HEIR Network Conference 2016

Metrics that matter: future directions for qualitative and quantitative institutional research

Abstract booklet

7-8 September 2016

“Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”

Albert Einstein

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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) practitioners and enthusiasts working in the UK and Irish higher education (HE) sectors. We strongly believe in the increasingly important role of IR in enhancing learning and teaching practice and providing timely and relevant evidence to aid management decision making at all levels.

The activities of the network focus on 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 IR capacity across the sector
2. To be a forum for discussion around contemporary issues and for sharing ideas, experiences, practices and solutions
3. To inform HE policy and practice through engaging directly with policy-makers
4. To work with other bodies and IR communities across the world to enhance HE policy and practice

The network has worked with universities across the UK and Ireland to organise annual conferences each year; evaluations show that all have been commended by delegates and contributed to our objectives. Previous conferences have been held at: Southampton Solent University (2008); Sheffield Hallam University (2009); Dublin City University (2010); Kingston University (2011); University of Liverpool (2012); Birmingham City University (2013); Oxford Brookes University (2014); and the University of the West of Scotland (2015)

www.heirnetwork.org.uk

#HEIR2016

Contents

Keynote: Dr Dawn Geronimo Terkla

Keynote 1: (Wednesday 7 September, 09:45 – 10:45)

Dawn Geronimo Terkla is the Associate Provost for Institutional Research, Assessment, and Evaluation at Tufts University. Before coming to Tufts in 1985, Dawn held positions at Harvard University and the University of California at Berkeley. She has a doctorate in higher education research from Harvard University and her research interests include college-choice decisions, financial aid issues, retention issues, management information, assessment and evaluation. She is a member of the National Student Clearinghouse Advisory Committee and is a past President of both the North East Association for Institutional Research and the Association for Institutional Research.

Keynote

'Metrics: the key to effective data driven decision making'

How many times have you heard the following?

- If you don't measure it, it doesn't count
- Not everything that can be counted counts
- Not everything that counts can be counted

It's confusing!

Higher education is a complicated enterprise, and institutions have come to realise they need data, both to understand how things are operating currently and to make informed decisions about the institution's future. But how do we know what to measure and when to measure it? How do we define and select the critical metrics that senior leadership need to make informed decisions? How do university stakeholders use indicators to govern effectively?

This talk will explore these questions and more as I describe how data is being used to drive decision making at universities in the United States. I'll draw from over 30 years of experiences at my university as well as from experiences of colleagues at other institutions, and will discuss how data can help strategically position your institution to succeed in an ever-more-competitive marketplace.

Keynote: Professor Mantz Yorke

Keynote 2: (Wednesday 7 September, 15:50 – 16:50)

Mantz Yorke is Visiting Professor in the Department of Educational Research, Lancaster University, UK. A varied career in education evolved into a period of six years as a senior manager at Liverpool Polytechnic, followed by two years on secondment as Director of Quality Enhancement at the Higher Education Quality Council in the UK. Returning to Liverpool (the Polytechnic by now John Moores University), he concentrated on researching aspects of institutional performance, focusing on aspects of 'the student experience'. He has published widely on higher education and is past President of the European Association for Institutional Research.

Keynote

'For the common good? Collaboration, competition and institutional research'

Higher education is in an increasingly marketised environment, as is evidenced by competition for students, resources and the prestige bestowed by 'league tables' (rankings). Set against advantages attributed to competition is the benefit to be derived from collaborative endeavour, particularly in the area of 'the student experience'.

This presentation will draw on personal experience of a number of studies in which collaborative work has extended beyond the periphery of individual institutions. This collaborative work has raised a number of issues worthy of exploration in the context of institutional research, amongst them being:

- The tension between competition and collaboration
- Compromises in the interests of multi-institutional support
- Amalgamating data from differently-produced datasets
- Identifying signals amongst noise
- The tension between rough and ready rapidity in reporting and slower perfection

At heart is the need for studies to exhibit practical utility – i.e. to be 'good enough' for the purposes to which their results are to be put.

Keynote: Professor Ronald Barnett

Keynote 3: (Thursday 8 September, 09:30 – 10:30)

Ronald Barnett is Emeritus Professor of Higher Education at University College London Institute of Education (UCL IOE), and for thirty-five years has been working to develop the philosophy of higher education. His books include: *The Idea of Higher Education*; *Realizing the University in an age of Supercomplexity*; *A Will to Learn: Being a Student in an Age of Uncertainty;* and *Beyond All Reason: Living with Ideology in the University*. Recently, he has completed a trilogy on understanding the university in the twenty-first century, the three books being, in turn, *Being a University* (2011), *Imagining the University* (2013) and *Understanding the University* (2016). He is a past Chair of the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), has been awarded the inaugural prize by the European Association for Educational Research for his 'outstanding contribution to Higher Education Research, Policy and Practice', and is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, the SRHE and the Higher Education Academy (HEA). He is also a Visiting Professor at several universities both in the UK and abroad and he has been a guest speaker in around 40 countries.

Keynote

'Measuring the darkness: learning as potholing, becoming lost and finding new spaces'

Today, in higher education – and in the public services generally – all has to be measured. 'Give us your metric' is the cry, whenever an initiative is proposed. It seems to be that only if it is susceptible to measurement can a proposal carry any weight. This approach is not without some value but as a total approach, it has to be repudiated. It is not neutral but has pernicious aspects. In this talk, I want to suggest that much is of value in higher education is hidden, is dark even. I shall suggest the metaphor of potholing. Considered in this way, we understand that the student at times stumbles, is in darkness, feels hemmed in, and cannot see a way forward, and is anxious and even a bit scared. And yet, through her or his perseverance, the student may suddenly come into a large space, even with shafts of light percolating through. Teaching has to allow the spaciousness for this kind of hidden learning; and to let the student find her or his way forward. The task of teaching, therefore, is to encourage students through the darkness. (That teaching is not always of this supportive and encouraging kind must surely in part account for the rise in non-completion rates across the world.) And our evaluation systems need to be conducted with a sense that not all that is valuable in higher education can be measured, mathematicised and made explicit. Much that is valuable in higher education is beyond measurement. It is even invisible.

Day One: Wednesday 7 September

Session 1: (Wednesday 7 September, 11:15 – 11:40)

Learning Gain

'Which student outcome metrics will we see in UK HE within the next five years?'

Matt Hiely-Rayner, Kingston University

Drawing on experience of compiling the *Guardian* newspaper's university guide, this paper will describe the metrics that are currently used to measure performance in UK HE before illustrating the emerging metrics that we shall encounter in the next five years. The principal areas of focus will be student attainment and graduate employment. Owing to the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), the importance of metrics to the policy and governance of HE has never been greater. There is a huge appetite for reliable measures of learning gain and of longer-term student outcomes, but obtaining these for the entire HE system without introducing perverse incentives is a huge challenge.

Measuring student achievement is an obvious outcome metric for higher education but achieving this is very difficult. What does the act of recognising student achievement as a signal of university performance do to institutional behaviour? How can student achievement be measured through alternative methods, and to what uses can any of these methods be put? Data from tax revenues presents a new opportunity to see the earnings of our graduates. Aside from the temptation to immediately leap in with a simplistic metric that equates good university performance with high graduate earnings, the idea of measuring the effect of different initiatives on future salary is an exciting prospect.

This paper will illustrate how the tax data could be presented and describe the difficulty in making a judgement about how results should be interpreted in a judgemental manner. When are a graduate's earnings most indicative of their overall 'success'? What contextual information will be missing from tax data? What alternative measures of student outcomes would complementing their earnings data? After appearing in league tables and the TEF, these metrics would become a focal point for IR projects aimed at improving student outcomes.

Session 2: (Wednesday 7 September, 11:15 – 11:40)

Informing Decision Making

'Managing the unmeasurable: moving beyond metrics to promote enhancement and innovation'

Nick Almond & Penny Haughan, Liverpool Hope University

The forthcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) has the potential to bring learning and teaching narratives to prominence in coming years. The TEF aims to "promote cultural change to recognize teaching as equal in status to research," (BIS, 2015: 18) a call that will be of great interest to academic developers and practitioners across the sector who have a professional remit focused on the enhancement of teaching practice. Although the TEF has a potential to rationalize the growing drift at the research teaching nexus, there is serious concern (Burrows, 2012) that the growing reliance on metrics will lead us towards a model of practice development that prioritizes enhancement in proxies of practice rather than practice itself.

This work explores the potential problems that may arise from optimizing the student experience through the use of raw quantitative metrics and argues that this approach may constrain institutional innovation. We outline the work carried out within the recently commended (QAA, 2016) Liverpool Hope University Network of Communities of Practice and provides case studies of scholarship and innovation in teaching and learning that demonstrates the potential of what practitioner driven, rather than metric driven approaches to enhancement can deliver.

We propose a model of organizational learning (Öternblad, 2014) that aims to build a culture of enhancement at the institutional level that promotes exploration and innovation in teaching through participation and dialogue. The case studies from the network demonstrate a breadth of pluralistic scholarship that closer represents the complexity of academic practice than the suite of metrics currently proposed within the TEF. Finally, we present a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data emerging from the network that provides a rich insight into the development of learning and teaching across the University and we propose some potential uses of this data as a metric for enhancement.

