

**Title:**                    **Understanding Students' Prior Experiences and Expectations of Assessment and Feedback**

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## **Abstract:**

### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Appreciate the possible impact that students prior experience of assessment and feedback can have on their learning experience as they make the transition into higher education.
- Identify how an understanding of students' prior experiences and expectations might be used to enhance course and module design to support more effectively the transition into HE.

### **Session Outline**

Yorke (1999) has shown that students whose expectations are not met, are more likely to withdraw from university. It is important therefore in this context to know what students expect and to understand what they experience if university staff are to make appropriate modifications to courses with the aim of improving overall student satisfaction and ultimately retention. Recent research at Sheffield Hallam (Smith and Hopkins (2005), Smith (2005)) and across the sector (Stuyven et al (2002); Beaumont et al (2007)), suggests that the experience of assessment and feedback prior to University is very different from that received during their University career. This means a real gap in expectations through the transition into HE, resulting in poor attainment. Taking as a starting point that students are increasingly consumers of their education, Darlaston-Jones et al (2003) carried out research into what students expect from both academic and administrative staff at university.

The drawback associated with some of these pieces of research is that they have tended to focus on students who are already at university, asking them to remember the expectations they had before arrival. This session will provide the opportunity to share and discuss the initial findings of a research project which focuses on year 13 students in local schools and colleges and mature students, who are about to make the transition to HE study. The project will focus on prior experience and expectations of assessment and feedback and its impact on their learning experience as they make the transition into higher education.

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

Please provide an indication of how the session will be structured and how activities and discussion will be facilitated. For discussion papers please include a few indicative questions which will focus the discussion element.

- Introduction and welcome
- Activity 1: Your thoughts - quick feedback - participants will be asked for their thoughts on student experiences and expectations of assessment and feedback 10 minutes

- Initial research findings and discussion - what impact will this have on the students' learning experience at university? 15 minutes
- Activity 2: Your thoughts - what does this mean for the way in which the transition to higher education is managed? 10 minutes
- Feedback plenary and conclusions 10 minutes

## References

Beaumont, C., O'Doherty, N. and Shannon, L., (2007) *Improving feedback to first year undergraduates*, HEA Conference, Harrogate

Darlaston-Jones, D., Pike, I., Cohen, L., Young, A., Haunold, S. and Drew, N.; (2003) *Are they being served? Student expectations of higher education*. *Issues in Educational Research*, 13, 31-52

Smith, K (2004) 'School to University. An investigation into the experiences of first year students of English at British Universities' , *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 4(3), 304-318.

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Struyven, K., Dochy, F. & Janssens, S. (2002) Students' perceptions about assessment in higher education: a review. [Conference Paper] Joint Northumbria/Earli SIG Assessment and Evaluation Conference: Learning communities and assessment cultures. University of Northumbria at Newcastle, August 28-30. Available at: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002255.htm>.

Yorke, M. (1999) *Leaving Early. Undergraduate non-completion in Higher Education*, Falmer Press, London