

**Title:**                   **Equality in Student Support: comparability and variability in learning support services in higher education**

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Review a case study of student perceptions about study support and reflect upon how this information relates to their own setting.
- Identify strategies that can be used in order to enhance study support for part-time students

#### **Session Outline**

The paper aims to examine the perceived expectations of two groups of part-time students regarding study support, and to contrast this to their perceived experience of this support. The purpose of this study is to ascertain variation in perceptions of study support, in order to more clearly and precisely identify the learning support needs of the target student group.

Student perceptions of study support will be analysed using a phenomenographic approach (Marton and Booth 1997). The unit of analysis will be the students' conceptions of study support in each institution, and thus the focus will be on qualitative variations in the ways in which the students conceptualise, and experience, study support.

The different meanings that students assign to study support will be used to form categories of description. The aim is to offer a hierarchy of empirically grounded and logically consistent categories of description of the ways in which students experience study support (termed the 'outcome space') The outcome space for each institution can be compared to ascertain both areas of commonality, and of variability, in order to establish internal institutional recommendations, and to extrapolate from this analysis those recommendations that might be generalisable across institutions.

#### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

- 20 mins – Presentation: the structure of the research and the results obtained.
- 25 mins – Discussion based around the following questions:
  - Do the findings resonate with your own experiences / opinions?
  - How can institutions best meet the study support needs of part-time students?

#### **References**

- Marton, F & Booth, S (1997) 'The idea of phenomenography', *Learning and Awareness* Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum
- Prosser, M & Trigwell, K. (1999) *Understanding Learning and Teaching: The experience in Higher Education* Buckingham: O.U.Press