

Widening Participation:
Supporting Student Nurses from Diverse Backgrounds

Final Report – March 2007

Centre for Research in Nursing and Midwifery Education
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European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences



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Appendices

This report is supported by a number of Appendices found at the back of this report:

- A Project design and methods
- B Student demographics from focus groups
- C Interview and focus group topic guides
- D Workshop Programme
- E Staff toolkit (extended resource)
- F EIHMS Leaving reasons
- G Additional Statistical analysis

Preface by the research team

This report highlights issues and current practices relating to the needs of a diverse student body and gives recommendations on how the European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (EIHMS) and the University of Surrey can strengthen current educational provision and support structures in relation to working with a diverse student population.

The research team also undertook a large scale mapping exercise which permitted us to present a detailed picture of the nursing student population for the first time. These data are complemented by stakeholders' perceptions and feelings (students, academic teachers and practice staff) revealed during the research process. The participants' willingness to share their experiences in such an honest way is to be congratulated. In particular, this project has given them a unique opportunity to voice concerns and highlight issues about widening participation and diversity.

Since this research was carried out, there have been a number of developments within the EIHMS. For example, the mentor preparation programme is currently being reformulated and is building on the findings and learning from this project. There is also a project underway called 'Supporting Learning in Practice' (SLIP), which is exploring how practice support can be strengthened for all student groups. There is a strong commitment to enhancing the student experience and to supporting academic and support staff in their role in order to build on and consolidate current achievements and promote further excellence.

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Glossary

BTEC	Business & Technology Education Council
CFP	Common Foundation Programme
EBL	Enquiry Based Learning
EIHMS	European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualifications
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
NHS	National Health Service
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
R&D	Research and Development
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Services
UniS	University of Surrey
WP	Widening Participation

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1. Introduction

This report describes the research and development project 'Widening Participation: Supporting Student Nurses from Diverse Backgrounds', which was undertaken by the Centre for Research in Nursing and Midwifery Education at the University of Surrey between August 2005 and July 2006.

The project explored the impact of the Government's Widening Participation agenda. The definition (Kennedy 1997) of widening participation, adopted by the project, highlights the importance of ensuring success and support for the students while at University.

We must widen participation not simply increase it. Widening participation means increasing access to learning and providing opportunities for success and progression to a much wider cross-section of the population...

The groups of students (often referred to as 'non-traditional' students) that are being targeted for participation and that have previously been under-represented in higher education are (as described in the Government White Paper 'The future of Higher Education 2003):

- mature students (over 21)
- first in family to go to higher education
- lower socio-economic groups
- coming from low participation neighbourhoods
- having non-traditional entry qualifications (e.g. Access courses)
- ethnic minorities
- special needs (for example physical disability)

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¹ For further information and definition of these groups see: http://www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/0405/participation_definitions.htm

The University of Surrey has a well developed strategy for widening participation (UniS, 2004) and supports a programme of on-going research and development projects. However, it was found that there was limited information within schools and departments regarding how so called 'non-traditional' students were distributed across the different programmes and what their specific support needs were. This project proposed to map and evaluate how current widening participation strategies had been implemented within the European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (EIHMS).

In addition, evidence supports the fact that in recent years the demographic characteristics of nursing students entering Higher Education has changed. 'Non-traditional' students have been given opportunities to enter nursing through new entry pathways. However, the impact of these changes appears not to have been evaluated (Kevern et al 1999). Kevern et al called for more qualitative research aimed at investigating the social and academic experiences of non-traditional nursing students, in order to develop a more targeted support system. Other research has pointed out that the growth in student numbers within higher education has indeed created a more diverse student body with different backgrounds, cultures, expectations and needs which remains relatively unexplored (Glen 2002).

Against this backdrop, the project investigated student retention and progression across the European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences undergraduate and pre-registration nursing programmes of professional preparation with a view to enhance the student experience and to support teaching staff in their professional role. A one-year project plan was developed in order to complete the work and meet project aims.

The overarching aims and outcomes of this project were to:

- map how non-traditional students are distributed across programmes (i.e. Diploma and Degree) and the different branches of nursing
- raise awareness of widening participation requirements among EIHMS school staff
- produce an EIHMS specific widening participation toolkit for the staff and disseminate this through workshops
- ultimately minimise student drop-out rates for all groups of students

The following questions guided the project:

Progression and achievement

1. How can support mechanisms be improved to maximise achievements for all groups of students?
2. Is there a need for targeted support aimed at 'non-traditional' students and if so, what format should this support take?
3. At what stage of the programmes should support be targeted?

Completion and attrition

4. Is there a need for targeted strategies/support mechanisms aimed at 'non-traditional' students?
5. How can learning/teaching approaches and support mechanisms be strengthened across the curriculum to increase completion rates for all groups of students?

Report overview

Section 1 introduces the rationale for this project and identifies gaps in current knowledge and research, as well as listing the aims and objectives. Section 2 expands further on some of the key policy and research literature. Section 3 describes the project design and methodology. Section 4 presents a summary of the outcomes and findings from the analysis of student demographic data as well as linking widening participation performance indicators with data on student attrition. Section 5 presents the findings from the

interviews and focus groups with university teachers, students and practice staff. Finally sections 6 and 7 discuss the project findings, its implications and provide recommendations aimed specifically at the European Institute of Health and Medical Sciences. The findings and recommendations do however have wider reaching implications which can be transferred to other professions and faculties within Higher Education (HE). A toolkit for staff can be found at the end of this report. The report is supported by a number of appendices which can be found at the back of this report.

2. Background

2.1 The national and local policy context

Widening participation (WP) has been a major area in Higher Education and a priority of the Government over recent years. The Government wants to see that 50% of all 18-30 year olds have the opportunity to benefit from higher education by 2010 (DfES 2003). In addition, the Government's White Paper on the future of higher education stressed the need for more flexibility in courses, to meet the needs of a more diverse student body and to try to close the social class gap in entry to higher education.

Widening access and improving higher education participation is also a very important policy area of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The aim of their WP policy has been to help HE institutions increase the numbers of under-represented groups being recruited, retained and successfully progress through higher education. The Action on Access team, which coordinates the Council's widening participation activities, produced a strategy and good practice guide for widening participation (HEFCE 2001) which included case-studies with examples of good practice on how to attract and support under-represented groups.

The University of Surrey's own widening participation strategy has the following key features:

- Raising aspirations and awareness with non-traditional students
- Facilitating access to courses and programmes at the University of Surrey
- Facilitating progression to university for students with non-traditional entry qualifications
- Supporting retention and progression at the University
- Supporting staff at the University

There are additional widening participation policy drivers distinct to healthcare education, which focus on ensuring that healthcare staff mirrors the demographics of the population that it serves. The National Health Service (NHS) Plan (Department of Health, 2000) promised improvements to the NHS through, for example, investment in frontline staff and increasing flexibility in staff education and particularly widening the nursing entry gate.

2.2 The needs of diverse student body

Evidence suggests that students from diverse backgrounds and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds present challenges for educators, as they might not be aware of students' unique needs (Zuzelo 2005). This research highlighted the need for role-models, as well as having educators with different cultural and racial backgrounds may increase feelings of isolation among students. The research also suggested that universities have a moral obligation to examine attrition rates to determine whether disadvantaged students are less likely to succeed. The authors stress that if these groups of students have been encouraged to apply, universities have an obligation to support students throughout the curriculum.

Smith et al (2004) found extra demands on tutors' personal time while supporting 'non-traditional' nursing students on a part-time

programme. Some tutors in this evaluation found that they had to provide extra support to these students and attributed this to pressures generated by balancing programme, family and often paid employment.

Similar, but perhaps more critical views were raised in another study which claimed that HEIs are facing challenges because there are complexities maintaining quality of the learning experiences whilst widening participation. It was claimed that new types of students may be costly to support as they tend not to fit into a system which was designed for the majority (Gutteridge 2001). This author also claimed that students of today arrive at HE with limited life skills in, for example, financial management, discipline and reliability, and this places greater demands on academic staff.

2.3 Attrition and outcome studies

Houltram (1996) predicted relationship between age, mode of entry and outcomes at the end of the common foundation programme (CFP). Similarly, Kevern et al (1999) investigated the relationship between nursing student characteristics and academic achievement and found the highest proportion of students withdrawing had entered with either Business & Technology Education Council (BTEC) or through Access courses. Highest CFP completion rates came from students with at least 2 A-levels. The authors claimed that nursing offers 'added value' for non-traditional students and linked this to work which has considered organisational factors of attrition. They also stressed the importance of nurse lecturers' pastoral role as a retention strategy. Further work was called for in relation to the roles of nurse lecturers working with non-traditional students.

Action on Access (2003) investigated six UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which performed well in widening participation and retention and attempted to identify factors that had contributed to that

success. Significant factors that improved the success of non-traditional students included:

- HEI climate being supportive and friendly (for example sustained commitment to student experience, sense of ‘belonging’)
- Emphasis on support and formative assessment early on in programme
- Recognising importance of social dimensions
- Recognising that pattern of student engagement in HE was changing (increasing part-time work by students, role of personal tutor)

Further factors that appeared to affect retention included HEIs not making maximum use of student data (i.e. demographic links to withdrawal). Another key barrier was described as the level of commitment of all University staff both to the philosophy of WP and to supporting the success of students from diverse backgrounds. In addition, according to policy, HEIs did not tag or label WP students and this made it difficult to analyse effectiveness of new WP policies.

3. Project design and methodology

The project used a mixed method three-phased design, applying both quantitative and qualitative methods to reach its aims. The first phase involved the collection of student demographic data, and key widening participation variables were collected and analysed. The second phase, when key stakeholders were consulted, was of a more exploratory nature. As we have shown in the background section, there was limited information and knowledge available about the needs of a diverse student body, so questioning was more open-ended and exploratory. The third phase involved the development of a tool-kit for staff and drew from the literature, the research findings from phases 1 and 2, as well as a workshop held with academic staff.

For further information and details on methodology, samples and methods refer to Appendix A at the back of this report.

4. Findings: Demographic profile of students and statistical analysis

4.1 Introduction

One of the aims of this project was to map how non-traditional students are distributed across the programmes. The project also aimed to investigate the correlation between demographic background of students and attrition. In order to do so, a minimum data set was established on the basis of key diversity variables/widening participation indicators. Analysis was then undertaken based on the 993 students enrolled on nursing diploma and degree courses in EIHMS between September 2002 and September 2004 (cohorts in sample are listed in methodology section, Appendix A).

