

**Title:**                    **Student expectations of higher education**

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

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

- Explore quantitative and qualitative data gathered over a three year period on student expectations of Higher Education
- Investigate links between student expectations and their progression and achievement
- Discuss the implications of student expectations for Higher Education provision and our practice within it.

#### **Session Outline**

Key issues to be addressed are:

This paper addresses the conference theme on student transition by exploring student expectations of Higher Education and the implications of these expectations for their engagement and achievement.

Yorke & Longden (2008) examined the links between student expectations, first year experience and drop-out based on 462 completed questionnaires by non-returners. It identified mis-matches in expectations and resulting issues in engagement with University as two of the key factors which made the transition problematic. Meanwhile there has been considerable work internationally on student expectations of HE. The Australian experience dominated the OECD publication *Responding to student expectations* (2002) and there has been more recent publication of data on student expectations on entering one particular Australian University (Crisp et al 2009). In both cases evidence emerged of changing student expectations and the challenges involved in seeking to influence or address these expectations. 'Student preferences and expectations ... are exceedingly complex issues for analysis. ... simple analyses of student expectations should be treated with suspicion.' (James 2002, p.71)

This discussion paper is based on the analysis of data gathered over a three year period at a UK University. New students, logging on to University systems for the first time, have been asked to complete a questionnaire on approaches to study, reflective practice and expectations of Higher Education. We now have over 1000 returns including both

quantitative and qualitative data. Furthermore, we are able to link this data to progression and achievement records to form a picture of how expectations interact with achievement.

This paper will explore:

- what student expectations are on entering University,
- whether changes in student expectations can be identified over a three year period and
- what the relationships are between expectations and progression?

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

Discussion paper [20 min] plus indicative questions for small group discussion [20 min] and final plenary [5 min]:

- Do our findings fit with your experience and expectation?
- Should we shift provision to better address student expectations?
- Should we better educate pre-entry students on what to expect of HE?
- What are the implications of any links between expectations and achievement?
- Will expectations change dramatically over the coming year?

### **References**

Crisp, G., Palmer, E., Turnbull, D., Nettelbeck, T., Ward, L., LeCouteur, A., Sarris, A., Strelan, P., & Schneider, L. (2009) 'First year student expectations: Results from a university-wide student survey', *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 6, 1.

James, R. (2002) 'Students' changing expectations of Higher Education and the consequences of mis-matches with the reality' [p.71-83] in OECD, *Responding to Student Expectations*, OECD

Longden, B. (2006) 'An Institutional Response to Changing Student Expectations and their Impact on Retention Rates', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 28, 2, p. 173-187

Yorke, M. & Longden, B. (2008) *The first year experience of HE in the UK*, HEA