of the Irish government's Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020. The difference between the internationally domiciled students and Irish domiciled students was statistically significant for all indicators, mainly driven by the internationally domiciled students agreeing more strongly with statements pertaining to their engagement with their institution. The results suggest that higher education institutions in Ireland are already delivering an educational experience to internationally domiciled students of comparable quality to that experienced by Irish domiciled students, and that they are well placed to meet their obligations under an incoming new regulatory regime.

Key words: Student engagement, student survey, closing the feedback loop, student feedback, international students

3b

Presenter: Ken Mavor, University of St Andrews

Co-authors: Brenda Marin & Lillian Smyth

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: Identity incompatibilities in the HE student experience: impact on learning, academic self-handicapping and social mobility

Abstract: Widening participation in higher education is crucial to achieving pathways of social mobility for non-traditional student populations. We argue that the psychological experience of incompatibility between university and "home" identity for non-traditional students might undermine learning processes such as deep/surface learning, increase procrastination and academic self-handicapping (and ultimately undermine grade attainment). Our recent work (Smyth, Mavor and Gray, 2019), showed that identity incompatibility undermined learning through procrastination and self-handicapping. The current study extends this work by exploring the link between non-traditional student groups, identity incompatibility, and social mobility beliefs. An online panel of UG students (N=315) completed a survey including measures of social class and ethnic identity, identity incompatibility, academic self-handicapping, approaches to learning, and social mobility beliefs. Results replicated previous findings and supported links to some demographics measures and the undermining of social mobility beliefs. We discuss implications for work on the attainment gap and suggest potential identity-based interventions.

Key words: Widening participation, Non-traditional students, Identity incompatibility, Procrastination, Academic self-handicapping, Social Mobility

3c

Presenter: Gemma Mansi, Hilary Orpin & Cathy Molesworth - University of Greenwich

Track: Track 2 - Enriching Data Stories

Title: The NSS and overall student satisfaction: how to get it right!

Abstract: In 2018 the NSS results for the Department of Education and Community Studies dropped significantly with student satisfaction for one undergraduate programme dropping to 39%. This study aimed to identify differences in staff and student expectations, which may be creating underlying frustrations in terms of how staff and students work together on an undergraduate programme; subsequently affecting NSS results. We carried out this study through focus groups and online surveys across five undergraduate programmes in the Faculty. Significant themes identified through thematic and statistical analysis included collaborative teaching; scaffolding of academic skills; clear signposting to relevant university services and consistent communication. Next steps include trialling recommendations across all undergraduate programmes across the institution to investigate correlation and significance of recommendations.

Areas for consideration in regard to student satisfaction were broken down into four areas; teaching and learning, employability, student behaviour and student workload. These areas were based on aspects of the National Student Survey, but also anecdotal concerns raised by students and academic staff. Our research focus was to consider how these areas interplay and affect student satisfaction; and how these areas were interpreted by students and staff and whether the variation in interpretation affected satisfaction.

Some of the conclusions included:

- There was no association between student priority whilst studying and satisfaction.
- The difference in satisfaction between programmes can be entirely accounted for by student expectations around how engaging teaching methods are, how big the workload is, and the consistency of academic support offered across modules on the programme.
- In general staff responses mirrored the pattern of student responses indicating excellent understanding of the motivations, priorities and the satisfaction of students.
- Staff tended to underestimate slightly the importance of career preparation to students.

This action research was internally funded by senior executives within the institution to help programme teams address underlying factors related to poor NSS scores. Dissemination of findings was through a final research report; annual institutional teaching and learning conferences and an article submission through Compass, our internal teaching and learning journal. Wider impact included disseminated research findings via WonkHE on release of NSS results this academic year. This research intends to make wider impact on the sector by providing programme teams with helpful tips and advice to facilitate academics in their own reflections of their teaching practices; and to reassess priorities for colleagues interacting with students on a programme of study, subsequently having impact on survey outcomes.