4.2 Results

a) *Widening participation indicators*
(note: student data collected at start of programmes and demographics are self-reported)

- Ethnic origin
 - 76 % (n=755) were white (British, Irish and other white background)
 - 19 % (n=175) were black (Black British – Caribbean/African)
 - 1 % (n=10) were Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)
 - 5 % (n=53) had other background (mixed, ‘other’, other Asian ethnic background)
- Gender:
 - 90 % (n= 898) were female
 - 10 % (n=95) were male

- **Disability:**
93 % (n=926) had no known disability
4 % (n=41) had dyslexia
3 % (n=26) had other disability (hearing impairment, diabetes, epilepsy etc.)
- **Age:**
32 % (n=318) were 20 years of age and under at the start of the programme
31 % (n=311) were aged 21 – 30 years
23 % (n=227) were aged 31 – 40 years
14 % (n=137) were aged 41 and over
- **Highest Entry qualification**

Table 2: Highest Entry qualification

<i>Highest Entry qualification</i>	Percent/ frequency
HE qualification (UK first degree, credits or post-graduate)	13% (n=134)
GCE A-level/A-level equivalent qualification, NVQ/SVQ level 3	49% (n=487)
Access course	20% (n= 196)
GCSE/O-levels qualification. only: SCE O grades and stand grades	6% (n=63)
Other qualification (ex. other non-UK qualification. level not known)	6% (n=58)
No formal qualification (ex. APEL or mature students with experience)	0.4% (n=4)
Missing data	5% (n=51)

b) Additional information

- **Programme**
67% were on the Adult Diploma Programme
7% were on Child Diploma Programme
12% were on Mental Health Diploma Programme
10% were on Adult Degree Programme
4% were on Child Degree Programme

- **Attrition**
81.3% of students had either completed programme, still on programme or were interrupted
18.7% of students had dropped out (attrition)
- **Leaving reason**
Data was collected on the code (leaving reason) that is attributed to students as they leave programmes. For the results refer to Appendix F.

c) Cross-tabulating attrition with widening participation indicators

One of the aims of this project was to map student demographic data across the pre-registration programmes. We also wanted to investigate if and how attrition was related to student demographic data. Attrition was mapped against the widening participation indicators used for the project and the outputs of the analysis are presented below. (Tables 3 – 6 below²).

Table 3: Ethnic origin: attrition rate within sub-groups

Ethnic Origin	Drop out rates within sub-groups (attrition)
White (British, Irish, other mixed background)	18.5% (n=138)
Black (Caribbean, African, other black background)	18.2% (n=30)
Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)	50.0%* (n=5)
Total (average attrition whole sample)	18.8% (n=173)

Table 3 cross-tabulated ethnic origin with attrition rates. The student groups from white and black ethnic origins were found to have attrition rates close

² Complete datasets were not available for all respondents, therefore totals are not consistent.

to average for the whole sample (between 18-19%). The attrition rate within the sub-group of students with Asian ethnic minority had attrition rates of 50%. However, it must be considered that there were only a total of 10 students that had reported having Asian ethnic background, therefore results must be treated with caution.

Table 4: Age: attrition rates within sub-groups

Age	Drop out rates within sub-groups (attrition)
Up to 20 Years	26.9%* (n=83)
Age 21 - 30	18.0% (n=55)
Age 31 - 40	12.6% (n=28)
Age 41 and over	11.9% (n=16)
Total (average attrition whole sample)	18.7% (n=182)

* statistically significant

Table 4 investigates the link between age and attrition. We can see that in the youngest age-grouping (student up to 20 years) the attrition rate is nearly 27%. As students get older, the attrition rate decreases. The grouping of students over 41 years sees the lowest rate of around 12% compared to the average of 18.7%.

Table 5: Disability: attrition rates within sub-groups

Disability	Drop out rates within sub-groups (attrition)
No Disability	19.2% (n=174)
Disability	12.1% (n=8)
Total	18.7% (n=182)

Table 5 investigates the link between disability and attrition and shows that the students with disability (students who had given data to registry at the start of programme) had lower attrition – around 12% compared to the average of nearly 19%.

Table 6: Entry qualifications: attrition rates within sub-groups

Entry Qualifications	Drop out rates within sub-groups (attrition)
HE Qualification	15.9% (n=21)
GCE A-level/A-Level equivalent qualifications	20.8% (n=99)
Access course	10.9% (n=21)
GCSE/O-levels qualification only	32.8%* (n=20)
Other Qualification	19.0% (n=11)
No formal qualification	25.0% (n=1)
Not known/sought	40.0% (n=2)
Total	18.8% (n=175)

* Statistically significant

Table 6 above explores the relationship between entry qualifications and attrition. For the students who entered University on Access courses, the attrition rates were comparatively low – close to 11%. High levels of attrition were found within the group of students who entered with GCSE/O-levels only. Here, attrition reached nearly 33%.

Additional statistical analysis in the form of logistic regression can be found in Appendix G.

5. Findings: Interviews and focus groups with students, academic teachers and practice staff

This section brings together the findings and key themes emerging from phase two of this study when key stakeholders were consulted. The following data collection was carried out:

1. Nine individual interviews with *tutors and lecturers* from the EIHMS (referred to in the text as ‘teachers’)
2. Three focus groups with pre-registration *nursing students* (‘non-traditional’)
3. Two focus groups with *practice staff* (at the time on the mentor preparation programme, but having had experience of supporting students while on placements)

5.1 Investigating the needs of non-traditional students

Introduction

The academic teachers and the practice staff were asked to identify the different student groups which they taught and supported in the academic setting. They were also asked to describe the learning, academic and other needs characteristic for each group. In addition, teachers and practice staff were asked to describe how current programmes and student support structures, in their experiences, met the needs of a diverse student body. The following open-ended question was posed: ‘Can you describe the different student groupings and their needs for support?’. The teachers and practice staff were allowed to freely explore and define the different groups of students, in effect developing a ‘taxonomy’ of student groupings. The following student groupings emerged during discussions³:

1. young A-level students
2. having university degree (first two groupings not discussed in this report as considered ‘traditional’ student)
3. mature
4. ethnic minorities/different cultural groups
5. having English as second language
6. sponsored healthcare assistants (NHS staff paid by healthcare trust whilst training)
7. entering HE with non-traditional entry qualifications (for example, access courses)
8. having a disability

The students in the focus groups were asked to describe their experiences on the programme and their needs of support. A number of themes (data driven) emerged from triangulating the interview and focus group data from students, academic and practice staff. These findings informed the development of the staff toolkit as they highlight issues that are directly related to the needs of non-traditional students. The themes are presented and discussed below and focus on areas and issues which have the potential to be strengthened and developed within current programme provision.

a) Lack of academic role models

The lack of role models for the students from diverse backgrounds within the academic setting was described by the teachers to be of concern and related to:

1. Lack of teachers from ethnic minority groups
2. A majority of teachers having middle class background
3. A majority of teachers being middle-aged and older

These three dimensions were described as inter-related and not specific to nursing, but an issue that many other UK universities encounter. The following quotes from teachers illustrate the difficulty:

³ It is important to note that the teachers themselves described that this is not a way to categorise or ‘pigeonhole’ students.

The other thing is they'll be saying for widening participation you need to widen the participation of the staff, you need to widen their backgrounds, rather than having all white middle classes (tutor 5, p. 18).

Another teacher who was in her early thirties explained how she turned to the more mature fellow teachers for advice and guidance on understanding the needs of mature students. However, when she sometimes struggled to understand the needs of foreign ethnic minority students, the same support network was not available among the colleagues. She explained:

Whereas with foreign students, we don't have that kind of support network, suppose, amongst the staff to be able to address any specific issues (tutor 4, p. 12).

It was also highlighted how some of the younger students had commented in class on how much they enjoyed being taught by younger tutors:

I have had students say to me, 'it's really nice to have someone of your age, because we feel that we can relate to you' (tutor 4, p. 7).

b) Lacking knowledge about National Health System and British culture

It was illustrated how some students that were educated and brought up outside the UK sometimes appeared to be struggling to grasp the set-up and organisation of the National Health Service and to navigate their way around British society. One teacher explained that assumptions about students' previous knowledge and understanding could put some at a disadvantage:

I guess some of the things we say, or put on OHPs, and things, have a thousand unwritten assumptions in them, which, depending on how long and how well the person has navigated their way around British society and so on, the services, some

of those assumptions will be in place and some aren't (tutor 7, p. 8).

Therefore, all students are not on a 'level playing field' when they start the course and some students can be disadvantaged due to a lack of understanding and knowledge. One way described by one of the tutors to deal with this concern was to have an 'orientation to the NHS and British culture' at the start of programmes.

c) Students having different learning preferences

This section relates to the needs of both some of the ethnic minority groups that completed their schooling abroad, but also to some of the mature students who went to school in the UK twenty to thirty years ago. This mature student also described how she sometimes felt disadvantaged because of her mature status:

There tends to be a little bit of an attitude 'well, that's life', thinking that because I'm mature I've got life experiences and therefore it's a case of get on with it.

Interviewer: Is that support both in practice and with your academic work you feel like that?

Both really. With the academic I think there's, being a mature student, when I was at school things were a lot different. I think we could actually do with more help because the way things are done now are obviously a hell of a lot different than 20-30 years ago (student 1, focus group 3, p. 7).

Similarly, this teacher described how some of the ethnic minority students struggled to adjust to learning and teaching approaches in the UK, which can for example place demands on the student to be more self-critical. The following quote illustrates how having different learning styles can lead to confrontation between students and tutors in the classroom:

A lot of it I think is because of different learning styles, different forms of traditional education ... a different experience of education, much more didactic teaching. The need to progress possible ethnocentric approaches.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

It's possible that some of the work that we do from reflective practice, for example, I say this from student feedback really. There's a lot of emphasis on reflective practice, but it may be very ethnocentric when we do that. You know, people have told me in essence 'I've come here to demonstrate that I can succeed and do this well. How dare you ask me to identify my limitations' (tutor 1, p. 8).

d) Assessment disadvantage

Relating closely to students' different learning preferences and highlighted by teachers as potentially needing attention is the way students are assessed. One particular aspect that emerged was that students from some foreign countries are not familiar with reflective writing which is used within 'portfolios', the dominant form of assessment on all nursing programmes at EIHMS. In addition, students can be disadvantaged in the practice assessment because they might have what was described as 'different cultural attitudes'. These teachers explained:

I mean, we have quite a lot of our pre-registration assessments in the portfolio are done through reflection and reflective writing. It isn't something that they are particularly trained to do as children. I don't think culturally they're trained to do it ... There's not a level playing field for all the students, we need to get them to that point where they can all know reflecting, what we're asking of them and I feel that perhaps they're

disadvantaged there, I would say (tutor 3, p. 3).

The risk may be that they might be disadvantaged in terms of what they're assessed in. The student may be disadvantaged in their practice assessment because they might be perceived as having different attitudes to their work (tutor 1).

The second quote related to a student who did not look her mentor in the eyes while in practice and the mentor phoned the university saying that the student was not interested or engaging fully in the work. However, when later speaking to this student she said that in her home country it was respectful not to look your superiors in the eye. This matter links closely with the following theme 'cultural differences in practice'.

e) Cultural differences in practice

The practice staff explained that there was potential for them to misinterpret the behaviour of students from different cultures, and that this could lead to situations which could have been prevented. One mentor explained:

I've come across students that appear to be uninterested, appear to be not picking up the information but I think it's a cultural difference that you're not necessarily interpreting that accurately (practitioner focus group 2).

