

Document Reference: Retention in Higher Education

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Description:

Higher education brings many benefits to students, employers, the economy and wider society (National Audit Office 2007). Retaining students (full and part time) within higher education through to successful completion of their award is a key strategic agenda of the Grimsby Institute. This Code of Practice takes into account the wide range of activities that can inform the retention agenda including the quality of information, advice and guidance given to prospective and current students, induction events, academic, pastoral and specialist student support mechanisms, attendance, and methods to monitor and review management data. The Code also recognises that higher education students may require a range of collective and individual support services in order to enhance opportunity to achieve academic and personal success.

Version 1.1 (May2013) introduces the following changes with immediate effect:

- Inclusion of reference to UK Quality Code replacing reference to Academic Infrastructure and internal changes.

In using this code of practice other documents may need to be considered:

Document Reference:

QAAd. Higher Education Admissions
QAapi1. Accuracy and Completeness of Published information

For further advice on how the code of practice works, you should contact the Quality and Standards Department.

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Additional information can be obtained by visiting the National Audit Office web site at www.nao.org.uk

*This document is available in alternative forms
on request from the Quality and Standards Department*

1: Introduction

- 1.1 This Code of Practice supports the drive towards promoting the retention of students within a widening participation context.
- 1.2 'Retention' refers to the degree to which the Institute works with students to prevent student drop out/ non completion.
- 1.3 A 'widening participation context' relates to the demographic profile of the Institute's catchment area and student constituency. It refers to the activities and approaches used to work with students from a diverse range of groups that have traditionally been identified as under-represented in higher education.
- 1.4 This code makes clear the 'minimum features' that it expects in relation to a range of processes, practices and interventions that impact issues of student retention.
- 1.5 In bringing together a range of processes relating to retention of students in one document, this code of practice embraces issues of widening participation and student diversity recognising that the 'the student experience' is paramount. These processes include matters relating to:
 - i. information, advice and guidance (IAG)- pre-enrolment, on course and withdrawal;
 - ii. induction and orientation;
 - iii. Attendance;
 - iv. management information (monitoring and reporting of data);
 - v. summer programmes.
- 1.6 The code of practice is underpinned by a range of values and principles which include those of:
 - i. inclusion and integration;
 - ii. social justice;
 - iii. equal opportunities;
 - iv. support and guidance;
 - v. acceptance;
 - vi. student and institutional accountability;
 - vii. availability, accessibility and quality;
 - viii. consistency;
 - ix. impartiality;
 - x. responsiveness;
 - xi.** monitoring, feedback, evaluation and improvement.

2. Information, advice and guidance (IAG)

- 2.1 This section of the code is intended to promote consistency in the range and quality of IAG services available at the Institute.
- 2.2 The Institute is committed to ensuring that its IAG services are available 5 days a week. Appointments for advice are available outside normal working hours where practicable.
- 2.4 The Institute provides 24 hour access to its website for the submission of emails and 24 hour access to an answer-phone service for IAG requests.
- 2.5 Annual monitoring, review and evaluation of the quality of IAG may include methods such as 'mystery shopper/ applicant enquiries, surveys, Institute reports and audits.
- 2.6 The Institute ensures competence of its front line staff to deliver IAG services at the point of a applicant's enquiry, entry to higher education and thereafter.
- 2.7 The Institute ensures that staff are available to provide specialist information (such as for disability needs or information regarding international applications) where practicable including the availability of teaching staff.
- 2.8 This code of practice takes into account the importance of effective information, advice and guidance as a process:
 - i. to promote an applicant's/ student's sense of 'academic preparedness' from pre-enrolment onwards;
 - ii. through which the wider processes of not only supporting entry into learning but also the completion and subsequent progression from learning is promoted;
 - iii. to address and overcome barriers to learning;
 - iv. to support students in making realistic and well informed choices.
- 2.9 The provision of IAG must be impartial and informative of the wider implications of being a student in higher education.

Pre- enrolment

- 2.10 The pre enrollment stage is split into three key points: pre-contract advice and guidance, the interview stage and the offer stage. At the pre-enrolment stage of a prospective student's application into higher education, IAG staff and admissions tutors must ensure that the following information is accessible and should attempt in all instances to promote knowledge and understanding of the:

- i. expected demands for directed and self directed study time;
- ii. levels of personal commitment;
- iii. nature and extent of assessment methods;
- iv. nature and context of the learning environment in higher education;
- v. information on course design, delivery and content;
- vi. pre-enrolment reading lists;
- vii. Likely costs of studying in HE;
- viii. details of the admissions process;
- ix. contact details of the Institute's Admissions department;
- x. availability and nature of support for disability (if appropriate);
- xi. days in which study will occur;
- xii. Access to regulations likely to affect completion and clear instruction regarding regulations and rules, associated with the course, that applicants are likely to find surprising.