Session 3: (Wednesday 7 September, 11:15 – 11:40)

Improving Student Engagement

‘Learning from the best: identifying ‘Bright Spots’ in university teaching’

Craig Bartle, Coventry University

As the HE market has become increasingly competitive and students have become more discerning, the requirement to provide an excellent student experience is crucial to organisational survival (Morgan 2012). Universities are already focused on student satisfaction as a ‘key information set’ (KIS) statistic, which many students use as a guide to choosing their place of study. Academic support plays an important part in ensuring students have a positive and successful experience and institutions are now looking for fresh ways to improve student satisfaction, which may also impact on future fee levels.

This research uses the ‘Bright Spots’ approach to identify and disseminate good practice across a UK university. Bright Spots is a problem-solving technique which focuses on discovering ‘successful efforts worth emulating’ (Heath & Heath, 2010) or ‘observable exceptions recognised by their peers as producing results above the norm’ (Allen Foundation, 2012). It then supports others within the organisation and/or community to study the ‘bright spots’ and replicate that success more widely (*ibid*).

Qualitative feedback from classes with consistently strong satisfaction levels for areas relating to teaching and overall satisfaction across a two-year period were identified from termly module evaluation reports organised within the institution. These were then analysed to reveal the ‘bright spots’.

This paper will outline the methodological approach used and the findings from the analysis of this data. The goal is to use the insights uncovered from the analysis to engage staff in future development work. The Bright Spots approach suggests that such work is led by the academics whose work has been identified as associated with high levels of satisfaction, working alongside peers who wish to make similar positive developments within their modules and courses.

Session 4: (Wednesday 7 September, 11:15 – 12:10)

Informing Decision Making

WORKSHOP: 'What's on your IR radar? Examining your institutional priorities'

Aisling McKenna & Ben Kokkeler, DAIR

The aim of the workshop is to present a thematic framework through which workshop participants can think about the key institutional research priorities within their own institutions or personal research interests. The participants will work in small groups to design their own institutional research radar, reflecting their own practice, and compare this with those of conference colleagues. The facilitators will discuss how institutional research is changing within the higher institutional systems of The Netherlands and Ireland, and how these might impact on institutional research practice in the future.

Session 5: (Wednesday 7 September, 11:45 – 12:10)

Learning Gain

'Predictors of degree performance at the University of the West Indies'

Tiffany Best, University of the West Indies

The University of the West Indies' (UWI) mandate to serve the human resource needs of the region by widening participation in higher education has resulted in significant expansion in enrolment over the last decade. The expansion of student intake has led to greater student diversity in terms of abilities, learning styles and levels of preparation. With the increase in the diversification of students, there has been concern about the impact this trend may have on University standards and the overall academic performance of students. Therefore, it is of significant interest to the University to determine whether students who enter the University with lower matriculation requirements (i.e. lower level qualifications and mature students) perform at different levels than A-Level or CAPE (Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination) students.

It is in this context that this paper examines the influence of prior educational attainment (i.e. type of matriculation and entrance scores) on final GPA. Other control variables such as gender, age, faculty or discipline, and student status were also examined. The results of this study are broadly consistent with previous studies, and suggest that opening access to mature students and to those with non-traditional qualifications has not led to any diminution of standards at the UWI.

Session 6: (Wednesday 7 September, 11:45 – 12:10)

Informing Decision Making

'An institutional review of the role of the course leader leading to the implementation of enhanced practices and enabling systems of support and communication at course leader level across the institution'

Will Bowen-Jones, University of Worcester

The University has been running a major institutional project looking at academic course leadership. There is widespread interest across the sector in the way universities support their course leaders, given that the role is widely accepted to be pivotal in delivering a high quality student experience. The University's success in boosting recruitment figures and recording significant improvement in NSS scores can be attributed to the work of colleagues in course teams. The University recognises the need to review of the role of the course leader and, in turn, to implement the best possible systems of support and communication. This project is fundamentally aimed at developing a working environment in which course leaders will thrive, flourish and excel. The project has focused on five work-streams: Developmental Leadership; Role and Responsibilities; Quality Enhancement; Administrative Support; and Recruitment and Marketing. Each one has produced either a set of resources, established new working practices or made a series of recommendations in order to ensure all course leaders have a 'voice'. The project included a survey aimed at identifying key issues and priorities which may extend the scope and reach of the project into a second stage. The results of the survey will be presented at the conference. However the initial aims of the project were:

1. To enable and empower course leaders to excel in their role
2. To ensure a consistent standard of good practice across the University
3. To develop a course leader role description
4. To develop a support structure and training programme for course leaders
5. To improve lines of communication and flows of information across the University, which have an impact on course leaders

Session 7: (Wednesday 7 September, 11:45 – 12:10)

Learning Gain

'Value added higher education: the importance of measuring work readiness learning gain'

Bob Gilworth, The Careers Group , University of London

In 2015 a consortium of universities secured HEFCE funding for a three-year research project to investigate the value of Careers Registration — introducing questions about career readiness and work experience into mandatory data collection at student enrolment — as a measure of learning gain in relation to work readiness. With the direct link to student registration data we have the opportunity to map employability journeys of particular student cohorts (e.g. widening participation students), explore links between career readiness and academic success, or measure the impact of employability interventions.
In today's higher education environment, institutions are required to look more closely at 'value added' higher education. Measures of learning gain can be valuable in helping universities optimise the student experience and evaluate and measure 'distance travelled' (HEFCE, 2015) by students.

We will share our rationale and learning from early implementations of the careers registration methodology, and discuss the potential impacts and benefits of this approach to measuring learning gain.

Session 8: (Wednesday 7 September, 12:15 – 12:40)

Improving Student Engagement

'What does the phrase "Value for Money" mean from a student's perspective?'

Rhiannon Birch, University Sheffield

As part of the University of Sheffield's leadership programme attendees identify strategic questions and work as 'Strategic Improvement Groups' (SIG) to make recommendations to the University Executive Board. The 2015 cohort included a SIG which undertook research into student perceptions of value for money (VFM). This session presents a working paper on the initial findings from the project and outlines our plans for the further development of the work.

The question arises from the University's Strategy Plan 2015-2021 where the theme "Our Education and Student Experience" poses ensuring VFM as a key challenge. It also addresses one of the significant issues in the Government’s Green Paper which notes that “Students are concerned about value for money … a third believe their course represents poor value for money” and links with the development of the Teaching Excellence Framework.

We surveyed students in a range of departments and received over 150 responses in an attempt to find out what they really value about their learning experience at Sheffield and how they believe they will benefit from having studied here. The survey was designed to gain an insight into: what students consider to be important to them; their views on how the University could invest to provide VFM; and their career salary expectations.

The initial survey revealed areas where the University meets students’ expectations as well as a range of areas where the University could take action to further improve student satisfaction. The survey responses also reveal that our students have an awareness of how a Sheffield degree will help them to achieve their career aspirations and suggests that their decision to study at Sheffield was based on some surprising factors.

Session 9: (Wednesday 7 September, 12:15 – 12:40)

Informing Decision Making

‘Mapping the state of IR around the globe’

Stefan M. Buettner, University of Tuebingen

In 2010, the White Paper-Discussion group on ‘Going Global: Institutional Research Studies Abroad’ called for an IR-peacecorps; in 2011 we established the Network of International Institutional Researchers (NIIR), and since 2012 we have IR-ambassadors. However, in discussions with practitioners across the globe some questions arose: How can we find out how IR is developing abroad? Institutional Research tasks are done by different entities under different labels and names by ‘Third Space workers’, as ‘New Public Managerialism’, or within new ‘Higher Education Professions’. Even though hardly any Institutional Research office exists there, many functions still being dealt with – by a series of other offices. However, which elements are done? Who is doing them? Does this differ within an educational system? Can a global study help to find answers and lift ‘home-IR’ to the next level? And, as names, content and higher education cultures differ, who will address what questions to find out about it? This session will explore these questions and give first multinational insights in IR and new definitions for ‘IR’.

Session 10: (Wednesday 7 September, 12:15 – 12:40)

Improving Student Engagement

'Personality-related variables in the process and product of achievement for undergraduate students'

David McIlroy, Liverpool John Moores University

Personality traits reflect behavioural consistency, and trait configuration is seen as common across culture (Allik & McCrae, 2004) and linked to genetics and early socialisation (Pervin, 2003). Personality is implicated in academic achievement (Poropat, 2009), choice of academic major (Vedel, 2015) and in educational choices (Furnham, 2010). However, broad general traits are likely to function distally rather than proximally in academic behaviours (Bidjerano & Dai, 2007). Other academic constructs act as mediators of academic performance (Caprara et al., 2013; Mcilroy et al., 2015), including Academic Self-efficacy (ASE), Test Anxiety (TA) and Academic Conscientiousness (AC). These were used in this study alongside the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism or Emotional Stability). This study tested Engineering students ($N = 235$) and compared their scores at Level 4 ($n = 97$), Level 5 ($n = 81$) and Level 6 ($n = 57$). FFM mean scores varied from 33 to 38, above the scale midpoint of 30. However, within each factor there were no significant differences across the three groups (F's > .05), although individual differences (standard deviations) within each group emerged on all constructs. Only ASE elicited significant group differences with an apparent slump for Level 5 students. Students reported lower than usual TA, but ASE means were high, although AC means were lower. Data quality was excellent with high reliabilities (> .75) and strong indicators of normality. ASE was positively related to Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness; AC was moderately related to general Conscientiousness ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) and TA was negatively associated with Emotional Stability and Openness. Given the stable FFM profile across the three levels, and their systematic relationships with the academic constructs, data patterns are discussed with reference to characteristics implicated in the processes that support learning, augment ability and enhance achievement.

