

**Title:**                   **Supporting student transition: a labyrinth journey**

**Presenter:**           **Jan Sellers**  
University of Kent

### **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

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

### References

- Bigard, M.F. (2009) Walking the labyrinth: An innovative approach to counseling center outreach. In: *Journal of College Counseling*, 12(2), pp137-148. American College Counseling Association
- Saward, J. (2003) *Labyrinths and Mazes of the World: A definitive guide to ancient and modern traditions*. London: Gaia.
- Saward, J. and Saward, K. (2011) Labyrinthos [website]. At: [www.labyrinthos.net](http://www.labyrinthos.net) [accessed 25.10.11]
- Sellers, J. (2009) Exploring the Labyrinth. In: *Educational Developments*. London: SEDA. 10:1, pp15-16.
- Sellers, J. (2012, forthcoming). Quiet Time, Quiet Space: A labyrinth for your university or college. In: Sewell, R., Sellers, J. and Williams, D. (eds) *Working with Labyrinths: Paths for exploration*. Iona: Wild Goose.
- Walker, H. (2011) Creating a labyrinth: a personal and professional journey. In: *Association for University and College Counselling Journal*. March. pp20-23. Lutterworth: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.
- Williams, D. (2010) *Labyrinth: Landscape for the soul*. Iona: Wild Goose.