Key words: National Student Survey, Student satisfaction, Programme leadership, Student expectations, Staff expectations

3d

Presenter: Ray Bachan - University of Brighton

Track: Track 3 - Influencing Policy

Title: Grade Inflation and Grade Adjustment in UK Higher Education

Abstract: The proportion of 'good' degrees (the top two degree classifications) awarded by UK high education institutions (HEIs) has increased significantly over the past decade from just over 60% in 2008 to 75% in 2017. Part of this increase is sometimes referred to as 'grade inflation'. The proportion of first class degrees awarded (the top classification) has also increased over the period from just over 12% to 23%. These trends have raised concern over the quality of the award and the credibility of the current UK degree classification system. The issue has become a staple focus for the education press and government ministers and agencies. However, the extent to which grade 'inflation' is a serious issue for UK Higher Education (HE) is not clear, particularly if the rise in the proportion of good degrees is accompanied with improvement in student ability together with improvements in university 'efficiency' (i.e., the introduction of better learning and teaching methods and/or curriculum development that produces better graduates).

This paper examines the rise in the proportion of 'good' in UK HE degrees awarded to graduating students in UK HE and quantifies the extent to which this increase can be 'explained' by input variables, and therefore what remains 'unexplained' or attributed to 'grade inflation'. This includes modelling student degree performance controlling for student characteristics and the ability of universities to produce graduates efficiently (given available resources). The data used in the analysis are compiled at the institution level from the UK HEIDI Plus database and cover the academic years from 2007/8 to 2016/7 inclusive. The findings suggest evidence of grade inflation in the 'good' degree category since 2011. There is also evidence of 'grade inflation' in the first-class degree category. The dataset employed and the modelling framework adopted also allows other sub themes to be explored.

Key words: higher education, grade inflation

3e

Presenter: Nigel Page - Kingston University London

Track: Track 3 - Influencing Policy

Title: Will COVID-19 be a driver for making real and positive changes for commuting students?

Abstract: Widening participation has encouraged students from a diverse range of backgrounds into university with many students now living at home and commuting. This has placed challenges on universities in developing their inclusive learning communities, whereby student activities/ resources/staff can be appropriately scheduled and made accessible. Furthermore, distinctive commuter patterns are apparent between White and BME students, where BME students tend to live considerably further away from university than White students, presenting additional challenges in securing equitable outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to be a positive disruptor permitting serious rethinking and rebalancing of teaching delivery/resources with new definitions of what a quality on-campus experience means. This poster will review some of approaches we are putting in place in curriculum design and delivery due to COVID-19; and as we pull back from the brink how these could lead to fundamental long-term changes in re-balancing support for both commuting and on-campus students.

Key words: Commuting, COVID-19, BME attainment, learning communities

3f

Presenter: Nigel Page - Kingston University London

Co-authors: Amanda Baker & Martha Mador

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: The use of hackathons in the biosciences to support the development of creativity and innovation as an implicit part of the student experience

Abstract: Mismatches have been identified in the expectations between STEM higher education providers and employers and industry, particularly in areas such as creativity, innovation and enterprise. Here, we outline a strategy in collaboration with employers that uses interdisciplinary hackathons (intense problem-solving sessions) embedded into the curriculum to contextualise the learning experience and enhance creativity and enterprise skills. This initiative has allowed students to explore and solve real-world scenarios in the biosciences by working in teams alongside multifaceted industrial experts. Through this approach, students have drawn upon their scientific expertise to enhance their critical thinking and key skills as well as providing new opportunities for engagement and networking with employers. With graduate employability an implicit part of the HE agenda, we have motivated students to grasp their career aspirations and match employer expectations. This is especially vital in ensuring positive graduate employment opportunities and outcomes.