Session 11: (Wednesday 7 September, 12:15 – 12:40)

Improving Student Engagement

'The value of measuring student responses before taking action: the introduction of pre-arrival shared reading at Kingston University'

Alison Baverstock, Kingston University

Evaluation of student responses usually takes place after the event; offering opportunity for *future* amending of process/delivery. This session explores how *prior* exploration of student habits and attitudes, and establishment of project familiarity among those upon whom implementation depended, impacted on subsequent delivery.

Using a single book to create a community among prospective students is common in US institutions; much less so in the UK. US universities have viewed such schemes as strong support for student enrolment, retention and engagement, but outcomes are more usually described within information relating to marketing and student experience, than fully analysed.

The KU Big Read grew from a student-staff research project, exploring attitudes within the student body towards reading for pleasure, actual involvement in reading and likely propensity of arriving undergraduates to participate in pre-arrival shared reading – in an attempt to boost enrolment, engagement and retention. Having analysed the responses of a representative sample of current first-years, a decision was made to proceed.

This presentation explores how initial research significantly influenced project design and facilitated subsequent implementation, monitoring and development. Project delivery was subsequently orchestrated with the support of agencies that operate across the university (e.g. learning resource centre staff; student engagement groups; student ambassadors; welcome connectors). Various monitoring of how the scheme was received and viewed by the community continued during/after delivery, and has impacted on future development.

What was less expected (because untested) was the extent to which the project fostered relationships between students and their families and students and staff. It also evidently promoted understanding between colleagues within the same institution; seeking similar outcomes but through operational structures and working processes largely unknown to each other. Overall the project promoted organisational cohesion on which future collaborations can build – in a research project now of significant size, and working with a partner institution.

Session 12: (Wednesday 7 September, 13:50 – 14:15)

Learning Gain

'Measuring student performance: developing students' academic writing and speaking skills to enhance engagement and success'

Karen Lipsedge & Egle Butt, Kingston University

The Writing and Oral Skills (WOS) project involves a weekly series of extra-curricular interactive workshops primarily for first year undergraduates at Kingston University, and is designed to enhance their academic writing and speaking skills. Our evaluation of the WOS project utilises institutional data and demonstrates how enhancing students' key academic skills in an interactive and inclusive environment, increases their engagement and helps to facilitate students' educational outcomes.

In the WOS workshops, our emphasis is on enhancing students' academic performance. By using a combination of lecturer-led presentations, small-group exercises and peer-review, students are introduced to academic writing and speaking skills in a collaborative, inclusive and supportive workshop environment with the emphasis placed on active participation and engagement. By encouraging students to contribute to discussions and debate, the WOS workshops validate their learning and knowledge, enabling them to begin to build much needed confidence at this very early stage in their academic journey. Such strategies of approach also foster a shared learning environment in which students feel empowered and, thus, able to apply the academic skills acquired to the assessments they need to complete as part of their degree. Moreover, this type of collaborative and inclusive environment is essential for enhancing our students' engagement and experience, and enabling them to become autonomous, confident and successful learners.

The paper addresses the theoretical underpinning, development and evaluation of the WOS project. At Kingston University we are committed to 'develop[ing] strategies to support all who can benefit from a Kingston University education, regardless of background' (Kingston University, 'Led by Learning Strategy', 1.7). Our paper reports on qualitative and quantitative findings, drawn from student feedback, assessment outcomes and end-of-year progression statistics, to argue that developing students' key academic skills enhances their engagement and enables all students to reach their full potential.

Session 13: (Wednesday 7 September, 13:50 – 14:15)

Informing Decision Making

‘Impact of quality assurance performance indicators on professional behaviour’

Lucy Hemming, Birkbeck, University of London

This session will explore a recent qualitative study conducted as part of a Masters dissertation into the extent to which the growing use of performance indicators in quality assurance has altered professional behaviour. The discussion will focus on how professional behaviour may change as the professional in question is involved in either measuring or being measured as part of quality assurance activities. The session will encourage participants to reflect on how their own professional behaviour is affected through their engagement in the use of metrics, using auto-ethnographic approaches to enable them to connect their own experiences to wider sector understandings of the impact of performance indicators on quality assurance professionals. This session will then explore how changes in professional behaviour may subsequently impact on institutional decision-making.

This session is designed to be inclusive and to allow participants to share their own practice and reflections while drawing on the findings of recent qualitative research.

Session 14: (Wednesday 7 September, 13:50 – 14:15)

Improving Student Engagement

‘Integrating institutional research into university curricula and increasing institutional effectiveness’

Stefan M. Buettner, University of Tuebingen

In most organisations – higher education, private firms, public services and in particular in the interaction between those – there is potential for improvement and further development. Activating this potential and reducing weak spots is often the task of a strategy advice department, in-house consulting, or institutional research and quality management.

This work in progress focuses on the role project seminars can play in optimising strategies for institutions without a formal IR department or with few staff, while promoting knowledge about what IR is all about within the institution. At the same time, they can serve as a screening and recruiting pool for future IR staff or student assistants. At one traditional research university, for-credit project seminars for students, teaching institutional research and investigating improvement potential in specific areas, have become a small but impressive success story.

Session 15: (Wednesday 7 September, 13:50 – 14:45)

Informing Decision Making

WORKSHOP: 'Mining institutional data to facilitate student progression'

Wayne Turnbull, Liverpool John Moores University

While a great deal of thought and effort is devoted to developing assessment strategies, policies and processes, there is little evidence that the re-assessment of students who fail at the first attempt receives the same level of scrutiny. Thus, a research project has begun that explores the success rates of undergraduates who have had Level 4 re-assessments.

A single cohort of students from the participating institutions will be categorised into four groups according to whether they:

- Passed all Level 4 modules at the first attempt;
- Passed all Level 4 modules after a re-assessment attempt (re-assessment);
- Were awarded credit to facilitate progression (compensation); or
- Were permitted to progress without attaining 120 credits (trailing)

The degree classifications of the four categories will be compared to identify whether any there are any systematic differences in performance across the four groups. The results will also be analysed in the context of the institutions' academic regulations to examine the relationship between regulations and outcomes.

One of the purposes of this research is to understand more explicitly how re-assessment policies can contribute to the retention, continuation and success of students, one of the metrics referred to in the Higher Education Green Paper, *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. The session will describe: the development of the project; suggest how assessment board data can be used to provide an empirical basis for a course team, department or institution's re-assessment policy; and consider the implications of the project's findings for such a policy and the associated assessment regulations.

A central tenet of any (re-)assessment policy should be that all students are treated equitably and fairly. The session will consider some of the principles on which a re-assessment policy might be developed, and the extent to which it is possible and desirable to ensure regulations are explicit, in order that they can be applied consistently without local interpretation or discretion.

Session 16: (Wednesday 7 September, 14:20 – 14:45)

Learning Gain

'An Online Centre for Achievement and Progression (OCAP): one year on'

Jamie Guinan, University of Worcester

This work describes the launch of OCAP (September 2015) and its subsequent development throughout the year.

Staff and students will chart the challenges of making visible a new, inclusive resource and communicating its existence, purpose and benefits to the students in the institution. The Centre was co-created last year by students and staff in order to enhance the way students are supported remotely throughout their academic studies. Six students were initially recruited during autumn 2015. The students' responsibility was essentially two-fold: (1) to help promote the Centre among the student population; and (2) to ensure new resources and areas of work were identified and made available as soon as possible.

Following consultation with peers staff and students have identified two additional areas to be created: 'Students from Partner Colleges' and 'Careers'. The responsibilities of the staff have been primarily to maintain the site and quality control, while also providing support and guidance to the students. Quantitative data will be presented to detail student and staff usage of OCAP, while qualitative data will be made available to demonstrate student engagement as well showing the results of student evaluation.

Session 17: (Wednesday 7 September, 14:20 – 14:45)

Improving Student Engagement

''Accommodating' different ways of doing university: understanding the challenges faced by commuting students to overcome barriers and identity solutions'

Annie Hughes, Kingston University

This paper presents the findings of a research project undertaken with commuting students at Kingston University. This project explored the reasons why students commute, their perception of their HE experience through their commuter lens and the challenges that they faced. The research also considered how the university could best accommodate the needs of commuter students through transformative change; focusing particularly on issues relating to retention, progression and attainment.

Commuting to university (rather than leaving the family home) is becoming more popular amongst students from a diverse range of backgrounds; but is particularly prevalent amongst students from non-traditional backgrounds namely BME and mature students. This is significant given that there is substantive evidence which points to the fact that these groups of students attain less well than the 'so-called' traditional students (HEFCE, 2015). We argue that institutions need to understand the challenges faced by their commuting students and move beyond deficit thinking in order to more effectively assist these students in their progression, retention and attainment (Newbold et al., 2011). We offer some examples of transformative change that institutions can adopt to provide a more effective HE experience for commuting students.

Session 18: (Wednesday 7 September, 14:20 – 14:45)

Emerging Technological Tools

'The successful launch of a Data Governance regime'

Brian Christie, University of Regina

Data Governance is the activity that, through a combination of people, processes and technologies, ensures that an organization is able to maximize the benefits of its data assets. The main objective of a Data Governance program is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the business processes throughout the organization as the result of the effective management of data. Data Governance is about knowing that your data are performing. It is the framework that ensures all the data pieces and stakeholders are in place and aligned. Data Governance is the glue that binds Data Strategy and Data Management together.