On- course

2.11 Throughout the duration of study, there may be points where additional advice and guidance may be beneficial beyond that which is provided by the teaching team e.g. matters relating to finance, accommodation, health and well being, concerns and complaints, careers advice, study support, quality and standards.

2.12 Students are encouraged in the first instance to seek advice and guidance from their programme leader/nominated year tutor or progression coach, however where advice and guidance is insufficient or alternate services are deemed more appropriate, students are in all instances urged to make direct contact with the service best suited to their needs.

2.13 Where additional advice and guidance is required, a range of other services exist:

- i. *Learning Resource Centre*: for matters relating to such issues as submission and collection of assessments, help with finding information;
- ii. *Admissions and Finance*: Enrolment and registration information, applications to the student loans company, finance, council tax exemptions, student's bursaries, change of circumstances details, references;
- iii. *Student Union Officers*: for matters relating to the wider demands of being a student such as sharing views and experiences, managing stress, suggestions for problem solving and managing lack of confidence, balancing work loads, meeting deadlines, seeking general advice, seeking support with complaints;
- iv. *Academic Achievement Coach*: available to deliver study skills workshops to groups or for students to access individual support sessions;

- v. *Progression Coaches*: for matters relating to such issues as advocacy, support for student disability, accommodation, attendance;
- vi. *Institute Counsellor*: for matters relating to a mental health and well-being and personal therapy;
- vii. *Visually Impaired Unit*: for matters relating to academic and holistic support needs in instances where a student has a visual impairment;
- viii. *Study Support Centre*: Including a dyslexia support unit, the centre is available for students who may need assistance in instances of hearing and physical disability ie. for chronic disability and longer term support or short term intervention such as in the case of a broken arm, screening for learning support;
- ix. *Quality and Standards Department*; for matters relating to the provision of Institute feedback regarding its services, all aspects relating to quality and standards, concerns and complaints.

Withdrawal

- 2.16 The Institute recognises that sometimes students are uncertain if they have made the right decision in relation to a chosen pathway of study or sometimes they may decide they wish to withdraw.
- 2.17 Where students feel uncertain about staying on a chosen programme of study students are advised to discuss this with a member of the teaching team, their programme leader, curriculum manager progression coach before withdrawing.
- 2.18 Advice and guidance should always be given regarding the implications for student finance and the limitations on the number of years of study.
- 2.19 Programme leaders must carry out an exit interview (face to face or over the phone) and document reasons for a student withdrawing on Pro-Monitor. This should always investigate possible solutions to problems causing the wish to withdraw.
- 2.20 Where practicable support opportunities will be offered for changing programme of study or mode of attendance (such as full or part time).
- 2.21 Exit interviews-where practicable- must be carried out in a timely fashion and no longer than 10 days after the student has formally notified the Institute of the withdrawal.
- 2.22 Where a student has evidenced a wish to withdraw in writing and subsequently refuses contact the institute will evidence four attempts to make contact using, phone calls, emails and letters.

3. Induction and orientation

- 3.1 The principles underpinning the Institute's induction processes recognise that quality of information provided, student satisfaction and opportunities to enhance student 'preparedness' when entering into higher education is of fundamental importance to retention.
- 3.2 The Institute must deliver a scheduled programme of Institute wide activities commonly referred to as 'Freshers week' at the start of year for new entrants into higher education.
- 3.3 Teaching teams must ensure that a comprehensive programme level induction schedule is administered to each new student cohort (full and part time).
- 3.4 Induction must not occur as a 'one of' event but as planned programme of activity with sufficient time allocated.
- 3.5 As a minimum, the content of induction programmes must include:
 - i. information about how to access wider Institute services and facilities;
 - ii. opportunities to be involved in other events ie. social and sporting events, student union;
 - iii. activities to promote integration and group cohesion ie. 'ice breakers, group activities;
 - iv. library induction;
 - v. study skills information and signposting to the study skills web page;
 - vi. IT entitlement;
 - vii. provision and explanation of programme and module handbooks;
 - viii. an explanation of how formative and summative assessment is to be used on the programme;
 - ix. provision of the assessment schedule (a timetable of all assessment deadlines- formative and summative) and information relation to feedback timescales (see CoP Assessment of Students);
 - x. how to submit assessments, obtaining extensions, late and over-length assessment penalties (see CoP Assessment of Students);
 - xi. an explanation of academic regulations (within programme handbooks) in particular the rules appertaining to absence with good cause from examinations, mitigating circumstances, applications for extensions, penalties for plagiarism;
 - xii. details of how to access codes and policies on the Institute's web site;
 - xiii. timetable information and planned programme delivery;
 - xiv. attendance and punctuality including who to contact in situations of absence;

