### SNAPSHOTS FROM THE STUDENT LIFECYCLE

### Feeding the student experience into access to HE course development Susannah McKee and Joanna Cooke

## **Foundation Year for access to HE**

Access provision (including FY year) recognised for widening participation (e.g. for mature students, those without grades for direct entry to degree or requiring specific skills (Sanders and Daly, 2013)

Opportunity: 'Second chance education' (Bookalil and Rolfe, 2016) Rich experience WP students bring (Warren, 2002)

Support for: Transition to HE (Christie et al, 2008) Access student 'learner identity' may have been damaged by previous negative experiences in education (James et al, 2015) WP cohorts may be at higher risk of drop out (HEFCE, 2016)

Need for university to adapt in response to diverse cohorts (Zepke and Leach, 2005)

### Extended Degree in Social Sciences and Humanities - London Metropolitan University

Level 3 – 'extended degree year' prepares for entry to level four Social Sciences and Humanities degrees

Average 200 students – September and February starters

Cohort demographic typically WP

Integrated design of content and academic skills

# Aims

To understand the experience of our students at different points in the degree

Feed this data into our course design



Findings

1. The starting point

2. Scaffolding of course content

3. The social aspect of learning

4. Growth and transformation

# 1. The starting point

"I was so nervous, I was thinking, let me see the countdown of how long I can last in this"

"I was scared and reluctant, felt I would be the oldest person in the class"

"Didn't have a lot of options"

### 2. Scaffolding of course content

"The feedback is really important. It has all started to fall into place. [Before the extended degree] no-one really broke down for me how to put an assignment together, ..... how to do research for an assignment, ..... the difference between quant and qual research. "

"After getting good feedback on the first few assignments, I just felt wow, I have done this, and I can go on to do more."

*"The course was like a welcome pack – the first year they throw everything in there."* 

## 3. The social aspect of learning

"If you can find decent class peers, who are serious and driven about what they do, then you team up and exchange ideas and help each other. I can't lie, some of my class peers have been very helpful to me."

"There were other people that had gone through what I was going through or even something worse."

"I can't separate anything from the group now. I just tap into it, [WhatsApp], I don't mind who's there, what age, what culture, what colour, we just gelled."

## 4. Growth and transformation

"I grew more in that year than any of the years before me."

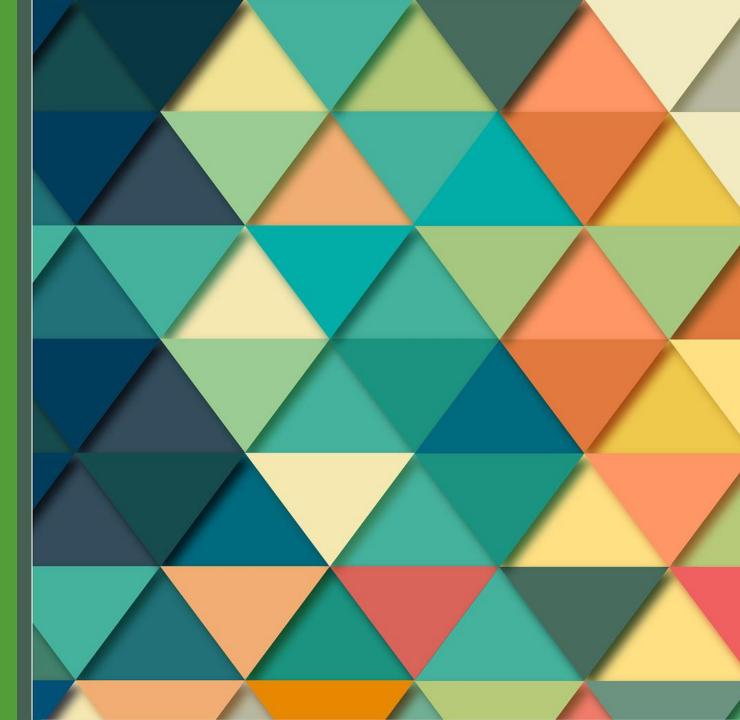
"This is where you really become an adult. This defines where you are going in your life. Your second gateway into finding life.'

"Yeah, it's crazy. I'm just sitting here smiling now – if I think back 8 years ago I was nothing like this. I would not have come in for this interview. I might have been one of those guys sitting out on the stair case doing something a bit naughty....everyone has weaknesses, you are not a freak, you are not this guy who couldn't be saved in education. You just have to save yourself."

# Implications for course design

Lack of choice Sense of community Inclusive

Illeris



### **Emotion/attitude**

### 'Reflecting on Self and Society' module:

- Non-remedial
- Reflexivity and criticality
- Reflect on own strengths, experience and value
- Choice in tasks in assessed reflective portfolio



## Cognition

#### 'Researching discrimination'

- Challenge
- Deconstruction
- Practice
- Transparency



## Individual and Society

Seminar delivery mode

Inclusive assessment diverse tasks incorporating choice, including collaborative

Example: seminar assessment

Peer support groups



## Conclusions and limitations

- Limitations
- Holistic learning
- Key access route to HE
- Sharing current practice



### Selected Bibliography

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