The University of Regina, a small Canadian comprehensive university, has, after two years of preparation, successfully launched a Data Governance regime. This presentation will describe all that this entails: groundwork, resources, structure, tools, people, policies and plans. It will also reflect on the role a proof-of-concept demonstration dashboard and other factors played in obtaining institutional support for this initiative.

Session 19: (Wednesday 7 September, 14:50 – 15:15)

Informing Decision Making

'Staff engagement: understanding the motivations and experiences of full-time higher education staff who are part-time doctoral students'

Lynn Ramsey, Letterkenny Institute of Technology

This discussion paper will present the initial findings of a multiple case study. The project is conducted by Dr Lynn Ramsey and Dr Maria Gallo (NUI Galway, St. Angela's).

The Irish National Strategy for Higher Education (Hunt Report) attempts to provide a framework for Irish Higher Education, extending to 2030. The Hunt Report provides for the possible creation of new technological universities derived from the existing Institutes of Technology. The new technological universities will have a stronger research focus than the existing Institutes and successful establishment is predicated upon a range of matrices, including numbers of staff with doctoral qualifications. At the same time the Irish university sector has become increasingly concerned with research matrix and strategic planning within universities is grounded in a performance driven research culture; the number of full-time staff in Irish Higher Education undertaking doctoral studies has risen rapidly since the adoption of the Hunt report.

Our study uses a multiple case study methodology to examine the motivations and experiences of full-time staff in higher education institutions in the West and North West of Ireland. The existing literature on student engagement focuses largely on the undergraduate student experience. While there is some research on doctoral student engagement this has focused largely on the experience of full-time doctoral students. Our study employs semi-structured interviews and reflective journals, which has been analysed in conjunction with data from the five higher education institutions in the West and North

West of Ireland. The initial findings provide a rich and nuanced picture of the motivations and experience of this group of students and has significant implications for our understanding of staff engagement in higher education.

Session 20: (Wednesday 7 September, 14:50 – 15:15)

Improving Student Engagement

'On the move: understanding the transition experience of commuting students'

Liam Waldron & Ruth Wilson, Robert Gordon University

Diversification of the student body together with increasing financial pressures mean that substantial numbers of on-campus students travel considerable distances on a regular basis to attend lectures, while juggling home and work commitments. This discussion paper reflects on the approach taken at Robert Gordon University to understanding this previously undefined cohort of commuting students, highlighting the value of thinking broadly about the kinds of data that can help to inform our understanding of the student experience. The presentation will include a short interview with one of our commuters.

While analysis of society memberships showed relatively low levels of involvement among students living further away from campus, suggesting that social aspects of their experience may be constrained, the academic achievement of these students was on a par with that of their peers. Qualitative interviews and focus groups highlighted the pragmatic approach taken by these students and emphasised the high levels of organisation, determination and resilience needed to successfully complete their courses of study, despite limited immersion in broader aspects of university life.

Enhancements were identified through a workshop, facilitated by the research team, in which students presented their experiences to teaching staff across disciplines. The discussion that followed explored several ways in which small changes could make a big difference to commuters' experience of university life, particularly in the areas of timetabling, social activities and group work.

Session 21: (Wednesday 7 September, 14:50 – 15:15)

Improving Student Engagement

'Which survey questions predict better academic performance?'

Niamh Godley & Egle Butt, Kingston University

This paper illustrates how the internal second year student survey data has been matched with end-of-year student outcomes to establish which survey questions, using NSS questions, predicted better academic performance. The session will discuss the institutional approach taken to establish the internal survey within the University, the challenges faced as well as the lessons learnt and the outcomes of matching the student satisfaction data with end of year module and course outcomes.

The data shows valuable significant differences across different student characterises in relation to a number of the categories such as 'the teaching on my course', 'assessment and feedback', 'academic support' and 'organisation and management.' This will allow a greater understanding of the academic experiences of our students with different characteristics so suitable interventions can be made for students according to their profile. This institutional research has provided insight into student experience and relationship between survey questions and student outcomes and is helping identify future developments and interventions to support student outcomes and the student experience.

Session 22: (Wednesday 7 September, 14:50 – 15:15)

Improving Student Engagement

'Drop-out propensity and student expectations: empirical evidence and implications for university didactics'

Professor Dr Pohlenz, Annika Rathmann & Claudia Wendt, Otto-von-Guericke-Universität

Students enter their studies with diverse expectations and goals. The match between such expectations and the actual study conditions and course contents are a relevant predictor for students' academic success (Heublein et al., 2011); propensity to drop-out can be a result of a respective mismatch (Wendt et al., 2016).

Based on the theory of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1993), student expectations towards their studies are related with student learning experience, and with the achievements of basic demands (gain of competences, social integration and intellectual autonomy) after the first year of study. In order to promote academic motivation and to prevent drop-out propensity, universities should facilitate competence acquisition, social inclusion and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1993: 231).

The paper will thus explore in a first step in what way and extent student experience and expectations are associated with competence acquisition, social inclusion and autonomy. In a second step these predictors are investigated as determinants for student drop-out propensity. Based on the respective results we will conclude didactical implications for academic development and the development of study programmes. Data from a student panel which is implemented at Otto-von-Guericke-University in Magdeburg, Germany will serve as basis for the respective analyses. The student panel observes individual study courses in a longitudinal approach (panel data).

Session 23: (Wednesday 7 September, 15:20 – 15:45)

Improving Student Engagement

'Thesis success: understanding students' thesis processes and their experiences with thesis seminars'

Marlous Dekker-Regelink, Leiden University

The concluding aptitude test in Bachelor's (BA) programmes within Leiden University's Humanities Faculty is writing a thesis. By doing so, students show their ability in conducting research and writing an academic report within a limited time frame. This requires disciplinary and methodological knowledge, but also appeals to meta-cognitive and regulatory skills, such as self-motivation, self-efficacy and time management. For many students writing a thesis can be a major challenge, not only causing stress and uncertainty, but often also delay in finishing the programme.

The Faculty of Humanities introduced compulsory thesis seminars for Bachelor students in 2014-15, to support students in their thesis process. Theses' designs vary, depending on the BA programme students participate in. Therefore, each BA programme organises a thesis seminar that is tailored to their specific needs. Within the Faculty approximately 20 different thesis seminars exist, which can vary in content, number of meetings, number of participants and pedagogical approaches.

In 2015-16 we conducted research on thesis success and the value of thesis seminars. In this research, that is still work-in-progress, we examine how students perceive their academic and meta-cognitive skills at the beginning, during and at the end of the thesis process. Also, we analyse how the design of thesis seminars affects students' experiences. In my paper I will discuss our initial conclusions on how this institutional research can help us understand the dynamics of student experience and pedagogical practice.

Session 24: (Wednesday 7 September, 15:20 – 15:45)

Improving Student Engagement

'Identifying marginal gains to drive up student satisfaction amongst different cohorts of students at a top-performing UK university'

Sandeep Gakhal, Coventry University

Coventry University has consistently received high rates of student satisfaction and is committed to retaining its ranking as a top performing university, in this respect. Furthermore, as outlined within the University's corporate plan student satisfaction continues to be on top of the agenda.

This session, which is at the heart of improving student engagement and experience, will explore the extent to which existing University-held data can be analysed to yield deeper understanding of how different cohorts of students respond to student satisfaction surveys. For example, exploring the differences between UK and non-UK domicile students and satisfaction scores and, also the differences between satisfaction scores and students' average attainment scores per module. Student survey responses are anonymous due to students suggesting that they would respond differently if responses were linked to their student ID. However, differences between groups of students were investigated by comparing satisfaction scores with the proportion of students registered per module according to their characteristics.

The session will highlight the benefits of making good use of existing University-held student satisfaction data including avoiding survey fatigue which has shown to negatively impact on response rates. We will profile the data used, explain our method of analysis, including limitations, and report what insights were discovered from our pilot analysis. We will discuss how the findings will be used to address areas for improvement and discuss how the data might be used to identify further marginal gains according to other characteristics of the student population i.e. living at home/living independently, males/females, differences in students' satisfaction scores depending on the level of the module that they are undertaking (Level 1-M).

Session 25: (Wednesday 7 September, 15:20 – 15:45)

Emerging Technological Tools

'Effective module evaluation: tackling the most challenging institutional survey'

Graham Sherwood, Elena Zaitseva & Clare Milsom, Liverpool John Moores University

Module level feedback is a key indicator in the institutional enhancement and quality assurance processes and one of the most challenging evaluations to implement across the institution. Many universities are looking for a flexible and user-friendly survey instrument able to engage both academics in students in the evaluation process and deliver high quality reporting. Liverpool John Moores University was the first HE institution in the UK to adopt online module evaluation platform eXplorance Blue, widely used at universities in Australasia, USA, Canada and Latin America.

The presentation will reflect on how the new approach impacted on engagement of academics in the module evaluation process. Potential for amplification of the reports and expansion of analysis points by using demographic analysis will also be explored. It will also explore challenges, successes and lessons learned from the first institutional pilot and subsequent whole University implementation.

Day Two: Thursday 8 September

Session 27: (Thursday 8 September, 11:00 – 12:25)

Improving Student Engagement

‘Student engagement: power and vulnerability of the UK Engagement Survey data’

Elena Zaitseva & Clare Milsom, Liverpool John Moores University

In recent years student engagement has become a dominant discourse in HE practice, research and policy. The shifting focus from ‘satisfaction’ to ‘engagement’ is indicative of the sector’s growing awareness of the connection between engagement, retention and subsequent student achievements. With increased diversification and accountability required from HE providers, ‘enhancing student engagement has moved on from the cottage-industry stage to become a high stakes, [sector-wide] imperative’ (Krause & Armitage, 2014).

