

**Title:**                   **What works? Student retention and successful first year experience design - lessons from the students**

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

- Consider the impact of the student voice for curriculum design
- Identify the key features of effective practice in first year curriculum design
- Discuss opportunities to support and enhance the student first year experience

#### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

The first year of tertiary level study provides an influential script for the development of an engaged learner. Transition issues at point of entry and the impact of course selection affects individual expectations and levels of commitment. The first few weeks also have much impact on the ability to acclimatise to tertiary level study and to achieve comfortable person-environment fit (Tinto 1993)

The first year requires students to engage with and take responsibility for their learning quickly. Integrated and holistic curriculum planning is a key factor in the successful management of student transition. This workshop aims to facilitate participants' consideration of the key elements involved in the design of the First Year Experience.

As "good teaching means seeing learning through the learners eyes" (Ramsden 1998), the "student voice" can bring valid and valuable perspectives to learning and teaching practice. Using first hand video accounts from students, this workshop will guide participants' through a consideration of the first year from the perspective of lecturer, institution and student. Working in small groups, participants will reflect on, and debate issues of course design in terms of the need to adopt student-centred active learning strategies; integrated study skills, formative assessment and feedback; peer mentoring and learning support. Examples of FYE curriculum design initiatives from the University of Northampton and the Dublin Institute of Technology will be presented for further discussion.

## Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Participants will view the first hand video accounts from students. Case study prompts will be used to structure discussions

Activity	Time
Introduction and overview Context of workshop - background of workshop originating from a one -day FYE event; development of a reflective tool for curriculum design; guiding theoretical principles; hearing the student voice	10 mins
Video	15mins
Prompts/discussions	15mins
Feedback	20mins
Examples of FYE curriculum design initiatives	15mins
Discussion of potential applications	10 mins
Conclusion/direction to further resources	5 mins

## References

Ramsden, P. (1998). *Learning to lead in higher education*. Routledge, London, NY.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition, (2nd ed.)*. University of Chicago Press, Chigago