In addition, it was felt that as a consequence of lacking knowledge about cultural differences some practice staff might place students at a disadvantage. As this nurse explained:

They still demonstrate that they want to learn and they still demonstrate that they are able to learn, but your initial perceptions about them can sort of put you on a feeling that they're not that

interested and that disadvantages students when a mentor feels that they're not interested even if they are. And because of that you don't invest as much in them (practitioner focus group 2).

As a result of the lack of understanding of cultural differences, the practice staff sometimes felt an inability to meet the needs of students. This nurse felt that she did not have the appropriate training to support these students in practice:

I find that difficult. I don't necessarily feel enough, well equipped to provide the right lead really, to give them what they need really (practitioner focus group 2).

f) Distribution of ethnic groups across placement areas

It appears that some placement localities or healthcare trusts attract higher numbers of some ethnic group students. The data offers two main suggestions as to why this might be occurring. The first reason given by the participants were that some practice placement areas are closer to London and therefore might attract larger student numbers from black communities, many of whose families may live there. The second explanation is more complex as it appears that a relatively high proportion of black students are placed in [x] locality. The reason for this was perceived to be that students local and brought up in the area, were aware of the long commute to this healthcare trust. This teacher explained what appeared to be going on, albeit unconsciously:

Because I don't think the [x] locality is the most, the favourite place for any student to be, because of the commuting to here, so therefore students who come here, UK students will know that if they're going to be here on the campus, they might as well be with a local locality so they don't have to use their car. So any students who are

coming that are not in the know, they're coming straight from [country]. (tutor 5, p. 4).

This university teacher continued to explain that some black students were also finding it difficult to integrate in this particular area, as the population did not match their cultural and ethnic background. This could potentially lead to students feeling isolated:

[x] is very white middle or upper middle class private schools area and so on, so it might be that some of the students have difficulty adjusting (tutor 5, p. 4).

g) Assertiveness skills: building self-esteem and self-confidence

This theme relates to what the teachers described as a need to support 'non-traditional' students building self-esteem and self-confidence. It was often related to mature students and those with non-traditional entry qualifications. There was a need to assure them and make them feel they 'deserve a place' on the programme.

The data from the students confirm the importance of having assertiveness skills, in order for them to access the support that is available both in the academic setting and while on practice placements. The understanding of one of the students was that in order to get help by tutors and module organisers within the academic setting, they had to initiate it themselves. However, she also expressed some doubt as to how to go about exercising this help-seeking behaviour. She said:

I think the support systems are there but it's almost as though we have to initiate it which I think is fair enough because they're not going to know what's going on in your mind unless you say something. So I think, it is there but you just need to know how to get to that (student focus group 3, p. 6).

Other students explained how they found it helpful when their personal tutors guided them to build assertiveness skills in preparation for practice. The teachers were telling students to ‘push themselves forward’ in order to access learning opportunities in practice. In addition, students (mainly first year) described how they sometimes felt intimidated and not confident enough to ask questions in large lecture halls. The teachers described how they could help to develop these students’ assertiveness skills through reassuring them that they had valuable contributions to make from their life experiences. This type of ‘confidence boosting’ can be used as a strategy both in the classroom and within the one-to-one tutoring relationship. Teachers also felt that students willingness to ask and access help, may be affected by cultural background. This teacher explained:

I think that’s very important that we identify the mature students who perhaps need a bit of a boost in relation to their self esteem and really reassuring them that they have a valuable contribution to make in relation to sharing with other group members, their peers (tutor 6, p. 4).

h) Need for correct pre-course information

An additional issue that emerged in the student focus groups related to information provided to students before they start on the programmes. The following quote is from a student who was struggling with finances and who had not been given correct information about childcare allowances at the time of application and was now close to withdrawing from the programme. She explained:

I don’t think the university, they’re recruiting students but they’re not kind of advising them beforehand. Look, if they said to Pete ‘you’re going into university accommodation then it will be noisy’ and giving him information like that, giving me information about finance, it just seems like once

you’re here it’s almost too late. Well it is too late (1st year student, mature, first in family. Focus group 1, p. 9).

This student’s experience highlights that the need for correct information at the time of application and interview is perhaps even more important for non-traditional students. In addition, the students tend to come from families with no tradition of higher education. Therefore, they may have little or no information about what to expect of university life. The type of information the students requested more details on before the course started were:

- childcare /childcare allowance
- accommodation
- bursaries and student grants
- shopping (especially where to find cheap groceries)

The teachers explained that such information is in fact provided to the students at the time of recruitment and interview. On reflection, it was considered that perhaps some students do not take on board such detailed information until they start the programmes and the realities of student life was fully appreciated.

i) Changing family dynamics

Learning has the potential to change peoples’ lives. The teachers highlighted this issue as needing consideration in relation to non-traditional students, particularly coming from lower socio-economic groups and from families with no tradition of higher education. The teachers talked about the fact that some students had gone through divorce, sometimes influenced by their new university student status:

It’s very hard to judge, but it’s almost as if they’re from lower socio-economic groups ... and they’ve come in and they’re often very anxious because I think they see nursing as something that’s prestigious. Their family are looking up to them doing it, they struggle

with the academic work and they struggle with the changes it causes to family. I think often the dynamics of family changes, sometimes I think relationships go through difficulties when they come on the course either because the women feel more empowered ... I've certainly come across girls who have got divorced or separated from their partners, difficulties because they're on the course (tutor 5, p. 3).

The above response highlights problems particularly relevant for 'women returners' to education and raises questions about how and if we can support these kinds of students in relation to their often newly found position in the family. How far can, for example, personal tutors support these students in the unfortunate events of family crisis and when do personal tutors refer students to university counselling services. This concern also relates closely with the next section discussing academic role boundaries.

j) Academic support boundaries

This section highlights the question of what appropriate levels of support should be for students who struggle academically. The tutors described how some sponsored healthcare assistants and other students sometimes struggle academically and need higher levels of support and input from tutors in order to pass assignments. Student essays might go to 'third retrieval' and module organisers and personal tutors offer additional support with reading and correcting numerous drafts of assignments. This teacher described that unclear academic support boundaries and variable levels of support provided by academic teachers can carry a risk:

They tend to come to the module organisers, the ones who teach on the module. But then you see, we're not automatons, we're all individuals and so some people will give a little bit more support than others, and some will say 'I'm not

really meant to see it [draft of assignment] three times, but run it by me.'

Interviewer: You want those on your module to do well

Well, of course you do. Also, or else, the danger, a real danger is that people are so overloaded you just think 'This is borderline, I'll pass it' because if you pass it, then there doesn't have to be a retrieval and there doesn't have to be a tutorial. So actually, do you see? Now, how does that square with academic standards? Obviously, I'm telling you, I would never do it, but other people might (tutor 8, p. 18).

The discussion about academic support boundaries was placed within the widening participation agenda relating it to the described extended support needed for some of the sponsored healthcare assistants, as well as students entering university with non-traditional entry qualifications. Perhaps it could be placed also within the context of the content and level of support that is provided for students who are generally struggling academically. It appears from the data that tutors do provide variable levels of support in relation to correcting drafts of assignments, as well as providing pastoral support.

k) Mature student groups' specific learning and support needs

In addition, a number of further learning and support needs were highlighted as having implications for the way universities teach, assess and support mature students. These were discussed by both students, tutors and practice staff. In particular, these related to:

- Teachers and practice staff explained how mature students often required extra support and encouragement with IT-skills development.
- Mature students requested careful timetabling, as students with young

children did not appreciate long gaps during the day when having to pay for childcare. In addition, one or two lectures in a day places financial strain on students who live far away and struggle to pay for transport. These students preferred longer days when in university:

Student 1- I mean you live on campus so it's easier for you to walk across campus to go to lectures, but for me it costs me £5 a day for me to come into Uni and if I'm coming in five days a week just for two hours when I could come in two days a week, difference between 25 quid and a tenner.

Student 3 – from the childcare aspect, it's easier to make arrangements for two full days, rather than have somebody everyday for a week, 'please can you have my children for just half an hour', It's hard (student focus group 1, p. 15).

- Students described how they sometimes felt isolated on campus and requested social activities designed specifically for mature students. This student explained:

In a lot of universities there's like a post grad or a club for mature students, so I went to the union in Surrey to ask about one and I was told there isn't one and they asked me to set it up myself.

Interviewer: And did you do it?

Well, no, I was bogged down with enough work. I thought I couldn't take on doing my own club as well. But I did find that really bad (student 6, focus group 3, p. 5).

- Students explained how they sometimes felt that they 'had to learn on their own' as they often had to leave campus after lectures. As a result, they were not 'getting the viewpoints of fellow students'. However, the introduction of enquiry based learning (EBL) was described to have facilitated the

integration and mixing of age groups, due to the smaller group format.

- One mature student discussed how she felt that the learning process was slower for her:

Being an older student, I think the learning process is slower.

Interviewer: And do you think people take account of that?

No. I don't want them to really, I want to do it on my own merit (student 2, focus group 2, p. 10).

1) Students with a disability/special need

The most common special need that was discussed among practice staff was students who had dyslexia. Although the practice staff did not have much experience of working and supporting this student group, they discussed how they would approach mentoring a student with dyslexia:

But, certainly sort of general principles that you would teach anybody, the way that you teach anyone that you have to be prepared to be flexible in your approach to explanations and maybe using much more practical analogies but that tends to be the approach I would adopt anyway (practitioner focus group 2).

In addition, an example was given of a student who had only found out after she started the course that she was dyslexic and support was therefore delayed:

So it's finding out that they are dyslexic in the first place, because sometimes It's not easy to recognise that they are unless you have your own experiences (practitioner focus group 1).

The practice staff also explained that they preferred to know if a student had dyslexia before they arrived on practice placements. Without this information, supporting and grading the student can potentially become problematic. Two of the participants discussed:

1- Yes, especially if you mark someone's work ... but if the mentor knows, I don't think there's a problem.

2 - I agree with that because actually with training to be a mentor we're now taking on, we're becoming mini teachers and we're part of the teaching team aren't we?

1 - And therefore, if it's confidential it's leaving us out as if we're not part of the team, but we are, it's giving us that responsibility (practitioner focus group 2).

5.2 Academic and practice staff views and development needs

The following sections of the qualitative findings will explore additional issues discussed in the focus groups and interviews. The discussion is a summary of the responses relating directly to questions that were asked in the interviews and focus groups. These included:

- Academic and practice staff knowledge and awareness of widening participation
- Academic staff development and training needs
- Practice staff learning and support needs
- Practice staff views about the mentor preparation programme

5.3 Academic and practice staff knowledge, awareness and views of widening participation

The teachers and practice staff were asked about their knowledge and awareness of widening participation in higher education. Generally there was a sense that nursing is 'ahead of the game' in terms of widening participation and recruiting under-represented groups. The nature of nursing makes it better at attracting students from 'low-participation' neighbourhoods as well as being less class-bound than other disciplines within higher education. It was felt that nursing attracts people who might

not normally choose to go to university, and this was mainly relevant for the diploma students. Teachers felt that the degree students are the more 'traditional' university student, often with a middle class background, being younger and coming into Higher Education straight after completing A-levels.