The UK Engagement Survey (UKES) was introduced by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) as a sector wide instrument to measure and benchmark ‘student involvement in educationally purposeful activities’ (Hu & Kuh, 2001: 3), including active participation in disciplinary learning, and interaction with academic peers, teachers and wider communities. The role of the survey is becoming more prominent in recent HE policy developments. The Government’s consultation on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Year Two) refers directly to UKES as an instrument that could be used for generating additional TEF evidence – e.g. to help institutions evaluate impact and effectiveness of schemes focused on monitoring and maximising students’ engagement with their studies (HEFCE, 2016).

This presentation will explore findings from the HEA’s Strategic Excellence Initiative project undertaken at Liverpool John Moores University. The primary aim of the project was to understand how UKES data could be used in curriculum development and enhancement. The relationship between engagement data and other indicators of student success – such as retention, performance and satisfaction, will be presented. Findings from in-depth discussions with staff and students from three subject areas will also be shared. Overall results indicate that engagement data are inherently more complex than satisfaction data, and disciplinary differences, as well as level of study, directly influence student learning approaches and how they respond to the UKES questions. The implications of the findings for a wider adoption of the Survey and incorporation of its metrics into the TEF will be discussed.

Session 28: (Thursday 8 September, 11:00 – 11:25)

Informing Decision Making

Quantifying and mapping staff external engagement: a DCU pilot in understanding the scale and scope of staff external engagement

Rachel Cook & Karen Johnston, Dublin City University

Since 2008, as a result of a sustained economic recession, the HE sector in Ireland has, and continues to operate within a highly pressured funding environment. This environment is characterised by ongoing debate about, and policy interest in, the impact of higher education to wider society, including economic growth and development. In response, a number of higher education institutions have commissioned studies into the economic impact of their institution on their region, and broader economy.

Within institutions, the valuable role that university staff can play in the education, business, cultural and civic life through their interactions with a wide range of organisations is often undervalued and unrecognised as part of the impact a university has on wider society. This research paper, a work-in-progress, presents the results of a staff engagement survey and register at an Irish university hoping to gain a better understanding of the scope and scale external engagement by staff.

This paper will discuss the scope of the research in attempting to ascertain the additional societal value generated through the external engagement and public service activities of staff, and gain a greater understanding of the breadth and depth of staff engagement. The paper will also explore how different types of engagement were identified and defined with the survey in order to capture a wide range of activity. Finally the authors will present some of the initial findings from the student, and present how this data might help inform future planning for civic engagement activities by the institution.

The session is intended to be discursive in nature. This project remains a work-in-progress, and we are keen for colleagues to provide us feedback on the process so far, and inform the future direction of the research.

Session 29: (Thursday 8 September, 11:00 – 11:25)

Improving Student Engagement

'Best practice in Nursing induction and social networking: a five-year review'

David Robson, University of Worcester

Multi modal evaluations of six of ten cohorts of nursing induction has enhanced our nursing induction process. We join nurses to a closed Facebook group immediately after accepting our offer. We use Facebook and Dropbox to share academic work for summer school and then prepare the students for Induction week.

We used a mix of anonymous online and paper evaluations, focus groups and non-anonymous Facebook induction feedback. This has resulted in a shorter face to face and increased online course preparation. We found that the students who were early starters developed a closer emotional relationship with the university, developed their own cohort based online groups and developed IT skills and awareness of virtual learning environments. The students also highlighted the positive effects of peer support, both academic and personal. Small unstructured face to face evaluations in summer school sessions allowed the non-engagers to see the value of pre session reading.

Induction week has reduced from five to three days, and the focus has shifted from general to module specific preparation. This came about as a result of both Facebook and module evaluation, students said that we should use Induction to better prepare them for the harder aspects of Year 1. The social aspects of what was intended to be an academic preparation have become significant. For example, some students come to stay in the city before the course commences with fellow students. Year 2 and 3 students stay on the site and jump in and support new learners when the induction tutor is unavailable and many of these students become academic representatives for their group. The above process starts three months before registration and allow us to discuss professional issues around social networking and starts to engage the students in the awareness of a professional identity.

Session 30: (Thursday 8 September, 11:00 – 11:55)

Informing Decision Making

WORKSHOP: 'Could we be doing better at using data to further our internationalisation goals as a university?'

Melissa Abache, Koç University

Internationalisation of higher education is a wide and complex topic that touches at an institutional level on teaching, learning, research, public engagement and management, amongst other areas. On many instances it is reduced to the concept of international rankings or international student recruitment.

Koç University, located in Istanbul, Turkey, along with other partner European institutions developed the HEIDA project (https://heida.ku.edu.tr) in 2015 to help bridge the gap between faculty and administrators in higher education when it comes to making decisions for internationalisation based on data and evidence.

The workshop will help participants gain a better understanding of the importance of internationalisation data and indicators and how these can be better monitored, visualised and reported for different decision makers and stakeholders in a university.

The workshop will first present the key results of an online questionnaire in which over 100 European higher education institutions provided valuable insights about those aspects of internationalisation that institutions find easy or difficult to monitor and track using data available at an institutional level. For example: one of the findings of the survey was the difficulty for International Offices to track and use research, teaching and learning focused internationalisation data and indicators. Another key finding from survey respondents was the need to build user friendly data collection tools that allow for data and indicators to be visualised in graphs, infographics or other formats.

The second part of the workshop will present the HEIDA Project's training module and free software tool to help universities bridge this gap and provide hands-on practical examples for participants to assess their institution's data management practices for internationalisation. The session will close by allowing time for participants to offer feedback, ask questions and share ideas for further development of the tool and training module.

Session 31: (Thursday 8 September, 11:30 – 11:55)

Learning Gain

'Understanding student motivators, aspirations and employability engagement and their effects on the student journey to final employment destinations'

Nigel Page, Lydia Ait Belkacem, Kelly Gurnett, Evelyn Siaw, Louise Carey, Baljit Ghatora, Gary Forster-Wilkins & Emma Steeds, Kingston University

Measuring the 'distance travelled' by students during their studies is taking on a more prominent role especially with the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework. The White Paper sets out that, not only teaching excellence matters but, there is the need to reduce inequality to ensure more students fulfil their aspirations and progress on into their chosen careers. Therefore, understanding student motivators, aspirations and employability engagement and their effects on the journey to final employment destinations are imperative. Equally, important is the development of methodologies that can reliably measure student progression and attainment. This is especially the case when taking into account the persistent national disparity in UK domiciled Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) attainment, which can affect the 'journey' even when students appear to enter HE with comparable entry qualifications.

We have conducted quantitative research along with focus groups in an attempt to understand the student journey. Our research has shown that although BME and White students share many of the same motivators and aspirations including the desire to improve career prospects and similar entry qualifications, there are some subtle differences that need further investigation at institutional level. Some of these include those where BME students are less likely to decide to attend university to move away from home, experience new places and meet new people, and less likely to connect their previous academic experience to that at university. Some of these factors could not only lead to a reduced disconnect from the university experience but also may inhibit the exploration of new opportunities and careers further afield. The process of capturing data from student transition to university and on to the job market for these purposes remains challenging but will become more essential as the Teaching Academic Framework is rolled out.

Session 32: (Thursday 8 September, 11:30 – 11:55)

Informing Decision Making

'Metrics and methodology for curriculum change'

Christopher Randles, University of Hull

The University of Hull is engaged in a strategic journey towards whole curriculum and pedagogic redesign. Three faculties will be introducing their revised and refreshed curricula and pedagogies in 2016 and a further two in 2017. The Curriculum 2016+ change initiative, under which these changes are occurring, emerged from the University's Strategic Plan 2011-15 and the accompanying Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy 2012-15.

Resulting from a Higher Education Academy Vice-Chancellors' Strategic Excellence Initiative award, the research presented has focused on identifying and applying appropriate metrics and methodologies for the evaluation of curriculum change.

This presentation introduces a conceptual framework on which an approach to evaluation can be built, outlines evaluation metrics and methodologies and reports on two disciplinary case studies in which the evaluation toolkit has been applied: History and Sports, Health and Exercise Science. Drawing on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data the case studies present the evaluation toolkit in action. The session ends with a discussion of how the metrics and methodologies may be incorporated meaningfully into annual monitoring and review processes in order to move from cross-sectional to longitudinal approach.

Session 33: (Thursday 8 September, 11:30 – 11:55)

Improving Student Engagement

'Why do I need a pal? What we can expect from peer assisted learning'

Peter Garside, Kingston University

This research project, sponsored by Kingston University through its associate student research scheme (SADRAS), is an investigation into the impact peer assisted learning has on mentors and mentees.

Throughout 2015/16 a group of final year undergraduate students volunteered to mentor a group of second year undergraduates on a module they had completed the year before. Whilst undertaking this role they also, together with representatives from the mentees, designed and implemented a research project to evaluate the impact this process had upon themselves and those they were supporting. The aim being to see how useful peer assisted learning can be in improving the learning experience and the academic development of undergraduates.