Key words: Hackathon, enterprise, problem solving, real world issues

3g

Presenter: Jennifer Taylorson & Margaret Adamson - The University of St Andrews

Track: Track 4 - Learning from Crises

Title: A Guide for Good Practice in Online Teaching and Learning: Developing a Foundation for Transformative CPD

Abstract: The aim of this project was to build a strong community of practice that will support and develop understanding of good practice in the post COVID-19 HE teaching context. The first step in this project has been the creation of a collaboratively developed, evidence informed Good Practice in Online Teaching and Learning Guide. The Guide will be used as a foundation for the structuring of CPD. The CPD provision will support and encourage attendees to undertake action research to explore the ideas and suggestions they have learned about during the CPD session. Subsequently, the product of attendees' action research projects will be fed back into the Guide in a cyclical developmental process. This poster outlines the principles that underpin our approach to the design of our CPD programme, research processes involved in developing the Guide, and reflects on the impact that the Guide has had on our practice so far.

Key words: Transformative CPD, Community of Practice, Action Research, Teacher Knowledge

3h

Presenter: Karen Campbell - Glasgow Caledonian University

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: Utilising Appreciative Inquiry for a whole curriculum enhancement

Abstract: This paper assesses the utility of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as an evaluation methodology in respect of a whole curriculum enhancement. Glasgow Caledonian University is the 'University for the Common Good.' As part of its core mission, the University undertook a whole curriculum enhancement to support, recognise and embed civic engagement within the curriculum and wider student experience. A strengths-based approach for organisational change, AI was selected as the methodology as the evaluation is in itself part of the innovation since its results feed into the development of the goal. The paper will describe the positive impact on the student learning experience by way of evidence derived from each stage of the 5 'D' AI process: define; discover; dream; design and deliver. The merits of the AI approach are discussed in the context of selecting an evaluation model for a curriculum enhancement where the desired outcome is that of transformational change.

Key words: Appreciative inquiry, curriculum enhancement, transformational change

KEYNOTE 4

Professor Sir Chris Husbands

Date	Friday 11 September
Time	11:00 – 11:45
Title	What next? Higher Education after COVID
Abstract	COVID has been an extra-ordinary disruptor. Universities have changed their systems, assessment, pedagogic practices and internal structures at exceptional speed. But what might come next? Will a 'new' normal look like an 'old normal? Whose expectations will win out? Will the 'next normal' involve continuing profound disruptions? In May 2020, Chris Husbands published Leadership, learning and lockdown? (FETL) – a first set of thoughts from the front line of institutional response. What does that look like six months on? What will our institutions look like in six months time?

BREAKOUT SESSION 4

4a

Presenter: Eilidh Harris - University of St Andrews

Co-authors: Rebecca Wilson, Paula Miles & Ken Mavor

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: UG Transitions Toolkit: Supporting pre-arrival reflection and enhanced transitional student experience

Abstract: This paper describes the creation and implementation of a Transitions Toolkit, as a case study in effective third space collaboration between educational development professionals, directors of teaching, and academic higher education researchers. The Toolkit provides students with an insight into University level study before they arrive, while gathering key information about their expectations. Crucially, the Toolkit stimulates students to critically self-reflect in preparation for this transition. Implemented through Qualtrics, the Toolkit explores motivations for coming to university, and reflections on independent learning and critical thinking. It provides preparatory information about institutional structures, support resources, and targeted information about learning processes in each academic school. The data gathered from student responses supports institutional research into the student experience, which informs policy and practice. The Transitions Toolkit was awarded the Enhancing Student Learning Award in the 2018 Herald Higher Education Awards. The project is being extended to PGT and honours transition toolkits.

Key words: Student experience, Student transitions, Educational development, Enhancing learning

4b

Presenter: Sheelagh Heugh & Nigel Page - Kingston University London

Track: Track 1 - Enhancing Learning Lives

Title: Overcoming the hurdles to student engagement; challenges facing two modern urban London universities

Abstract: Exploring student cohort engagement experiences/challenges in two modern urban universities to identify, learn and share best practices that lead to more in-depth activities. To drive social change, the UK government widened participation in higher education, leading to the diversification of the students' backgrounds and abilities. More students live at home and commute, making establishing active learning communities difficult. Understanding social aspects help develop and enhance student engagement strategies. Utilising institutional data and focus groups, identified drivers and barriers to student's engagement with various activities/opportunities in/out of the classroom. Resultant similarities/differences between student cohorts in awareness, impact and benefit of engaging are observed. Particularly, striking was the impact of ethnicity and commuting on a large cohort compared to white students. Outcomes are discussed in terms of learning/sharing best practices to drive social change. Findings indicate that careful consideration of the timetabling of extracurricular events increases: socialisation, belonging, accessibility/inclusivity, enhancing mental wellbeing.