At the same time the teachers discussed that an increasingly diverse student body was felt by some to place progressively more demands on teachers' time and commitments. It was felt that these students had additional needs which could be met through spending more time building one to one relationships within the context of the personal tutor role. However, meeting this need was seen to be problematic as the number of personal students per teacher were increasing. This teacher explained:

But to meet the needs of those people who are becoming increasingly more needy, they need more of that relationship and paradoxically they're getting less of it. Two years ago they wouldn't have been on this programme anyway, for whatever reason, perhaps, but they are now. But if they had been, they would have had more help. Because you're one of 30. I notice you – 'Oh, you're not doing too well there. Is there anything I can help with?' Well, I do find a bit of difficulty with that now (tutor 7, p. 12).

Additional views were expressed which questioned how much encouragement should be given to students who were struggling and described by some to have a 'lower ability'. This teacher felt that universities were not helping these students by persuading them to stay on the programmes. The participant explained:

I say that with sadness, but we've got to be realistic about it. Students who are struggling are depressed, de-motivated, unhappy creatures who are incredibly demanding of

teachers' time and some people just haven't got it. That's life. I think what we're going to do is give them all of the support that they need in year 1, but if people aren't going to make it then it's best that we mutually say 'this isn't going to work' rather than encouraging people (tutor 8, p. 16).

Staff knowledge and awareness about university widening participation strategies appeared to be limited. This teacher explained how she personally linked recruitment efforts with widening participation and she questioned how local strategies supported this approach:

The approach that I have is that anybody who is interested in nursing should come along and see what it takes to come on to the programme, not to discriminate against any particular group. But I don't know of any university policies or school policies that do that. I know there is a group at the Centre university that has a particular interest in widening participation, but I don't quite know what they do or how they do it (tutor 2, p.3).

Another teacher mirrored this lack of knowledge in relation to the university of Surrey widening participation approaches. The teacher summed up:

There's definitely a widening participation committee isn't there, a group that works in the pull down data and present data back and I think they go out to schools don't they in a bus and try and get...

Interviewer: Is any of that information disseminated to you?

Not particularly well, no. I don't think that information is disseminated well (tutor 5, p. 17).

5.4 Academic staff development and training needs

The academic staff were asked to identify their own development and training needs in relation to supporting a diverse student body. The training needs were described to be:

- Working with students from different cultures: for example learning how to avoid stigmatising or labelling students. Cultural sensitivity training was being requested by the teachers and it was suggested that this training needed to place a focus on the student/teacher relationship rather than dealing with diversity issues in a more general sense.
- Strengthening student support structures: making sure that current strategies were stated and written in the School Policy for all staff to access.
- Supporting facilitation style: how to make learning more enjoyable and interesting, to motivate students and a need to move away from a punitive culture.
- It was also highlighted that 'reflective teaching' needs to be introduced. Teachers need to practice what is taught to students and continually evaluate how a diverse student body is supported and taught.
- Teachers requested an on-going development programme where teaching and learning processes was explored. One teacher pointed out that education, as well as the demographics of the student body was 'continually evolving and changing and needed to move with the times,' but at the same time there is also a need to continually revisit fundamental learning and teaching theories. In addition, it was suggested that staff development sessions were introduced which looked at student learning and progression, taking a

holistic view investigating the ‘student experience’. The following quote from one of the teachers illustrates the importance of linking this type of work with the personal tutor system:

There’s not much staff development at the moment around personal tutoring or around supporting students ... Certainly there’s been, I think the last thing that I went to was like enquiry based learning which would have been something about teaching. Supporting students it’s all about learning isn’t it, it’s almost educational isn’t it because you could have a lecture on assessment, why we do it, why we think it’s important, why feedback is important. I know this is stuff that all of us, because we’ve all been qualified trained teachers ... It’s almost going back to basics (tutor 5, p. 21).

- Teachers were expressing a need to receive more information about and analysis of student attrition data. If presented properly, this type of information could be included in teaching strategies and approaches on how universities support students ‘at risk’. The rationale given by participants was that teaching staff who deal with students on a day to day basis were the most influential group in minimising and tackling attrition.
- Finally, this teacher’s suggestion about needing to raise awareness and understanding about widening participation illustrates a requirement for training and development. It was suggested that training needed to include widening participation drivers, policy and requirements. The teacher explained:
... but if it’s explained why this is occurring, why we’re being forced down this line, why widening participation is a good thing because people live in a diverse

population so it’s better to have a diverse workforce (tutor 5, p. 22).

5.5 Practice staff learning and support needs

The practice staff described a need in relation to wanting a better understanding of the curriculum structure and content in order to meet the students’ expectations about learning opportunities:

... there is sort of a feeling that you don’t know the curriculum as well as you’d want to, you don’t exactly know what you’re needing to teach them (practitioner focus group 2).

The practice staff also requested further training and preparation in relation to working with students who had dyslexia:

... but I have to admit, it’s not something, I don’t think it’s something we would come across on the mentor preparation so I don’t, it’s not something that we’ve specifically prepared for (practitioner focus group 2).

As mentioned in the previous section, the practice staff described their own learning and development needs in relation to working and supporting students from diverse cultural backgrounds. It was suggested that some kind of cultural sensitivity training would be helpful, but that the training needed to be presented and handled sensitively in order not to emphasise differences. It was suggested that this training could have a focus on understanding the needs of students, patients and colleagues, for example the overseas trained nurses. This mentor explained:

It could be part of our development as nurses but not focused only on students, you know what I’m saying. Instead of, because you have also clients and patients from different cultural backgrounds and are you familiar with all those cultures and backgrounds? (practitioner focus group 1).

5.6 Practice staff views about the mentor preparation programme

There were a number of suggestions around the content and structure of the mentor preparation programme. The focus on students' learning styles was discussed in both groups:

I think that the mentorship course is good that we've been doing because it helps look at the fact that students have different learning styles and I think that's essential as a mentor so that you don't project your own personality into your students, because I think the portion that you're suggesting and you're not suggesting that your students should be all like you, because I think if you do that's quite dangerous for your students (practitioner focus group 1).

Although the practice staff appreciated the session about learning styles it was felt it should include more discussion and debate:

I think there were a couple of sessions, there was one about learning styles, basically based on handouts and there weren't many discussions and there was just 'read through on the big board', there could have been a much more elaborate teaching session ... and it could have got a lot more out of that one which I thought was a shame (practitioner focus group 1, p. 13).

The practice staff also requested additional time and support from the link tutors on the programme. In particular they wanted help in relation to understanding the requirements for the portfolios, both objectives and outcomes:

I don't think the support we had has been ... It's been good, I mean we're able to access, we're able to ring them or send an email and things like that but I think they need to be more involved, I think they should be able to sit down and ask us if we

have any burning issues, any problems that we might have with the paperwork side of things because for some people it might be very kind of daunting, you know, you look at it and think 'what does this mean?'. It's actually sitting down and going through it as a group (practitioner focus group 1).

5.7 Staff Toolkit

The final phase involved developing a toolkit for staff which aims to promote, encourage and support student diversity in the academic as well as the practice setting. The development of the toolkit built on the literature, the project research findings, and a workshop held with academic staff (summer 2006).

The toolkit which contains a number of cue questions for academic staff, programme managers and personal tutors can be found at the end of this report.

6. Discussion and conclusions

This project set out to achieve a number of aims. Firstly, we wanted to map how ‘non-traditional’ students were distributed across the programmes. We also wanted to raise awareness among staff and to develop a toolkit for staff. In order to progress with the toolkit, research was carried out with the aim of investigating the learning and support needs of ‘non-traditional’ students. Furthermore, tackling and understanding attrition among these groups of students was an integral part of this project. This section will discuss the key findings and highlight some of the challenges that we came across during the project.

One of the challenges realised during the progress of the project was that ‘widening participation’ was not an entirely effective concept when discussing, analysing and interpreting emerging findings, as it appeared to encourage ‘separateness’ as opposed to inclusion. In addition, it was not a concept that participants and informants recognised well, nor did it encourage debate or facilitate the clarification of a project focus. Some of the participants were critical of the concept, highlighting for example that it did not consider historical developments and changes that have happened to the student population. It was also found that people tended to primarily think of widening participation as *increasing access and entry* as opposed to retention, progression and inclusion of a diverse student body post entry at University. In the future, it is important that terms used for both research and development projects within this area are chosen carefully. They are potentially a tool that can help to promote access to participants, information and collaboration. During this project it was found that the term ‘diversity’ engaged stakeholders and research participants in a more positive way. The project team’s working definition of the term diversity throughout this project was that it should promote equal access to learning and support opportunities for all

groups of students, whether traditional or non-traditional.

A number of issues have been highlighted in this report relating to supporting and working with a diverse student body. Some of these are similar to and confirm the findings from other studies. For example, one of this project’s findings suggested a lack of academic role models for ethnic minority students. Another project (Bagnardi and Perkel 2005) sheds further light on this issue and was recently carried out in an American university. This university had seen sharp increases in ethnic minority students as well as in their attrition rates. One of the key challenges that were highlighted in this American study was having a limited diverse group of tutors (for example in relation to social class, age, ethnic background) working with the students from diverse backgrounds. This is a difficult problem to deal with, which may be considered through staff recruitment policies. It must however be considered that one explanation stems from the value of involving practitioners in teaching. Most will be middle-aged because they have already had a career in clinical practice before becoming university tutors.

We also brought forward the idea of students having different learning preferences and how the academic teachers sometimes struggled to introduce the students to perhaps different ways of thinking and new ways of approaching learning. There are educational developments which highlight the need to identify individual student’s learning styles in order to maximise learning. For example, Williams et al (2002), summarise a number of instruments, such as Haley’s Educational Orientation Questionnaire and Kolb’s learning style inventory, all aiming to identify student learning style. Although introducing similar instruments was not suggested by stakeholders in this study, our data provide evidence that teachers found a tension between considering individual learning styles and teaching large groups of

students having diverse learning styles. It was mainly within the personal tutor relationship that the teachers felt safe to explore individual learning styles.

From the focus groups with the non-traditional students we found a number of concerns brought forward by the mature students. These were mainly about the lack of integration of age groups, feelings of isolation, a need for better pre-course information and differences in the learning process. Other studies mirror these results. For example, Trotter and Cove (2005) examined UK healthcare students' first year experiences, as concern had arisen around high attrition rates and increasing numbers of mature students. Key issues for students were the lack of social and academic integration, concerns regarding mixed age groups and other life commitments, such as family. The study highlighted the importance for universities, as they widen participation, to adopt teaching and learning strategies for students who might not be familiar with 'traditional' models. A number of suggestions were also brought forward in our study on how to strengthen provision in relation to mature students. These included, for example, building assertiveness skills and to consider time-tabling carefully.