The literature highlights a range of interpretations, “Peers are often considered the most powerful influence in undergraduate education, even more so than advisors and instructors.” (Colvin, 2007: 166). Kopp (2000) found that active learning using undergraduate peer assistants proved to be influential in raising understanding and attainment. However Arco-Tirado et al. (2011) highlight that whilst mentoring did not have a direct impact on attainment it did have a significant positive impact on metacognitive strategies (i.e. study planning) and social skills (i.e. oral communication). Others argue as to whether the relationship should be social or academic (Hartwig, 1999; Jacobi, 1991.) and question who really benefits: mentor, mentee, staff (Egege, 2015)?

The research, based upon online questionnaires, focus groups and sounding boards, was conducted throughout the academic year 2015/16 and focused on PAL within a second year module entitled ‘The Contours of Global Capitalism’. Initial findings indicate the use of PAL had a profound and beneficial impact on all those who took part, improving the learning experience and promoting core graduate attributes for mentors. The study has also led to a range of recommendations for improving the experience.

Session 34: (Thursday 8 September, 12:00 – 12:25)

Improving Student Engagement

‘Can ideas about how to encourage people to stop smoking be harnessed to enhance student engagement and success?’

Caroline Wilson, Coventry University

An engaged student body is key to positively influencing student learning outcomes, which in turn impacts on teaching excellence, a topic currently at the centre of national and international higher education policy discourse (Gunn & Fisk, 2013). One of the challenges to achieving excellence in this field is making the right choice of coordinated activities designed to motivate students to engage in their studies. The challenge is made more difficult by the fact that activity to be categorised as ‘student engagement’ is still being clarified (Bryson, 2015).

Encouragement of the prevalence or incidence of particular behaviours can be defined as a behaviour change intervention (Michie et al., 2011). The Behaviour Change Wheel (BCW) is a recently devised design guide for the development of behaviour change interventions which requires formative institutional research at its core. Applicability of this new guidance to the domain of student behaviour is limited: this paper examines its potential.

It does this by following a methodology used ahead of introduction in other spheres (Wilson & Marselle, 2016) to assess whether the BCW comprehensively describes programmes attempting to encourage student engagement. Components of behaviour change programmes as identified in the education literature are mapped onto the BCW. The key value of this work to the sector is to ascertain whether use of the BCW appears to have application as a tool to encourage better specification of interventions. This session will reveal the extent to which the BCW and the literature on student engagement align, and whether and how this opens the way for institutional research to be used to support not just the design, but also the monitoring and evaluation of projects to encourage student engagement.

Session 35: (Thursday 8 September, 12:00 – 12:25)

Informing Decision Making

'Mainstream vs Foundation student success in South Africa: a case study at the University of Fort Hare'

Rod Bally, University of Fort Hare

To meet a growing need to bridge the gap between secondary and university education in South Africa, an ambitious programme of state-funded Foundation Provisioning Programmes (FPPs) has been introduced at universities with a current goal of providing assistance to 25 per cent of new entrants to undergraduate studies. An important element is to enhance university access to students from areas of society that were historically largely excluded from tertiary studies.

This presentation explores the effectiveness of FPPs at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), a "historically disadvantaged institution" that draws most of its students from socio-economically deprived areas in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The FPP model adopted at UFH is the "extended curriculum" whereby the first year of undergraduate study is spread over two years, supported by compulsory non-credit bearing modules designed to enhance students' skills for tertiary study. The net effect for students in FPP streams is that an additional year is added to the minimum completion time.

Placement of students in FPPs depends on several factors: (a) whether an FPP exists for a particular qualification; (b) students' university entrance score; (c) the number of places available in a given FPP. Even in qualifications with established FPPs, the number of admitted students needing support far exceeds FPP places, thus creating a natural experiment with students of similar needs following either mainstream or FPP tracks.

Although FPPs are state-funded, infrastructural limitations prevent higher intakes. Thus FPPs have both costs and benefits at a number of levels. This paper examines these as well as the academic trajectories of students who are either supported or not supported by FPPs at the University of Fort Hare.

Session 36: (Thursday 8 September, 12:00 – 12:25)

Improving Student Engagement

'The BME attainment gap'

Nigel Ling, Kingston University

The observed discrepancy in attainment of BME students compared to White (the so-called BME attainment gap) may have several causes. Factors suggested range from institutional bias, to low socio-economic backgrounds imposing feelings of inadequacy, to lack of structured support. Kingston, in common with other Post-92 universities, has a higher proportion of BME students and is thus well placed to conduct statistical studies on factors that may affect their performance. The aim of this research is to use student data to look for differences in factors such as attendance habits that may explain underperformance of BME students, and develop a model that looks for other influences and interaction between them.

Data on grade point averages for STEM students were examined over three years; the attainment gap was examined using the measures final grade point averages (GPA) and degree classification. A short survey was conducted to assess the relative motivations of BME against White students. Results were also compared to the broader student cohort to assess the impact of subject on the gap.

The BME attainment gap is found to be broadly consistent throughout Kingston University and is comparable to that of other UK institutions. White students are twice as likely to get a good degree than their BME peers; the figure does appear to be notably higher in certain humanities subjects. However, this apparent large difference is partly an artefact of the classification system: the difference in GPA is only 4 per cent between White and BME. The motivation survey indicates lower levels of self-confidence among BME students.

The main conclusion of this work is that the attainment gap is smaller than generally believed; the means of closing this may lie in concentrating on BME student motivation and their pastoral care.

Session 37: (Thursday 8 September, 12:00 – 12:25)

Improving Student Engagement

'How institutional research has supported enhancing the taught postgraduate student experience at one post-1992 university'

Julie Brown, Glasgow Caledonian University

At one post-1992 university, recently completed internal research, exploring the taught postgraduate (PGT) student experience provided valuable research findings. This evidence base not only provided new data on the PGT student experience and subsequent report recommendations at a University level, but also the provision of granulated data supported Academic Schools within the institution to identify specific areas in which that particular School could focus on to enhance the PGT student experience.

The aim of this research was to explore: What is the student view of their PGT experience, with a view to enhancing this experience if required? Adopting a mixed method approach, this research provided comparative and situated data, highlighting patterns and trends and in-depth data for PGTs. This included secondary data analysis of internal statistics, an online questionnaire distributed to all current PGT students in the institution, to explore their expectations and experiences (including student engagement) of PGT study and follow up focus groups and interviews enabling more in-depth exploration and unpacking questionnaire findings.

In addition to providing an overview of the main research findings (student satisfaction, enhancements required in relation to managing students' expectations, pre-arrival and early course experiences, course organisation and management; and varied levels of student engagement) this presentation will highlight the overall report recommendations in addition to the School specific recommendations.

This presentation will discuss the research and findings, the contribution of the research to enhancing the PGT student experience, whilst acknowledging a number of challenges associated with institutional research, in particular the sensitivities and challenges associated with institutional research.

Session 38: (Thursday 8 September, 12:30 – 12:55)

Learning Gain

'Measuring student learning: national assessment exams in Norwegian higher education'

Stephan Hamberg, Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

SESSION CANCELLED

Session 39: (Thursday 8 September, 12:30 – 12:55)

Informing Decision Making

'Theorising student constructions of quality education in a South African university'

George Kehdinga, University of Kwazulu-Natal

Higher education in South Africa has several objectives amongst which are transformation, poverty alleviation and national development. For this to be achieved, the Council of Higher Education constantly develops and reviews quality guidelines to ensure that teaching and learning is directed towards these objectives. Universities are therefore required to use these policies to guide teaching and learning. But with the current employment rate, low student throughput, deplorable basic education standards, questions begin to arise whether universities are actually upholding the quality challenge.

This paper is a journey in this direction, exploring students' constructions of quality education in a South African university. Using the qualitative case study approach, data was generated using questionnaires. A total of 800 students were sampled purposively and only about 270 responded to the question. The data generated was categorized and analysed on the basis of the questions on the questions. The Second Cycle of Quality Assurance 2012–17 was then used to give meaning to the findings of the study in the discussion.

The paper reveals that the quality of education was poor, most lecturers where unqualified, using obscure teaching and learning approaches as well as assessment mechanisms. Also the paper points out that universities need to develop their staff, involve students in curriculum design and effectively support students to address fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation imperatives. The paper recommends that universities must leave their ivory towers which are inhibiting quality rather addressing quality of paper.

Session 40: (Thursday 8 September, 12:30 – 12:55)

Improving Student Engagement

'The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE): data analysis and faculty dialogue for pedagogical changes'

Hirosuke Honda, University of Maine at Augusta

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has been widely administered among colleges and universities in the United States. The first part of this presentation will illustrate the analyses of the multiple surveys in 2007, 2010, and 2013 at the University of Maine at Augusta. In each survey administration, the respective working groups, involving both faculty members and assessment professionals, approached differently to the data analysis and continuous improvement efforts. The 2007 survey revealed the areas for future improvement and a working group decided to focus on improving 'culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)' and 'co-curricular activities (e.g. campus events, sports, clubs, etc.).' In the 2010 survey the results were analysed at the departmental level, which invited methodological challenges and faculty concerns. With the 2013 survey the presenter conducted an elaborated trend analysis of the three survey results. It verified the significant improvements in the two areas for improvement addressed in the 2007 survey. The trend analysis also identified other insights on student learning experiences and their perceived gains.

The second part of the presentation will address ongoing efforts on the faculty engagement in utilising the survey findings for further pedagogical improvements. The current Working Group developed and administered an in-house NSSE follow-up survey in Fall 2015. In response faculty members across academic departments expressed that 'collaborative learning' and 'quantitative reasoning' were critical to their student learning. The Working Group is brainstorming the strategies to generate an institution-wide dialogue involving both faculty members and students.