Key words: Widening participation, Student engagement, Inclusive social changes, Mental wellbeing.

4c

Presenter: Abi Kelly, Gráinne McDonagh, Ann Grennan, RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences

Track: Track 2 - Enriching Data Stories

Title: CampusTIES (Transnational Insights and Engagement System)

Abstract: Universities and higher education agencies across the globe recognise internationalisation, engagement and collaboration as important strategic goals. In Ireland, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030[1] explicitly explains that *"engagement by higher education with wider society takes many forms. It includes engagement with business and industry, with the civic life of the community, with public policy and practice, with artistic, cultural and sporting life and with other educational providers in the community and region, and it includes an* **increasing emphasis on international engagement**".

Higher Education Institutions are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to enrich their students' experience, their staff development, and their research work by cooperating and working jointly with complementary institutions in other countries. RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences recognised a need to build new organisational capacity to manage data relating to local, national and international stakeholders. The Office of Institutional Research & Planning (OIRP) and IT have been working collaboratively since July 2018 to scope, procure and implement a new relationship management system. Campus Management's (now Anthology) CampusNexus Engage CRM product is normally used for student recruitment or careers related activity. The Institutional Research team have defined innovative requirements to configure the product for RCSI's international engagement and external relations needs. The system is built on the Microsoft Azure/MS Dynamics platform. Once implement it will enable users to manage stakeholder contacts, build dashboards, glean insights and engage using the integrated marketing features. This new system will have an impact on how RCSI engages with local, national and international stakeholders and will facilitate the production of higher quality management information reports to inform decisions on education and research collaboration, student mobility, partnerships and strategic alliances. Phase 2 of this project entails enhancing data quality and expanding the user base to include more departments/schools and administrative functions.

Key words: stakeholder engagement, CRM dashboard relationship, Microsoft

[1] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/072a65-national-strategy-for-higher-education-to-2030/

4d

Presenter: Penny Jones - University of Brighton and Explorance

Track: Track 2 - Enriching Data Stories

Title: Developing a one size fits all approach to module evaluation...how good does our solution look on all shapes and sizes?

Abstract: An examination of the move from localised approaches to module evaluation at the University of Brighton to a centralised standard approach; supported by the implementation of the software solution BLUE EXPLORANCE. This session explores some familiar data stories looking at how well a diverse and typically non-standard set of module evaluation practices can be 'squeezed' into a one size fits all central process. In addition to some of the obvious non standard shapes and sizes of our data, the piloting of our new system allowed us to unearth some hidden policy, practice and data misfits. The session will share some of these stories; both where we have managed to tailor our system to fit them in, and where they remain an uncomfortable poor fit!

Key words: Data, Centralisation, Solutions

4e

Presenter: Debra Cureton - University of Wolverhampton

Track: Track 4 - Learning from Crises

Title: Creating a Postgraduate Researcher Community: A Response to Crisis during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Abstract: Postgraduate Research is well known to be a lonely path, which could potentially have been exaggerated during the Pandemic. This paper considers the lessons learned by the Doctoral College at the University of Wolverhampton during the Pandemic, with a particular focus on how 'community' developed and/or enhanced to support Postgraduate Researchers.

We operated by four rules:

- Consistency: the PGR lifecycle continued un-interrupted through a swift move to 100% online activity
- Communications: Continuous, inclusive and open communication with PGR throughout
- Connection: Providing opportunities for PGR to connect with us and with each other
- Compassionate Care: Taking a person centred approach to support for PGR

The results were that PGR reported that they were

- Educated about situation and our response to it.
- Engage more with online opportunities
- Empowered to create their own communities and activities.

Key words: PGR, Community, Connection, Support.

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