Originally this project had hoped to gather data on national policy widening participation performance indicators (PIs), namely the variables 'social class', 'students from low participation neighbourhoods' and 'parents' experience from higher education'. These types of data are routinely collected by UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Services) which is the central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to higher education. The project team had been led to believe that these data would be available from the University Registry Department. However, it was found out when the project had started, that NMAS (Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Services) who process applications for the nursing students, do not collect these data. Therefore, this

information was not available to the project team for analysis.

As a result, we used the data that were available in relation to widening participation. The subsequent statistical analysis of student demographic data has given us a picture of the current nursing student profile at Surrey. We were able to map additional (to above mentioned) key widening participation indicators; ethnic origin, gender, disability, age and highest entry qualifications. This large scale mapping of demographics had not been carried out before within EIHMS. It is hoped that in the future, similar analysis will be carried out in order to investigate any changes in the student population. This was not an aim of this study, nor possible due to limitations in the data. However, a point of reference has now been set and any future widening participation initiatives can potentially be evaluated against this benchmark in order to investigate demographic changes to the student population.

In addition, the statistical analysis of attrition rates in relation to WP performance indicators revealed some interesting results. Both our literature reviews and interview findings indicated that attrition rates would be higher among non-traditional students. The data from the interviews with the academic teachers revealed that some of the mature students with non-traditional entry qualifications were struggling with their academic work. Numerous research studies (for example, Trotter & Cove 2005 and Bagnardi and Perkel 2005 and Kevern et al 1999) raise concerns over attrition rates for non-traditional students. Our study, however, found that attrition rates for mature students over 21 years of age were considerably lower than average. The students who entered from access courses had attrition rates of around 11 percent compared to nearly 19 percent for the whole study sample. For the group of students who entered with a registered disability, for example dyslexia, the attrition rate was

around 12 percent, again lower than average. This shows that the EIHMS is successful in retaining the so-called non-traditional students. Although this project has revealed gaps in current educational provision for a diverse student body, there appears to be forces that are having a positive effect on retention. One of these might be the dedication and extra time provided by some of the teachers for students who struggle academically. Another explanation could be this study's evidence of students' high levels of commitment and persistence to complete the programmes.

However, in order to further strengthen the way universities support, teach and assess an increasingly diverse student body it is necessary to re-consider the underlying philosophies and principles of the whole curriculum. As Zuzelo (2005) points out, new types of students have been given opportunities to enter higher education. This places obligations on institutions to investigate further how students are progressing and if current curriculum structures are meeting the needs of these new groups of students. This will undoubtedly challenge educators and curriculum planners to think in new ways, but will also create excellent opportunities for staff development and training, as the findings of this study have shown.

In conclusion, this project has described and highlighted a number of key issues needing consideration and key recommendations are outlined in the next section. One of this project's strengths was that we interviewed non-traditional students and their teachers in the academic and practice setting, as well as analysing student demographic for the total population and widening participation performance indicators. This enabled the project team to triangulate the data and highlight issues and problems that were relevant for all the key stakeholders. The project design also facilitated awareness raising among staff and students. Participants commented positively on having been able to voice their views and

concerns in relation to working with diverse student groups. It was felt that new insights, understanding and awareness of widening participation had emerged through reflection and discussion, which has been an integral part of this project.

7. Recommendations

This section provides suggestions for how the EIHMS and the University can potentially strengthen the way non-traditional students are recruited, supported and retained. It is suggested that considering the following recommendations will contribute towards minimising attrition, maximising learning among students from diverse backgrounds, and improving the student experience. These recommendations build on measures and initiatives that are already in place.

Supporting a diverse student body

- Marketing material and pre-course information provided for students before they commence programmes need to be reviewed in order to take account of a diverse student body that needs additional practical information around, for example, childcare, finances and the local economy/environment.

Learning preferences & assessment

- The EIHMS/University should review methods of assessment and relate these to the needs of a diverse student body and in particular consider the different learning preferences of students educated outside of the UK.
- The EIHMS/University should consider introducing a questionnaire to new students which investigates learning preferences. The questionnaire could include questions about: types of assessment and teaching methods experienced in previous education; views about earlier educational experiences; and a self-evaluation test to

find out the students' learning preferences.

Placements

- Information should be made available about placement locations to all new students before they choose locality in order to ensure parity. This information should provide details about geographical location, transport and commuting, accommodation and basic facts about the local environment (population, schools, leisure facilities, shops and places of worship).

Mentorship

- It is recommended that the current 'mentorship preparation programme' and mentorship 'updates' strengthens and expands the content in relation to students' learning styles, cultural awareness/cultural sensitivity training and about supporting dyslexic students in practice.

Attrition

- The EIHMS/University should work towards publishing attrition data and leaving codes/reasons more widely among teaching and support staff, so that they feel more informed, included and therefore able to adjust and direct the support they provide for 'at risk' students.
- The EIHMS/University need to facilitate ongoing analysis of attrition data in relation to student demographics in order to inform strategies on retention, support and learning/teaching approaches.

Staff development and toolkit

- The EIHMS/University need to raise awareness and disseminate information about policies regarding levels of support appropriate for students who are struggling academically.

- The toolkit stemming from this project will benefit from additional dissemination events among the EIHMS staff in order to stimulate discussion and reflection around the implications for recruitment, support and curriculum development.
- The toolkit is of relevance to wider university audiences and the university may wish to consider how it maximises the potential of the toolkit to initiate conversation and dialogue across the university on widening participation.

Further research

- This project highlighted high rates of attrition among the students under 20 years of age. The stakeholders discussed a number of possible reasons for this which was not included in this report. It is important that further research and discussions are carried out which focuses on the reasons for drop-out within this age-group.
- High levels of drop-out rates were also found among students entering nursing programmes with GCSE/O-levels qualification only. This calls for more detailed investigations and dissemination. It appeared that teachers were not distinguishing these students from other young A-level students and therefore were not aware of these high drop-out rates.

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Staff Toolkit: A Guide to Teaching for Diversity

This toolkit provides a series of cue questions to facilitate teaching staff to reflect and consider together how they can enhance the university experience of a diverse student body through student support, learning and teaching activities. It may also be of interest to programme administration and support staff.⁴

Recruitment, selection and admission

Cue questions for recruitment and admission team

How robust is our pre - entry information?

- Does the pre-entry information meet the information needs of the diversity of the student body?
- Do recruitment publications accurately portray the characteristics of the campus and where relevant placements to prospective first-year students?
- How much information is available about student support services?

How can we enhance our range of pre-entry activities to support and meet the information requirements of a diverse student body?

- Are campus and where relevant placement visits explicitly encouraged?
- Are Student Support Services present at visit days?
- How much curriculum information is available to applicants?
- When is the first year curriculum available to applicants?
- Do recruitment practices give an accurate impression of life on campus and where relevant on placements?

Cue questions for academic staff

Are applicants interviewed as part of the selection process?

- Are students given the opportunity to participate in sessions designed to answer their queries accurately?
- Do you identify “at risk” students prior to entry?
- How much contact is there between the institution and potential students between application and enrolment?
- How do you deal with students applying through clearing?

How might the university be able to develop the ‘studentness’ of applicants?

- How do we need to develop our system of advice and guidance to support potential applicants from a diverse student body to develop understanding of what it means to be a student of EIHMS / other School/ university department?
- How do you identify the needs of non-traditional students (e.g. mature, ethnic minorities, undisclosed special needs)?
- At what stage do you identify the requirements of students with special needs?
- Who takes responsibility for recommending alterations to enable students with special needs to undertake a higher education programme?

Retention and progression

⁴ The research team gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the STAR project induction audit to this section of the guide.

Cue questions for the personal tutor

What do you do to know your personal students?

- Where do I get information about my personal students to prepare myself before I meet them for the first time?
- How can I use the individual and group sessions with my personal students to support their learning?

What issues might my personal students face?

- What does the learning history and life history of the student in the recruitment documentation tell me about the student?
- How can I use this information to formulate some questions to explore the learning needs with the student?
- Is my student at risk of non completion?
- How do I identify whether a student is at risk of leaving or failing the programme?
- What are the sources of support I can direct students to for a range of help and assistance?

Cue questions for teachers of the programme

How do you promote learner independence?

- To what extent do I encourage students to reflect on the way in which they learn?
- How do I promote the development of learning communities?
- How do I promote self-belief and academic confidence?

How do you know when to offer support and to whom?

- Do student support services provide academic staff with diagnostic feedback that allows appropriate support to be given to students at risk?
- How do I contribute to supporting students with special needs?
- Do I know sources of support I can direct students to for a range of help and assistance?

Cue questions for Director of Studies / Programme Managers

Do you provide an initial induction that includes tours of the department/campus and meeting of academic and support staff?

- Are trained student mentors involved in initial induction?
- Are social activities organised for students in induction week?
- To what extent do you induct students in programme or placement groups?
- What subject specific matters are included in induction?

How available are staff to meet students outside formal contact hours?

- Are staff contact details available to students? E-mail addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- What procedures are there for ensuring that part-time teaching staff are available for student consultation outside class?
- Are there intentionally planned activities, procedures that are designed to promote student-staff interaction outside the classroom?
- Does each student have a named advisor responsible for pastoral care?

Is there an academic tutorial system responsible for students' academic development?

- On average how many first year students does an advisor of study have?
- How frequently does a tutor meet his/her tutees?
- Is there a Personal Development Plan (PDP) system for students?

- Before changing courses or modules is the student required to confer with and seek approval from an academic advisor?
- What procedures are there for students who wish to leave?

Cue questions for Programme Management Team

Does the first year curriculum contain opportunities to provide students with an introductory overview and rationale of the programme?

- Is the teaching strategy in year one coherent so that modules are purposefully connected and sequenced?
- Are students introduced to the assessment methods involved in both university and placement settings?
- Does the first year curriculum reinforce students' vocational aspirations?
- Is the curriculum constructed to provide common group experiences for students enrolled on the same course?
- To what extent is the curriculum sensitive to diversity within your first year cohort?

Are students' basic academic skills assessed on entry?

- Are different experiences available for students with different skills?
- Is there a peer-mentoring scheme available?
- Are student support services highly visible to first year students?

APPENDIX A: Project design and methodology

Introduction

This project used a mixed method three-phased design, applying both quantitative and qualitative methods to reach its aims. The first phase involved the collection of student demographic data, and key widening participation variables were collected and analysed. The second phase, when key stakeholders were consulted, was of a more exploratory nature. As we have shown in the background section, there was limited information and knowledge available about the needs of a diverse student body, so questioning was more open-ended and exploratory. The third phase involved the development of a tool-kit for staff and drew from the literature, the research findings from phases 1 and 2, as well as a workshop held with academic staff.

