

# **The Sheffield Transitions Project**

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# The Sheffield Transitions Project

I'll talk about...

- 2009 transitions project
- Recognised the crucial role of Student Services
- Created new framework for conceptualising transitions
- Led to further work – currently in process

# Starting point...

- Lots of transitions support provided but completeness? ...strategic purpose?
- Carry out audit..map the territory...identify key transitions points...suggest purpose
- Help us clarify contribution of Student Services to broader student experience

# But what do we mean by ‘transitions’?

- Felt we had to get this clear first
- Usual discourse focused on entering university and transitions related to the formal academic cycle
- Benchmarking revealed little else
- But we felt this didn't do justice to reality of student transitions

# Another view

- Dictionary definition:

“1. The process of changing from one state or condition to another; a period of such change.  
2. (in music) a momentary modulation”

- So a *process*, not an event...representing change.
- Music – moving between two connected passages in a broader piece (like life..)

# Another view..

- Student's relationship with university life is all-embracing – it affects the whole person.
- Throws up array of challenges, throughout student life cycle
- Some predictable , some not...
- Related to student's growth as a person and the events they experience

# Key Aspects of Transition

- It's a continual process of change, covering the whole student life cycle.
- There are many transitions, of which the transition into university is only one.
- In supporting this process, we are developing both the academic and social capacity of students, for the benefit of the student, the university and in the longer term for the economy and society as a whole.
- The process is inclusive of large numbers of students – perhaps all - not just the “inclusion” groups who are perhaps the most challenged and vulnerable.
- This all feeds into the university's learning and teaching agenda, into retention, into employability – in other words, into key areas of university business.
- Giving attention to the whole process of transition fits into the context of broader access to university but also into the wider picture of developing the student experience.
- The university needs to recognise this as a real and important process: that the support given to students is valuable and, indeed, a core dimension of university business.

# Student Transitions Framework

Academic Cycle

Transitions caused by predictable events in the academic cycle, experienced by all students. Key points – joining, orientation, first exams, writing up, graduating.

Psychological,  
and  
Developmental

Psychological and social transitions, some of which may be caused by university life, some of which may be part of a normal process of development.

Learning to  
Learn

Developing as an independent learner, making the move from school to university study, dealing with raising of the bar.

Sense of  
Belonging

Transitions related to the process of becoming part of and detaching from communities. Leaving home, joining university community, joining new friendship groups.

# In more detail...

## Psychological and Developmental Transitions

- Becoming an adult
- Beginning and ending relationships
- Searching for a sense of purpose
- Dealing with success or failure
- Developing a sense of identity

# Auditing Services

- Used the framework
- Student Services provision comprehensive
- 'Endings' a possible gap
- Framework proved to be robust
- But territory not uniquely ours
- So – collaboration essential

# Strategic purpose for transitions

	... our <i>students</i> in their ability to negotiate these transitions successfully, enhancing the student experience
<b>Support, Develop, Enable...</b>	... <i>staff</i> to support students effectively, across the whole range of transitions, throughout the student journey
	... <i>collaborative frameworks</i> which allow us to work on transitions issues together with partners across the university, remembering that student transition support is at heart a collaborative task

# What **we've** gone on to do

## Focusing on...

- International student integration
- Students with complex mental health difficulties
- Collaborative work with faculties

# Collaborative Project

- Aiming to create a web-based resource for staff and students
  - ✓ Examples of good practice
  - ✓ Vignettes of student experience
  - ✓ Links to relevant support and services
  - ✓ Based on generic framework
  - ✓ Using most up to date web technologies
- Via mini projects in academic departments
- Working with students to develop case material

# Finally...

- Our framework seems useful, robust, accessible
- It recognises reality of student transitions
- We've taken this on to further specific projects within Student Services
- We're now working collaboratively with colleagues in faculties

**Thanks for listening!**

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