

Pinning the Butterfly – Improving Retention and Achievement of Entry Level Students

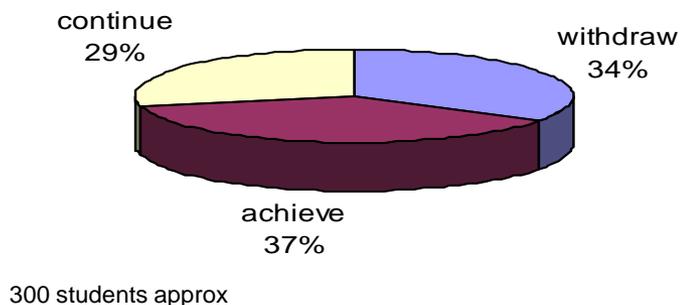
Why are we investigating this research question?

- to analyse the links between the statistics, behaviour and performance of entry level learners
- to enhance the effectiveness of our delivery to entry level learners
- to explore tutors and current and ex-students' views about their educational experiences
- to critically evaluate those responses and patterns

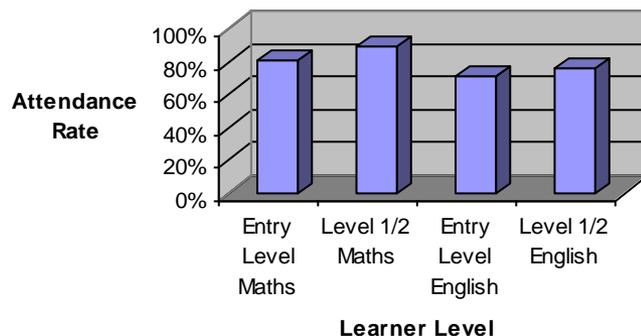
Data collection and analysis

- Analysis of past and current local student data
- Interviews with current and withdrawn students
- Tutor survey
- Implementation of revised initiatives
- Partner group consultation

Entry Level Student Outcomes 2010-11



Learner Attendance Rates 2010-2011



Entry Level Student Key Quotes

Learners;

- 'a smaller class means you can get more time with the tutor and feel safe to learn'
- 'I have much more confidence outside the class – even asking for help in the shop'
- 'really feel as though I am moving slowly forward all the time'
- 'I only left the class because work suddenly changed my hours'

Tutors;

- 'entry learners need their knowledge reinforcing and plenty of different activities'
- 'they need to trust and feel part of a group, then they will start to progress'

Findings

- 1) Levels of withdrawal from entry level literacy classes were higher than any other class.
- 2) Students valued the smaller class size and the subsequent security and trust at entry level.
- 3) Lower level numeracy classes had similar or higher attendance figures than higher levels.
- 4) Tutors stated that the regular reinforcement of learning and a sense of group belonging were critical to entry learners performance and retention.
- 5) Summative assessment needs to become continual, or termly.
- 6) Family reasons or work issues were the main reasons quoted by learners for withdrawal.
- 7) Project-based content on common learner themes would be welcomed by learners.
- 8) Need for increased support for entry learners during early stages of learning programme.

Recommendations

- 1) Restructure initial assessment sessions to show greater acknowledgement of learner lives and interests
- 2) Explore a range of realistic but creative ideas to enhance attendance figures
- 3) Summative assessment to show flexibility in moving towards a continual or termly model
- 4) Increase categories of class allowing entry learners to progress at a sustainable pace, in compliance with funding limitations
- 5) Content within class to be more project-based investigating common learner issues
- 6) Implement change, then continue to reassess

Strengths of the project: The project explored areas where internal research had taken place, so initial interest was very much in place. We were able to use, adapt and build on this work.

Limitations of the project: In terms of monitoring entry level learner behaviour, the time periods involved did not allow for any real impact to be shown or evaluated.

Project Researchers

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