Session 41: (Thursday 8 September, 12:30 – 12:55)

Emerging Technology Tools

'Do electric researchers dream of strategy? The limits and desirability of automated data analysis'

Jason Leman, Higher Education Academy

There is a gap between the desire to use data within institutions to evidence enhancement and the time and expertise available to examine that data in depth. The increasing automation of the research process is one way in which this gap is being closed; however, this often only provides crude analysis that fails to highlight key areas of importance and may mislead as to areas of concern. The latest wave of automation promises to scrutinise data and bring out key findings in areas of interest, with automated statistical testing highlighting areas of apparent importance.

This paper will explore to what extent the institutional researcher may be automated out of the research process. It will move from general reflections on new software available to automate research, to the development of an automated analysis system for survey data, used at the Higher Education Academy. The paper will explore key steps in the development of an increasingly capable benchmarking tool that has spanned over six years. The tool uses graphical and tabular presentations of survey data to highlight differences, defined as important through automated statistical analysis and logical routines. The paper will open out to a discussion with participants on the possibility and desirability of further automation of the research process.

Session 42: (Thursday 8 September, 14:05 – 14:30)

Learning Gain

'Participant selection and retention: lessons from the Learning Gain project in five higher education institutions'

Cesare Aloisi & Amanda Callaghan, University of Reading;
Stuart Brand, Birmingham City University

In pedagogic research projects representativeness of sample student populations is critical to the robustness of any findings. While the issue of sample attrition has been investigated in the literature, this paper seeks to contribute with new evidence on "what worked" in student sampling and retention. It does this by contrasting the experiences of five higher education institutions in recruiting student participants for administering a standardised test between October 2015 and February 2016. In the first part of the paper, the recruitment approaches chosen by each institution are described and linked to supporting literature. Each strategy is associated to a flowchart defining all steps that were taken to identify, select, recruit and retain participants. In the analysis section, the key steps are evaluated using a matrix including the rationale behind each action, its intended outcomes and success criteria, the resources available for its completion, as well as the actual outcomes and how they impacted on the following steps. This approach to programme evaluation highlights the discrepancy between the intended protocol and what was actually possible in practice, along with a clear picture of the critical factors affecting the plan. The findings from each institution are discussed in light of the experiences of the others, and common enabling or preventing factors (i.e., the points at which each strategy worked as expected or had to be completely reviewed) are identified. In the concluding part of the paper, lessons from this exercise are drawn, and the evidence from these five case study is contrasted to recommendations in the literature.

Session 43: (Thursday 8 September, 14:05 – 14:30)

Informing Decision Making

'New project management framework for institutional research: case studies in the US and potential applications in the UK'

Hirosuke Honda, University of Maine at Augusta

How can we improve the efficiency and effectiveness of institutional research (IR)? In order to answer the question, the presenter will illustrate a new project management framework. In this four-quadrant framework, the horizontal (X) axis indicates the "purpose" of office projects, distinguishing between Accountability (on the left) and Improvement (on the right). This axis speaks to the use of data and research findings in decision-making. The vertical (Y) axis characterizes the regularity of office projects, dividing between Routine (at the top) and Ad-Hoc (at the bottom). This axis is critical in regarding the workload of IR projects.

This four-quadrant framework is applicable for both academic research and practical action research. For the former, the four-quadrant framework serves as a common template to analyse the state of IR amongst various colleges and universities in a country or even across different countries. For the latter, the four-quadrant framework serves as a communication tool with office staff, supervisors and other campus stakeholders for determining project priorities and changes in office operations.

The first part of the presentation will describe the foundation of the four-quadrant framework. The second part will illustrate case studies of IR and Institutional Effectiveness offices in the US. The last part will propose potential applications in the UK, recognising its different office structures and functions (e.g. IR, Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning).

Session 44: (Thursday 8 September, 14:05 – 14:30)

Improving Student Engagement

'Developing the Assessment Self-Efficacy Toolkit'

Sue Palmer-Conn, Liverpool John Moores University

This study is based on the work from an LJMU Curriculum Enhancement Project that has been ongoing throughout this academic year with students as active partners taking part in interviews, focus groups and in piloting the measure. The project has developed a new psychometric measure of Assessment Self-Efficacy. Whilst Academic Self-Efficacy is a general measure of engagement and beliefs within an academic domain (McIlroy et al., 2015), Assessment Self-Efficacy is specific to assessment tasks. Like Academic Self-Efficacy, the Assessment Self-Efficacy measure has been constructed to explore students' concepts of self-agency (Bandura, 2001), goal setting, mastery experiences, self-regulation, persistence, motivation and past experience (Britner & Pajares, 2004; Chemers et al., 2001; Clearly & Zimmerman, 2004).

These aspects are explored in relation to engaging with assessment criteria, understanding the question, preparation for and completion of the task, receiving and acting on feedback, and feeding forward to the next task. The measure will be given at the start of an academic year and repeated at the end. In the interim period students will be given a series of workbooks for different aspects of assessments to work through in their tutorials or on their own. The aim is to see an improvement in Assessment Self-Efficacy. In addition, students will be encouraged to take a holistic approach to assessment by mapping out their assessment journey across the programme as a recent study indicated that student dissatisfaction with assessment and feedback may be attributable to a piecemeal rather than integrated programme wide approach (Jessop et al., 2013).

Session 45: (Thursday 8 September, 14:05 – 14:30)

Improving Student Engagement

'Student preparation for research-active occupational therapy careers: a longitudinal, mixed-method study'

Tanya Rihtman, Coventry University

Occupational therapy (OT) education has seen calls for enhancing the development of research capacity to facilitate evidence-based practice and to assist in securing the profession's future (White 2013; White and Creek, 2007). This study engaged a cohort of undergraduate OT students, investigating their research experiences and perceptions and the factors related to preparation for research active careers.

After gaining ethical approval, this longitudinal, mixed-method study repeatedly surveyed final year OT students from one university during the process of implementing final year research projects. The Research Spider (Smith et al., 2002), Q-methodology and non-standardised surveys measured experiences of research engagement, research knowledge and competencies and emotional variables. Data was analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Data collection at three time points (prior to research engagement, after project completion, after conference presentation) yielded 33, 21 and ten survey responses and 18, 12 and six Q-sort responses respectively. The results profile research attitudes and perceptions at the three time points, with findings demonstrating shifting profiles related to experiences of professional research engagement during the undergraduate learning experience.

Session 46: (Thursday 8 September, 14:35 – 15:00)

Learning Gain

'Academic challenge's impact on learning and personal development: an empirical study from the FE/HE colleges'

Hassan Al-Zubaidi, Sally Dixon & James Price, The Manchester College

The interest in measuring learners' engagement has grown globally in the last decade. Many surveys are available and used to measure learners' engagement like UKES or NSSE.

This growth in use of these surveys can be linked to consumer oriented culture in the UK higher education market.

This presentation aims to investigate the academic challenge's impact on learning, learners' engagement, personal and academic development. A survey has been developed that included the following dimensions: Learning with others, interacting with staff, time spent by learners, skills development and course challenge. Data has been collected from sixteen collaborative colleges to assess the impact of the level of course challenge on learners' engagement, skills and personal development. Descriptive statistics for the survey were presented; reliability measure was calculated and showed that the survey items are reliable to develop further analysis. Principle component factor analysis was performed and resulted in combining survey items into five principle components. A model was developed to assess the impact of course challenge on learners' skills, personal and academic development.

Session 47: (Thursday 8 September, 14:35 – 15:00)

Informing Decision Making

'Fundamental improvement of strategic analysis in higher education: a clarification typology'

Glenn James, Tennessee Tech University

Higher education institutions have a plethora of analytical needs. However, the irregular and inconsistent practices in connecting those needs with appropriate analytical delivery systems has resulted in a patchwork that sometimes overlaps unnecessarily and sometimes exposes unaddressed gaps.

The purpose of this session is to share a typology of components for addressing institutional analytical needs while leveraging existing institutional strengths, in order to maximize analytical goal attainment most effectively and efficiently. Session attendees will learn about focusing upon the clarification of components for attaining greater analytical strength and goal attainment in the institution.

Session 48: (Thursday 8 September, 14:35 – 15:00)

Improving Student Engagement

'Improving student activity: exploring the influence of faculty member expectations and demands'

Marie-Louise Damen, Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

Students' retention, progression and completion has been the focus among higher education institutional practitioners, researchers and policy makers for many years now. Research shows that students' sense of belonging and engagement are essential for achieving these aims (Kuh et al., 2008). Student engagement is framed as the time and energy students invest in educationally purposeful activities in combination with the effort institutions devote to using effective educational practices (Kuh 2001). Student surveys often show considerable variation among study programs in the time students invest in educational activities. Students' study time is thought to be influenced by the academic ambitions, expectations and demands of faculty members. The higher faculty members' academic ambitions and demands, the higher and more effective is students' study time investment. In this paper we test this hypothesis by studying the relationship between faculty members' ambitions and demands and students' study time. We use quantitative data on study time and faculty expectations from the Norwegian national student survey 'Studiebarometeret'. We conducted focus group interviews with students and faculty members of selected study programs to learn more about *how* faculty members' expectations influence the students.