Phase 1: Scoping of demographic data

Phase 1 involved the scoping and mapping of student demographic data as well as analysis of attrition data. A minimum data set was established on the basis of key diversity variables and widening participation indicators. Analysis was then undertaken based on the 993 students enrolled on nursing diploma and degree courses between September 2002 and September 2004 at the EIHMS. The students included in the analysis came from the following programmes and intakes:

1. Adult Diploma (intake Sep. 02, Feb. 03, Sep. 03, Mar. 04, Sep. 04)
2. Mental Health Diploma (intake Sep. 02, Feb. 03, Sep. 03, Mar. 04, Sep. 04)
3. Child Diploma (intake Sep. 02, Sep. 03, Sep. 04)
4. Adult Degree (intake Sep. 02, Sep. 03, Sep. 04)
5. Child Degree (intake Sep. 02, Sep. 03, Sep. 04)

The following variables were collected from the University Registry Department and EIHMS student databases:

Table 1: Variables collected

<i>From Registry (UniS):</i> Date of birth Gender Ethnicity Register disability Course code Entry Qualifications	<i>From EIHMS student database:</i> Programme status (Continuing, Left or Interrupt) Date left programme Reason for leaving EIHMS course code & course name Entry year
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The data were received in Microsoft Excel and subsequently transported into SPSS for statistical analysis.

Phase 2: Process mapping

A. Individual interviews with tutors and lecturers within the EIHMS

We carried out nine (n=9) semi-structured individual interviews with tutors and lecturers within the EIHMS. The aim of these interviews was to investigate staff experiences of working with non-traditional (as described in the introduction) students. We also wanted to investigate their understanding of the needs of a diverse student body. Staff awareness of widening participation requirements was also investigated, as well as their own training and development needs. The tutors were randomly selected from the list of teaching staff (at the time 87 permanent staff) within the EIHMS and they were invited via email to consider volunteering for an interview. Everybody that was selected agreed to participate in the study.

B. Focus groups with non-traditional students

Students were invited to participate in focus groups to talk about their experiences, views and needs of support. Non-traditional students were targeted and all students from selected programmes/cohorts (see below) were invited via email. Students were asked to volunteer if they considered themselves to belong to one of the following groups:

1. First in your family to enter university
2. Entered university with a non-standard qualification (e.g. Access course, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ 2/3, GNVQ Advanced level, BTEC etc.)
3. From an ethnic minority group
4. Mature students (over 21 when started university)
5. Have a disability (physical or learning disability)

In total, 17 students volunteered to participate and three focus groups were held with students from the following cohorts:

Adult Diploma, Year 1 students (n=6)

Adult Diploma, Year 2 students (n=4)

Adult Degree, Year 3 students (n=7)

At the beginning of each focus group, the students were asked to fill in a confidential questionnaire. The analysis of these data (table below) shows us that a majority of the students in the focus groups had entered university on non-standard entry qualifications and a majority was also mature. Seven of the students were first in their family to enter university. Four were from ethnic minority groups and one student had a disability. For a detailed overview of the demographic profile of all students see Appendix B.

<i>First in family to enter university</i>	<i>Non-standard qualification</i>	<i>Ethnic minority group</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Disability</i>
N=7	N=13	N=4	N=15	N=1

* Students can belong to one or more categories

C. Focus groups with practice staff who support students in practice

Two focus groups were held with practice staff studying on the EIHMS 'mentor preparation' module. The aim of these focus groups was to capture practice staff's views and experiences of mentoring and supporting a diverse student body in practice. We wanted to investigate how they

described the different student groups' learning needs. In addition, we wanted to capture their awareness of widening participation and their needs for training and development. The staff were not yet qualified mentors, but they all had considerable experience of supporting students while on practice placements. The staff were invited to volunteer at a project information session at the beginning of their module.

All the interview and focus group topic guides used during Phase 2 can be found in Appendix C.

Phase 3: Development of a Widening Participation toolkit

The team reflected on how best to promote the research findings for the purpose of informing the development of a 'tool kit' meaningful to the end user (principally student facing staff). An afternoon workshop was held during the EIHMS Academic & Practice Development week in which the School promotes a programme of scholarly activity free from teaching (see workshop programme Appendix D). In taking a facilitated workshop approach the intention was to capture teachers' views of what they considered would be of use to them in relation to their everyday teaching practice to support student diversity. Sufficient staff attended to form one group whose feedback on the group work questions was documented and informed the production of the 'tool kit' presented in Appendix E in the main report.

Data analysis

The student demographic data were entered onto the statistical software programme SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Basic frequencies for the variables were produced, as well as cross-tabulations and logistic regression. All of the interviews and focus groups were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysis was an integral part of the data collection and thematic content analysis was applied to the interview transcripts. Codes were negotiated and discussed within the project team. Case-specific notes for each interview were made to capture analytic insights. Cross-case analysis was then carried out.

3.6 Ethics

Ethical approval for this project was sought from the University of Surrey Ethics Committee and approved in August 2005. Although practice staff was consulted in focus groups, it was not necessary to seek Trust Research and Development (R&D) approval as staff were approached while in university studying on the mentorship preparation programme. Approaching practice staff about their role and their training experience while on courses at the University is considered to be part of the on-going module evaluation process. During the project, interview and focus group data were stored securely. Student records for the statistical analysis were anonymised. The Data Protection Act 1998 was adhered to.

APPENDIX B: Student Demographics from Focus Groups

Student focus group 1 – (Adult diploma – September 05)

Student	Year	First in family to enter University	Non-standard qualification	Ethnic minority group	Mature student	Disability
1	1	•			•	
2	1		•		•	
3	1	•		•	•	
4	1	•	•		•	
5	1	•	•		•	
6	1	•	•	•	•	

Student focus group 2 (Adult Diploma – March 04)

Student	Year	First in family to enter University	Non-standard qualification	Ethnic minority group	Mature student	Disability
1	2	•	•		•	
2	2		•	•	•	
3	2	•	•		•	•
4	2		•			

Student focus group 3 – (BSc – September 03)

Student	Year	First in family to enter University	Non-standard qualification	Ethnic minority group	Mature student	Disability
1	3				•	
2	3		•		•	
3	3		•		•	
4	3			•	•	
5	3		•			
6	3		•		•	
7	3		•		•	

APPENDIX C: Interview and focus group topic guides

Semi-structured Interview guide – Interviews with ACADEMIC TEACHERS (tutors and lecturers)

Before the interview starts:

- Ask if information leaflet (given to respondent before interview occasion) has been read and understood and if respondent has any questions.
- Re-iterate focus (pre-registration nursing, widening participation, support for students and staff, retention)
- Ask respondent to read through and sign consent form.
- If agreed, turn tape recorder on.

Section A: Introduction and recruitment

1. How would you describe the different ‘types/or groups’ of student we have here at EIHMS?
(focusing on nursing and pre-registration)
2. Do these different groups of student have different needs of support?
(If necessary – how do the needs differ, are we able to provide support that takes account of these different needs?)
3. What does Widening Participation mean to you?
(If necessary ask for components, processes, stages of education. Comparing general HE and Nursing)
4. WP Policy talks about ‘non-traditional’ students – how would you describe a ‘non-traditional’ nursing student here at EIHMS.
- 4a. Which of the groups that you described earlier would be ‘non-traditional’?
(Probe: Are non-traditional nursing students ‘different’ from other University students, examples of students and events, examples of student demographics. If necessary list groups: mature, ethnic minorities, low participation neighbourhoods, entered on non-traditional qualifications, first in family to enter HE.)
5. Do you think that the demographic profile of nursing students have changed in the last 5 years? If so, how?
(probe: differences for different programmes, i.e. diploma and degree? Are we widening participation to all types of programmes? Differences between the branches of nursing? Have the changes happened because of the Widening Participation initiatives?)
6. Do you think EIHMS recruitment processes have been affected by the recent widening participation trends/policy? If so, in what way?
7. Are you aware of any UniS/EIHMS Widening Participation Policy and strategies regarding recruitment, student retention and support for non-traditional students? If so, what are they?

(If necessary: Are they relevant, helpful guidance?)

Section B: Student support and retention

1. Are these students' need for support different from other students (if groups identified are different from Q A and B)?
If different – are we as a school and/or University providing the support they need?
(If necessary ask for: academic, practice and pastoral support including modes of delivery and assessment strategies)
- 2a. Is there a need for targeted support for so called 'non-traditional' students?
- 2b. If so, what form should this support take?
- 2c. At what time in the programmes should it be introduced?
2. Do you think these students' achievements in relation to progression and retention are different compared to 'traditional' students?
(If necessary ask: different for the sub-groups, ie ethnic minorities, disability, students with non-traditional entry qualifications?)

Section C: Staff Development

- 1a. Do you think that there is a need for staff/you to be trained and developed to support these groups of students?
- 1b. What needs would staff/you have?
2. Is there anything else you would like to add ?

THANK YOU!

Widening Participation: Supporting Student Nurses from Diverse Backgrounds

Topic guide - Focus group with Practice Staff

This topic guide lists the main topics for discussions (Section Headings) and suggested questions under these. The moderator will decide which of these questions to ask depending on how the focus group develops.

Before the focus group starts:

- Pass round attendance list.
- Ask if information leaflet has been read and understood and if respondent has any questions.
- Re-iterate focus (pre-registration nursing, widening participation, support for students and staff, retention)
- Ask respondents to read through and sign consent form. Check that you have consent form for each participant (against attendance list) – if not ask participant to complete.
- If agreed, turn tape recorder on (if one respondent does not consent to tape-recording, explain that second moderator will take written notes of conversation).

Section A: Introduction

1. How would you describe the different ‘types/or groups’ of EIHMS students you have in the Trust?
(note: focusing on nursing and pre-registration. If necessary give an example, such as mature student groups. Will depend on branches and levels of stud).
2. Do these different groups of student have different need of support whilst in practice?
(Probe – how do the needs differ, are you able to provide support that takes account of these different needs? Describe and give examples of how their needs of support differ – for each student group described).
3. What does Widening Participation mean to you?
(If necessary: Compare general HE and Nursing. What is their general exposure).
- 4a. WP Policy talks about ‘non-traditional’ students – how would you describe a ‘non-traditional’ nursing student?
- 4b. Which of the groups that you described earlier would be ‘non-traditional’?
(If necessary list groups: mature, ethnic minorities, low participation neighbourhoods, entered on non-traditional qualifications, first in family to enter HE).

Section B: Student support and retention

- 1a. Is there a need for targeted support for so called ‘non-traditional’ students when in practice?
- 1b. If so, what form should this support take?
- 1c. At what time in the programmes should it be introduced?

- 2a. How do you think that you can support these students to achieve and progress in practice?
- 2b. Are there different approaches for the different groups?
(If necessary ask: different for the sub-groups, ie ethnic minorities, disability, students with non-traditional entry qualification? If different, is there something that can be done to minimise disparities?)

Section C: Assessment

1. How can methods of assessment in practice support the learning needs of the different student groups we have just discussed?

Section D: Staff/Mentor training

- 1a. What are your training and development needs in relation to supporting these groups of students?
- 1b. Who is responsible for that training?
- 2a. How do the mentor preparation programme and the mentor updates meet your training and development needs?
- 2b. Are any changes to the programme needed?

