



Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

Title: Building Supportive Communities by Promoting Student Led Transition Teams. University of Edinburgh.

Transition(s) the practice supports: In and through.

Student(s) the practice supports: The target group has been medical maths and veterinary science students in year 1 of undergraduate study. However, it should be extendable to any student group.

Abstract: Our systematic review of the early intervention literature shows traditional interventions have weak effects for improving student performance. Very few of these are student-led, and most focus on content rather than on general transitions. We then recruited a paid student volunteer in a competitive application process to interview students and develop the training and delivery of the intervention. These revealed common issues with early teaching and how we could better support new students. We focused especially on metacognitive skills and threshold concepts as a basis to promote a student-led transition team.

Description:

Student-led transition teams can be more accessible to new undergraduates and provide support in an empathic and engaging way. However, the nature of medical education – especially the demands on student time in the clinical years and the lack of formal training – can inhibit the development of student-led transition teams.

Since 2012 we have been implementing a vision for student-led support for students at-risk of failing a year 1 MBChB. We have identified development challenges and potential solutions. Key goals include creating a large, well-trained transition team with skills for both this popular peer assisted learning (PAL) opportunity and general peer support.

The most significant challenges were: (1) a lack of training so team members were unprepared for the challenge of supporting at-risk students, (2) the low number of students able to volunteer time, (3) the tendency for volunteers to be academically excellent and so unfamiliar with challenges faced by at-risk students and (4) the rapid progression through medical school meaning students could only volunteer for one year, reducing knowledge transfer and expertise in the team. To resolve these issues we are implementing accredited training to improve skills and make volunteering more attractive (addresses 1 and 2),

focusing training on at-risk students (addresses 3), and structuring the transition team so students join in year 3 and “graduate” to more advanced roles as they progress (addresses 4).

The obstacles to building an effective transition team are significant but can be overcome by identifying challenges and designing tailored solutions.

Student-led transition teams can reduce drop-out rates, promote a supportive community *and* provide an opportunity for PAL.

We are keen to share successful ideas and hear about efforts to organise student-led transition teams elsewhere. By collaborating across institutions we can pool expertise and enable such teams to be powerful tools for supporting new students. Contact David Hope (David.Hope@ed.ac.uk) for more details.

Contact details:

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All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.