Preliminary results show that there is indeed a relationship between students' study time and faculty members' demands and ambitions. The effect of faculty members' academic ambitions is stronger for students' self-study, while the effect of demand is stronger on students' time devoted to organised learning activities. The interviews made clear that heterogenic student groups with respect to start competences, motivation and learning styles makes it difficult for institutions to set clear (and equal) demands for all students. The interviews also showed that both clear and unclear demands leads to a high devotion of study time, while the latter is assumed as a non-effective way of learning. This curve linear effect is confirmed in the quantitative survey data.

Session 49: (Thursday 8 September, 14:35 – 15:00)

Improving Student Engagement

'Measuring student engagement and participation: how can an engineering lecturer's use of technology in teaching and learning contribute towards institutional research?'

Asiya Khan & Priska Schoenborn, Plymouth University

There is an increased debate in the higher education sector focussing on aspects of the Teaching Excellence Framework such as the lack of information on teaching quality. Research has been funded on quality for a long time, now a similar system will apply to teaching, with institutions being able to charge higher tuition fees based on teaching quality (BIS, 2016). This paper seeks to reflect on the potential role of a 'front-line' academic, an engineering lecturer, in institutional research and quality enhancement systems. Interactive technology i.e. 'clickers' has been embedded at module level. Can and should such quantitative data be captured for institutional research? How can the good practice of such academics be harnessed? How can we incentivise colleagues to develop their practice and to contribute to such effort?

The use of interactive digital technologies can transform teaching and learning experience both for the student and lecturer. There has been a drive in STEM subjects (Freeman et al., 2013) towards active learning as opposed to didactic. Student response systems or simply 'clickers' are becoming popular in higher educational settings as they allow for student participation. Clickers allow students to respond anonymously in real time to a question put forward by the lecturer (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2013). Another advantage of this technology is the capture of quantitative data relating to students' acquisition of knowledge which, if monitored over time, could potentially identify key learning points in the student journey.

Therefore, the aim of the paper is twofold. Firstly, to present a small-scale educational research project and its findings, particularly the impact this has had on engineering students and lecturer. Secondly, to explore if and how such small-scale efforts can be used to inform institutional level research e.g. how can lecturers harness meaningful data to be used for institutional research purposes.

Session 50: (Thursday 8 September, 15:05 – 15:30)

Learning Gain

‘Piloting measures of learning gain at University of East Anglia’

Annamari Ylonen, University of East Anglia

This paper focuses on discussing an ongoing research project at University of East Anglia ‘Piloting Measures of Learning Gain in Higher Education’, which is one of the HEFCE-funded projects on developing measures of learning gain in HE. The paper is set within the wider national HE context in terms of teaching excellence, student outcomes and metrics on learning gain.

The UEA project takes a cross-sectional approach, looking at different cohorts of students for the 2015-16 academic year (Phase 1) and for the 2016-17 academic year (Phase 2) in different disciplines in sciences, social sciences, humanities and medicine. We are trialling three approaches to measuring learning gain: student marks and value-added measures, concept inventories, and self-efficacy measures. Details of each of these three strands will be discussed, including what the different approaches can offer as measures of learning gain as well as their potential strengths and weaknesses.

Some preliminary findings from Phase 1 of the project will then be discussed with particular emphasis given to the area of student marks, value-added measures and Grade Point Average. Different methodologies that have been trialled in this strand of work will be considered as well as the ways in which existing institutional data have been utilised.

The paper concludes by outlining some possible future scenarios in terms of the use of learning gain metrics in HE in England. The significance of the UEA project in informing future debates about assessment of HE quality is also considered.

Session 51: (Thursday 8 September, 15:05 – 15:30)

Informing Decision Making

'Measured discussion: what institutional learning and teaching conferences tell us about 'what matters most''

Virendra Mistry, Liverpool John Moores University

Usually managed by a central learning and teaching unit, annual institutional learning and teaching conferences have been embedded in many HEIs. Typically, they aim to provide a forum for staff to present new ideas on learning, teaching and assessment for discussion with fellow practitioners, share good practice and some are used to awareness of emerging institutional policy.

In this presentation, I will present summative content analysis from publicly available programmes, session abstracts and keynote addresses from over fifty UK institutional teaching and learning conferences that took place in the 2015/16 academic year. The paper will reveal the key topics and themes that have been discussed and presented at these institutional conferences, which give an interesting sense of sector and institutional priorities.

In an eventful academic year, that has witnessed the publication of a Higher Education White Paper, including articulation of a Teaching Excellence Framework with discussions around learning gain and student mobility – how have these impacted on what is debated at the institutional conference? Who has led these discussions? How have general presentations been structured or debates formed (research papers, work in progress, demonstrations, workshops) and what of the locus of the presenters, or their seniority/experience within their institution? What publicly available resources are created (e.g. filmed keynotes, PowerPoint slides of presentations) that continue discussion and debate? The session will present numerous other trends and ideas being incorporated in institutional conferences, stratified by mission group or institutional type and region.

Session 52: (Thursday 8 September, 15:05 – 15:30)

Informing Decision Making

'Going international: investigating institutional support for mobile students'

Steve Woodfield & Professor Robin Middlehurst, Kingston University

Undertaking an international experience during a course of study provides well documented, and potentially transformational, personal and employability benefits for mobile students. This is recognised by both governments and universities who have developed strategies to encourage more UK students to participate in mobility. Most existing research is based on the perceptions on students, and employers on the barriers to, motivations for, and impacts of mobility. So far there has been limited research into the institutional processes that support and underpin such mobility.

This paper presents the key findings from an institutional research project at Kingston University London that sought to shed light on this under-researched area, supported by funding from Santander Universities. The project involved eight in-depth interviews with 16 academic and administrative staff, focused on following themes: institutional roles, institutional policy and strategy, resources and support, student interactions and cross-functional working relationships.

Selected findings include: the importance of adequate funding and support for students; the key role of 'mobility advocates' (academic and administrative); the significant academic and administrative challenges faced by students; and the difficulties of translating student interest into participation in mobility. The project findings are intended to generate an improved understanding of the ways in which the University can increase and broaden participation in in mobility opportunities, and to enhance the experience of outward student mobility. The project will be extended in 2016-17 to include further research at Kingston, and comparative research with other universities.

HEIR2016 Posters

The River: a different but simple definition of what IR is all about

Stefan Buettner, University of Tuebingen

When Institutional Research was conceived the definition of what it actually means was in the flux. Many of us know about Pat Terenzini's elevator dilemma on sufficiently describing what IR means before the destination level has been reached. This poster will introduce you to an intriguingly different but simple definition of what IR is all about, a definition that not only works for one office in one country but for all offices everywhere. It all starts with a river full of challenges, opportunities and imperfections.

Attendees will gain a completely different way to present what they are doing to colleagues who don't know IR or refer to it differently, to 'sell' IRs value for the institution to principals and presidents and can also get inspired by new ideas through looking at IR, metaphorically, from a bird's perspective.

The mature students' experience at Kingston University

Kelsey Giroux, Kingston University

The aim of this study was to investigate and provide insight on the Kingston University mature student's experience; their social and academic needs and expectations of Kingston University. Mature students (i.e., students older than 24 years old on enrolment) represent a vital and growing part of the Kingston University community, comprising almost 25 per cent of the student population (Kingston, 2016). The researchers hoped to explore attitudes and perceptions, of the mature student towards services offered KU, understand the mature student's opinions of learning and teaching (L&T) pedagogy employed by KU, and capture the mature student's view of how KU can better support their L&T needs and experiences.

The sample is 12 postgraduate students of Marketing at Kingston University and the sampling method used in this research is non-probability, convenience sampling. A qualitative approach, specifically face-to-face interviews, was applied as we wanted to preserve each individual's opinions in tacked.

The first important finding of our research is that students chose to do a Master's in a later stage in their lives to either change their career path or to pursue a better position in their current field. They believed that taking time to gain working experience and then build on their education is more beneficial to their professional evolution. As mature students have consciously chosen to return to academia, they feel that their determination, in combination to their professional background, is a great asset against traditional students.

Come as you are: types of first year students

Adrienn Linder, University Duisburg

The student body at German universities is currently heterogeneous as never before. Next to the increasing diverse student body larger universities are faced with the challenge of drop out during the first semesters of first-year students. Therefore, one big challenge is the rethinking of study course programmes and the institutional conditions. Students should be allowed to gain academic success regardless of their individual potential. It is very well known that the first terms of study course are crucial for academic success.

Accordingly, we have asked our students in their first term about their level of necessary skills in the context of academic success in the context of a First-Year Student Survey at the University of Duisburg-Essen. The data has been analysed within a cluster analysis in order to identify types of first-year of students. The following variables were included in the analysis: level of information in general aspects of the study course, level of information relating to credit points, external condition regarding examination and performance pressure, external and internal motivation of studying, previous knowledge relevant for the study course, exam nerves, learning abilities and perceived self-efficacy.

We identified four types of First-Year Students:

- "ideal-typical students": an highly intrinsic motivated student group with high levels of information, previous knowledge, learning ability and perceived self-efficacy
- "careerist": a highly extrinsic motivated student group, which is less well prepared for the study course than the first group
- "disoriented students": an medium intrinsic motivated student group, with low levels of information, previous knowledge, learning ability and problems with examination and performance pressure

- "potential drop out": a medium extrinsic motivated student group with low levels of all measured skills

These results lead us to the central question: If we have knowledge about types of First-Year Students what conclusions should we draw when improving student´s engagement and learning gain?