Title: Supporting student transition: a labyrinth journey

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Understand how the labyrinth works as a metaphor for journey and transition
- Be aware, through examples, of use of labyrinth events at a variety of HEIs to support students at different stages in their journeys
- Understand how a temporary, low cost labyrinth installation may be used in their own HEI
- Experience a labyrinth walk
- Be aware of further resources and professional development options
- Find the locations of labyrinths in the UK and overseas

Session Outline

The ancient image of the labyrinth is about 4000 years old and has been found in many settings: rock carvings, pottery, Roman mosaic, coins and more. The UK has eight of Europe’s remaining turf labyrinths, where the pattern is cut into the ground. Labyrinths appear across the world, in many faith and cultural contexts: the image is international and has universal appeal. Laid out flat on the ground, a labyrinth provides a quiet, reflective path, a space for exploration. Unlike a maze, a labyrinth has a single convoluted path to the centre and back again: it works as an image for self-discovery rather than confusion and is a powerful metaphor for transition and journey.

Since the 1970s there has been a resurgence of interest in labyrinths; they are to be found in many contemporary contexts (Saward, 2003; Saward and Saward, 2011; Williams, 2010). In addition to permanent installations, it is possible to offer temporary installations, eg. a canvas labyrinth laid out on the floor like a carpet, or a labyrinth made from other materials.

Arising from my National Teaching Fellowship, I have explored the use of labyrinths as a teaching and learning resource, especially as a quiet breathing space for students and staff – time to be in the present – and as a resource to foster reflection and creativity. This quiet time is a valuable restorative space, countering the sense of stress, pressure and haste that is often part of the HE experience. Labyrinths now feature in a growing number of HEIs (Bigard, 2009; Sellers, 2009, 2012; Walker, 2011). This workshop introduces ways in which the labyrinth may be used to support student transition and other aspects of the student journey. There will
be an opportunity to walk a labyrinth and to find out about resources and further development opportunities.

**Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Format</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Welcome and introductions; have you walked a labyrinth? Key points to share</td>
<td>Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>History: Lightning tour of labyrinths around the world</td>
<td>PP Presentation (images by kind permission of Jeff Saward)</td>
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<td>A labyrinth near you? Introduction to the World Wide Labyrinth Locator</td>
<td>Group exploration of web resource</td>
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<td>15 min</td>
<td>Labyrinths and student journeys: Kent’s Labyrinth Project, and other stories</td>
<td>Talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Student Journeys: examples of labyrinth walks to support student transition and reflection</td>
<td>Talk and discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 min</td>
<td>Labyrinth walk, with time to explore supplementary resources</td>
<td>Individual activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Reflection and evaluation; further resources</td>
<td>Discussion, Q and A, information sheet</td>
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<td>Total 90 min.</td>
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**References**