Section E: Debrief

1. Are there any issues that we have not covered but that you would like to discuss?
2. Do you have any other questions about this focus group or about this project?

THANK YOU AND END OF FOCUS GROUP!

Topic guide - Focus group with STUDENTS

This topic guide lists the main topics for discussions (Section Headings) and suggested questions under these. The moderator will decide which of these questions to ask depending on how the focus group develops.

Before the interview starts:

- Pass round attendance list.
- Ask if information leaflet has been read and understood and if respondent has any questions.
- Re-iterate focus (pre-registration nursing, widening participation, support for students and staff, retention).
- Ask respondents to read through and sign consent form. Check that you have consent form for each participant (against attendance list) – if not ask participant to complete.
- If agreed, turn tape recorder on (if one respondent does not consent to tap-recording, explain that second moderator will take written notes of conversation).

Section A: Introduction and recruitment

1. Could you tell me a bit about your experiences so far on the programme?
- 2a. Why did you decide to go to University and how you went about taking the decision?
(NOTE: try if possible to get everybody to answer this question briefly and to understand their background).
- 2b. What was most important – training to become a nurse or going to University?
- 3a. What were your expectations of University before you started?
(If necessary ask for academic work, practice, assessment and support).
- 3b. So far, have your expectations been met?
4. How do you think that the recruitment/induction programme prepared you for the programme or not?

Section B: Student Support and Care Services

1. What type of support is available to you from the university?
(if necessary ask for role of professional tutor groups, personal tutors etc and use prompt below for each type of support discussed. Prompt: personal, academic and professional support)
 - 1a. what is your experience of using this type of support?
 - 1b. does it meet your needs?
 - 1c. could anything be changed?
2. How do you think that your use of student support differs compared to that of your peers?
(Note: 'peers' would be fellow students on programme).

Section C: Placement Issues

1. Can you describe how you are supported while in practice?
Note: depends on different practice settings, ask for examples of settings. September 05 have only been in practice 1 week – what are their expectations of practice support).

(If necessary ask for role of mentors, other practice staff, professional tutor groups, personal tutors etc and use prompt below for each type of support discussed).

Prompts:

- what is your experience of using this type of support?
 - does it meet your needs?
 - could anything be changed?
2. Do you think that your particular needs of support whilst in practice are any different from other students needs?
(Note: depends on what year of programme, what profession).
 3. Are there any particular challenges or issues for you in completing your placements?

Section D: Assessment

1. How are you being assessed on your programme?
(If necessary ask for practice assessment, skills labs, exams, essays, portfolios etc).
2. Are there any particular issues or challenges in the way you are assessed? If so, are any changes needed?

Section E: Completing the programme

- 1a. Have you ever considered leaving the programme? If so, what were the main reasons for wanting to leave?
(Where there any critical events or triggers).
- 1b.. What made you stay on the programme?
(What were the key events or people that influenced you?).

Section F: Debrief

1. Are there any issues that we have not covered but that you would like to discuss?
2. Do you have any other questions about this focus group or about this project?

THANK YOU AND END OF FOCUS GROUP!

APPENDIX D: Staff Workshops

Supporting student diversity workshop 28th June 2006 1400-1600

Pam Smith has kindly agreed to chair the workshop. The programme of activity is as follows:

14.00 – 14.25 **Presentation of research findings** Carin Magnusson

14.25 – 14.35 **Questions and answers**

14.35 – 14.50 **Introduction to Group Work** (and refreshments) Margaret Volante

14.50 – 15.20 **Group work** Locality Leads and DI

15.20 – 15.50 **Feedback** Locality Leads and DI

15.50 – 16.00 **Further development to support student diversity** Pam Smith

The people facilitating the groups and giving the feedback are the Locality Leads. We have set a target for 10 people from each locality.

Shafeda Mohammed Locality 1

Sue Gurney Locality 2

Denise Skidmore Locality 3

Debra Ibbotson Locality 4

Heather Mercer Locality 5

The introduction to the group work and questions are given below. 30 mins is allocated for the group work. Each facilitator will be given flipchart paper and pens to capture the discussion points. After 25 mins you need to ask the group to select out of the discussion points the 3-5 key aspects for each facilitator to feedback.

Each facilitator is allocated 5mins to feedback the 3 - 5 key aspects for inclusion in the guide.

Introduction to group work

The findings of the project appear indicative of a need for:

- Effective tutoring/mentoring to personalise the student learning experience.
- Academic development in the skills and tools of enquiry.
- Specific information giving during the recruitment, selection and admission process as preparation for 'survival'.

The project team would now like to draw on your understanding of the research findings and your experience of student diversity to enable us to develop a guide for use in the academic and practice setting.

Group work questions

What guidance is required to support student diversity in relation to:

1. retention and progression for successful completion in:
 - university setting?
 - practice setting?
2. recruitment, selection and admission processes?
3. what format would the guide take, how would it be made available, when, where and how would you use such a guide to support student diversity?

APPENDIX E: Toolkit

A Guide to Teaching for Diversity: an E-Resource for Teaching Staff

TEACHING FOR DIVERSITY

Introduction

This resource for teachers is informed by the findings of the research project: *Widening Participation: Supporting student nurses from diverse backgrounds* (Magnusson, Smith and Volante 2007). The project was supported through the University of Surrey Fund for Widening Participation Initiatives. Although the research setting was professional preparatory programmes of nursing, the project team suggest that the findings have broader relevance to widening participation initiatives across higher education programmes. The guide is created in the spirit of sharing best practice to promote dialogue in the interest of supporting all students. Whilst the primary audience for the guide is teaching staff, it may also be of interest to programme administration and support staff.

Aim of the guide

The aim of this guide is to facilitate teaching staff to reflect and consider together how they can enhance the university experience of a diverse student body through student support, learning and teaching activities. Potentially using such a guide in shared discussion can engender identification of both personal and professional development needs in relation to student support and learning and teaching approaches.

Presentation of guide

The guide is presented in three parts.

- Section 1: a power point presentation of the research findings informing the guide is provided as an orientating context for teachers to Section 2.
- Section 2: two aspects of the student journey provide an organising framework for a range of teaching staff audiences, namely, *Recruitment, selection and admission* and *Retention and progression*. Within each a series of cue questions are identified for particular audiences
- Section 3: selected list of electronic resources related to widening participation

Use of the guide

The guide has the potential to be used by a variety of audiences for a range of purposes for example:


- staff development
- staff induction
- Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (UniS)
- MSc Learning and Teaching for Professional Practice (EIHMS)

To promote the uptake of the guide the final version will be in electronic format and made available on the University web pages.

SECTION ONE

The Guide to Teaching for Diversity was produced as part of the project Widening Participation: Supporting Student Nurses from Diverse Backgrounds. Although the project used the case of nursing students, the team suggest that the findings have broader relevance to widening participation initiatives for learning and teaching across the university. The guide is created in the spirit of sharing best practice to promote dialogue amongst staff in the interest of supporting all students.

This section of the guide, provided as background resource material to Section 2, will be made available as a power point presentation with notes pages.

European Institute of Health & Medical Sciences 

A Guide to Teaching for Diversity (Section 1)

Project Team:
Carin Magnusson, Pam Smith and Margaret Volante
Centre for Research in Nursing and Midwifery Education
Project funded by UniS Fund for Widening Participation (August 2005 – July 2006)

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European Institute of Health & Medical Sciences 


Widening Participation:

"We must widen participation not simply increase it. Widening participation means increasing access to learning and providing opportunities for success and progression to a much wider cross-section of the population..."



Helena Kennedy (1997) Learning Works

2


European Institute of Health & Medical Sciences 

Background - Policy

- Government aims by 2010 – 50 % of people under thirty should have the opportunity to benefit from higher education
- Economic/social drivers: tackle social exclusion
- Groups targeted ('non-traditional' students):
 - mature students (over 21)
 - first in family to go to Higher Ed. & lower socio-economic groups
 - coming from low participation neighbourhoods
 - having non-traditional entry qualifications (i.e. access courses)
 - ethnic minorities & special needs (physical or learning disability)

Dearing Report, 1997 & Government White Paper 'The future of Higher Education', 2003

3


European Institute of Health & Medical Sciences 

Background - UniS Widening Participation Strategy

Key features:

- Raising aspirations with non-traditional students
- Facilitating access
- Supporting retention and progression
- Supporting staff at the University


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European Institute of Health & Medical Sciences 

Project Aims and Outcomes

- map how non-traditional students are distributed across programmes and the different branches of nursing
- raise awareness of widening participation requirements among EIHMS school staff
- produce an EIHMS specific Widening Participation 'toolkit' for staff
- ultimately minimise student drop-out rates for all groups of students


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European Institute of Health & Medical Sciences 

Research Questions

- How can support mechanisms be improved to maximise achievements for all groups of students?
- Is there a need for targeted support aimed at 'non-traditional' students and if so, what format should this support take? At what stage of the programmes should support be targeted?
- How can teaching/learning approaches and support mechanisms be strengthened across the curriculum to increase completion rates for all groups of students?


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Study design

- Phase 1: Scoping/mapping of student demographic data
- Phase 2 - Process mapping
 - 9 individual in-depth interviews with teachers
 - 3 focus groups with 'non-traditional' students
 - 2 focus groups with 'mentors' (on mentor preparation programme) who support students in practice
- Phase 3 - Development of a widening participation toolkit

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Phase 1 Data

Ethnic Origin	Continuing Student	Drop out (attrition)
White (British, Irish, other)	81.5% (n=607)	18.5% (n=138)
Black (Caribbean, African, other black background)	81.8% (n=135)	18.2% (n=30)
Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)	50.0% (n=5)	50.0% (n=5)
Total	81.2% (n=747)	18.8% (n=173)

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Age	Continuing Student	Drop out (attrition)
Up to 20 Years	73.1% (n=226)	26.9%* (n=83)
Age 21 - 30	82.0% (n=250)	18.0% (n=55)
Age 31 - 40	87.4% (n=195)	12.6% (n=28)
Age 41 and over	88.1% (n=119)	11.9% (n=16)
Total	81.3% (n=790)	18.7% (n=182)

Disability	Continuing Student	Drop out (attrition)
No Disability	80.8% (n=732)	19.2% (n=174)
Disability	87.9% (n=58)	12.1% (n=8)
Total	81.3% (n=790)	18.7% (n=182)

Entry Qualifications	Continuing Student	Drop out (attrition)
HE Qualification	84.1% (n=111)	15.9% (n=21)
GCE A-level/A-Level equivalent qualifications	79.2% (n=377)	20.8% (n=99)
Access course	89.1% (n=172)	10.9% (n=21)
GCSE/O-levels qualification only	67.2% (n=41)	32.8%* (n=20)
Other Qualification	81.0% (n=47)	19.0% (n=11)
No formal qualification	75.0% (n=3)	25.0% (n=1)
Not known/sought	60.0% (n=3)	40.0% (n=2)
Total	81.2% (n=754)	18.8% (n=175)