- xv. an explanation of teaching and learning styles used on the programme (e.g differences between lectures, seminars, workshops, practical work);
 - xvi. an explanation of Personal Development Planning (PDP) activities and how to book 1 to 1 support sessions with tutors and programme leaders;
 - xvii. completion of screening activities for the identification and support of learning disability;
 - xviii. completion of student self assessment measure (week 4);
 - xix. availability of and how to access learning support services including support for disability or general study skills issues;
 - xx. the role of and how to access a progression coaches;
the role and appointment of student representatives (see the Quality handbook section 9.8).
- 3.6 Programme leaders must collect, analyse and review student feedback upon completion of any induction programme: this must be available for audit and review purposes (see appendix 4- induction feedback proforma).
- 3.7 In instances of late enrolment (including induction for those students gaining approval for direct entry onto an advanced stage within a programme), students must receive an induction programme organised by the programme team.
- 3.8 The Institute will monitor and review the delivery of induction programmes annually within its HE audits described in the CoP periodic review.

4. Attendance

- 4.1 Attendance has a direct relationship to the likelihood of a student's success in higher education.
- 4.2 This code supports the principle that the quality of staff student interactions and the effectiveness of academic and pastoral support and guidance have a direct relationship to attendance and retention. Staff must at all times work to promote appropriate staff-student relations.
- 4.3 The Institute's attendance threshold for all HE programmes (unless specified otherwise by professional or awarding bodies) is 90%.
- 4.4 Tutors and programme leaders must monitor on a regular basis student attendance and report to their progression coaches if a student is absent for 2 subsequent sessions.

- 4.5 In instances where a staff member raises concern about a student's attendance, the Institute may contact a student by phone a student at home to discuss the absence further. This should be viewed as supportive to solve the problems causing lack of attendance. This call and the proposed solutions should be logged on Pro-Monitor.
- 4.6 In instances where unapproved absence is identified to the progression coaches and initial support has been rejected or has not been successful in ensuring attendance the following system will be implemented.
- i) A first stage written warning (see appendix 1)
Issued when a student is absent for 2 weeks without approval/ or attendance below 90% for a module or programme;
 - ii) A second stage written warning (see appendix 2)
Issued if a student who has previously received a first stage warning continues with poor attendance/ has failed to respond to or meet targets set at a first stage warning within the specified timescale;
 - iii) A third and final stage notification (see appendix 3)
Issued if a student who has previously received a second stage warning continues with poor attendance or whom has failed to respond to or meet targets set at a second stage warning within the specified timescale.
 - iv) Withdrawal from studies
Completed if a student has not achieved the targets set at third stage notification
- 4.7 Programme teams must be vigilant in their monitoring of attendance at key points with the academic year such as after the first assessment period and at the beginning of semester 2 when some students may not return.
- 4.8 Non submission of assignments can sometimes be related to poor attendance and threaten student retention. Module tutors must ensure that students who have failed to submit on time without approved extensions are immediately contacted preferably with a follow up call by the progression coaches.
- 4.9 The Institute recognises that there are key points in the academic year during when attendance in class may not be required, these periods include scheduled half term weeks/ 'reading weeks' and the mid year assessment periods which normally occur in the period immediately after the Christmas break (before semester 2) and towards the end of May (end of semester 2).

4.10 Scheduled periods of formal absence such as reading or assessment weeks can be potentially vulnerable periods for some students who may struggle with assessments or think about dropping. Schools must make arrangements with students for individual support sessions as appropriate or make an academic member of staff available during these periods.

4.11 Retention between academic years is recognised as important. Twice during each academic year destinations data will be collected for all HE students. Progression Coaches will discuss with each student their plans for the following year. Where students are in doubt support will be organised by the school to try to secure progression. All actions must be logged in Pro-Monitor.

5. Submission of Work

5.1 Submission of work has a direct relationship to the likelihood of a student's success in higher education.

5.2 In order to continue on programme students must make submissions for assessments. This CoP applies for all degrees studied at the Grimsby Institute and sits outside of exam board regulations.

5.3 i) A first stage written warning (see appendix 4)
Issued when a student has failed to submit 3 pieces of assessments warning that this is likely to affect achievement and that the next submission should be made.

ii) A second stage written warning (see appendix 5)
Issued if a student who has previously received a first stage fails to submit the next piece of work;

iii) A third and final stage notification (see appendix 6)
Issued if a student who has previously received a second stage warning and does not make the next submission.

iv) Withdrawal from studies
Completed if a student has failed to submit 5 pieces of work

5.4 At all stages the Progression Coach for the area must check that mitigating circumstances have not been submitted for the assignments before sending out the letter.

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