Gender	Continuing Student	Drop out (attrition)
Female	81.7% (n=718)	18.3% (n=161)
Male	77.4% (n=72)	22.6% (n=21)
Total	81.3% (n=790)	18.7% (n=182)

- Phase 2 Data: Emergent Themes
- a) Lack of academic role models:
The other thing is they'll be saying for widening participation you need to widen the participation of the staff, you need to widen their, rather than having all white middle classes, have a variety of... (tutor 5, p. 18)
 - b) National Health System and British culture
 - c) Learning history and orientation:

- d) Assessment
The risk may be that they might be disadvantaged in terms of what they're assessed in. The student may be disadvantaged in their practice assessment because they might be perceived as having different attitudes to their work. (tutor 1)
- e) Cultural issues in practice:
I find that difficult, I don't necessarily feel enough, well equipped to provide the right lead really, to give them what they need really" (mentor focus group 1)
- f) Geographical dispersion of student body

- g) Assertiveness skills
- h) Pre-course information:
"I don't think the university, they're recruiting students but they're not kind of advising them beforehand. Look, if they said to Pete you're going into university accommodation then it will be noisy and giving him information like that, giving the information about finance, it just seems like once you're here it's almost too late. Well it is too late." (1st year student, mature, first in family)
- i) Changing family dynamics

- j) Academic support boundaries
- k) Mature student groups
- l) Students with disability
"but I have to admit, its not something, I don't think its something we would come across on the mentor preparation so I don't, its not something that we've specifically prepared for." (mentor focus group 2)

Shifting research findings to educational development

What meanings can teachers generate from the research findings in relation to their own teaching practices?

teacher → significance → new experiences

SECTION TWO (the team gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the STAR project induction audit to this section of the guide).

This section provides a series of cue questions to facilitate teaching staff to reflect and consider together how they can enhance the university experience of a diverse student body through student support, learning and teaching activities. It may also be of interest to programme administration and support staff.

Recruitment, selection and admission

Cue questions for recruitment and admission team

How robust is our pre - entry information?

- Does the pre-entry information meet the information needs of the diversity of the student body?
- Do recruitment publications accurately portray the characteristics of the campus and where relevant placements to prospective first-year students?
- How much information is available about student support services?

How can we enhance our range of pre-entry activities to support and meet the information requirements of a diverse student body?

- Are campus and, where relevant, placement visits explicitly encouraged?
- Are Student Support Services present at visit days?
- How much curriculum information is available to applicants?
- When is the first year curriculum available to applicants?
- Do recruitment practices give an accurate impression of life on campus and where relevant on placements?

Cue questions for academic staff

Are applicants interviewed as part of the selection process?

- Are students given the opportunity to participate in sessions designed to answer their queries accurately?
- Do you identify “at risk” students prior to entry?
- How much contact is there between the institution and potential students between application and enrolment?
- How do you deal with students applying through clearing?

How might we be able to develop the ‘studentness’ of applicants?

- How do we need to develop our system of advice and guidance to support potential applicants from a diverse student body to develop understanding of what it means to be a student of EIHMS / other School/ University department?
- How do you identify the needs of non-traditional students (e.g. mature, ethnic minorities, undisclosed special needs)?
- At what stage do you identify the requirements of students with special needs?
- Who takes responsibility for recommending alterations to enable students with special needs to undertake a higher education programme?

Retention and progression

Cue questions for the personal tutor

What do you do to know your personal students?

- Where do I get information about my personal students to prepare myself before I meet them for the first time?

- How can I use the individual and group sessions with my personal students to support their learning?

What issues might my personal students face?

- What does the learning history and life history of the student in the recruitment documentation tell me about the student?
- How can I use this to formulate some questions to explore with the student their learning needs?
- Is my student at risk of non completion?
- How do I identify whether a student is at risk of leaving or failing the programme?
- What are the sources of support I can direct students to for a range of help and assistance?

Cue questions for teachers of the programme

How do you promote learner independence?

- To what extent do I encourage students to reflect on the way in which they learn?
- How do I promote the development of learning communities?
- How do I promote self-belief and academic confidence?

How do you know when to offer support and to whom?

- Do student support services provide academic staff with diagnostic feedback that allows appropriate support to be given to students at risk?
- How do I contribute to supporting students with special needs?
- Do I know sources of support I can direct students to for a range of help and assistance?

Cue questions for Director of Studies / Programme Managers

Do you provide an initial induction that includes tours of the department/campus and meeting of academic and support staff?

- Are trained student mentors involved in initial induction?
- Are social activities organised for students in induction week?
- To what extent do you induct students in programme or placement groups?
- What subject specific matters are included in induction?

How available are staff to meet students outside formal contact hours?

- Are staff contact details available to students? E-mail addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- What procedures are there for ensuring that part-time teaching staff are available for student consultation outside class?
- Are there intentionally planned activities, procedures that are designed to promote student-staff interaction outside the classroom?
- Does each student have a named advisor responsible for pastoral care?

Is there an academic tutorial system responsible for students' academic development?

- On average how many first year students does an advisor of study have?
- How frequently does a tutor meet his/her tutees?
- Is there a Personal Development Plan (PDP) system for students?
- Before changing courses or modules is the student required to confer with and seek approval from an academic advisor?
- What procedures are there for students who wish to leave?

Cue questions for Programme Management Team

Does the first year curriculum contain opportunities to provide students with an introductory overview and rationale of the programme?

- Is the teaching strategy in year one coherent so that modules are purposefully connected and sequenced?
- Are students introduced to the assessment methods involved in both university and placement settings?
- Does the first year curriculum reinforce students' vocational aspirations?
- Is the curriculum constructed to provide common group experiences for students enrolled on the same course?
- To what extent is the curriculum sensitive to diversity within your first year cohort?

Are students' basic academic skills assessed on entry?

- Are different experiences available for students with different skills?
- Is there a peer-mentoring scheme available?
- Are student support services highly visible to first year students?

SECTION THREE

Electronic resources for supporting students from diverse backgrounds

Higher Education Academy <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/default.htm>

The Academy is committed to supporting institutions to widen participation and enhance the learning experience of students from all backgrounds. The widening participation team is achieving this by:

- Commissioning, undertaking and disseminating research to inform national, institutional and disciplinary policy and practice in relation to widening participation.
- The development of a directory of widening participation practice.
- Supporting work on personal tutoring.
- Establishing a widening participation research service to support the sector to make better use of existing research and information.

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/199.htm>

Higher Education Funding Council for England

Widening participation addresses the large discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different social groups. Under-representation is closely connected with broader issues of equity and social inclusion, so we are concerned with ensuring equality of opportunity for disabled students, mature students, women and men, and all ethnic groups.

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/>

Nottingham Trent University Centre for Effective Learning in Science (CELS)

<http://www.ntu.ac.uk/cels/>

The centre aims to create a more relevant, accessible and achievable image for science within both the Higher Education and school communities. Based on our excellent record in science teaching and nationally recognised widening participation activities, the CELS will enable academic teams to develop and trial new approaches to teaching and presenting science to both communities. Key activities:

- [Developing new materials for teaching scientific concepts](#)
- [Creating materials to suit the individual](#)
- [Applying modern assessment methods](#)
- [Raising the aspirations of local people to enter Higher Education through outreach](#)
- [Evaluating effectiveness of learning approaches](#)

University of Central Lancashire <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/ldu/resources/toolkit/>

The Teaching Toolkit is a week long programme designed for new members of academic staff and colleagues developing their role in learning and teaching or student support. The aim of the Teaching Toolkit programme is to enable colleagues to become more effective in their teaching/student support role. One section details who the students are, and aims to raise awareness of diversity issues and encourage teaching staff to explore the implications of diversity for teaching and learning in higher education.

http://www.uclan.ac.uk/ldu/resources/toolkit/who_students/index.htm

University of Nottingham: Promoting Enhanced Student Learning Web pages
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/teaching/>

Learning Issues: Dealing with diversity. Addressing the diversity of learners in HE means recognising that students bring a wide range of experiences, knowledge and expectations to their study. In addition students will have learning styles and preferences that change over time and depending on the context. Providing a range of learning opportunities is part of accommodating the variety of student approaches.

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/teaching/resources/issues/diversity/>

University of Nottingham: Making practice based learning work

<http://www.practicebasedlearning.org/notts/notts.htm>

This website includes information about a FDTL 4 project that aims to enhance the quality of student experiences whilst on practice, i.e. work-based placements. A key part is a resource section containing materials that can be used by anyone involved in many aspects of practice based student supervision, including preparation and support. These resources were either commissioned by the project or externally sourced web materials. These materials have been peer reviewed and are freely available for anyone to use in enhancing the nature of practice education. In addition, the materials have been developed for use in health care student placements, but can often be used for other non health care disciplines.

- *Understanding dyslexia an introduction* (requires shockwave player).
<http://www.practicebasedlearning.org/resources/materials/intro.htm>
- *Resources on diversity*
<http://www.practicebasedlearning.org/resources/diversity/intro.htm>

University of Plymouth Colleges Higher Education Learning Partnerships Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) <http://www.help-cetl.ac.uk/index.html>

The HELP CETL aims to become the national exemplar of excellence in locally-based Higher Education in Further Education [HE in FE]. CETL funding will enable HELP to build on the excellent track record of the University of Plymouth [along with its regional Further Education College partners] in developing successful HE in FE partnerships and significantly widening participation while simultaneously maintaining high retention levels.

University of Surrey <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/>

The University widening participation strategy is committed to widening access among those groups who suffer educational disadvantage. A range of activity is supported by the widening participation team.

http://portal.surrey.ac.uk/portal/page?_pageid=1098,525194&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

University of Ulster: Student Transition and Retention (STAR) <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/star/>

Social and academic expectations of and by students change as they move into and through Higher Education. Students need to adapt rapidly and institutions need to address these changing needs as student populations become more diverse. There is widespread evidence and agreement that, in particular, the transfer from schools, FE Institutions or other HE Institutions into university, even internally between courses, can be a difficult time for students. Therefore in these transition periods there needs to be adequate support for these students and additional support for those most affected by the change in their academic and social lives.

The critical points to consider in the transition process are:

- Adapting to changes in academic teaching and expectations.

- Adapting to changes in social lives, living more independently, a new circle of peers.

However there are many stages of transition within the University experience such as pre and post placement or entrants into Year 2 or Final Year and these student groups need support in adapting or re-adapting to changes in expectations and their learning experience. This FDTL 4 project addresses student needs at a variety of stages:

- [Prior to entry](#)
- [Induction Processes](#)
- [Curriculum Development](#)
- [Staff Development](#)

The induction audit is in particular from this website has informed Section 2 of the guide. http://www.ulster.ac.uk/star/resources/induction_audit.doc

University of Wolverhampton Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching

<http://asp.wlv.ac.uk/Level3.asp?UserType=4&Level3=2116>

The Centre of Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) is a strategic department established to lead developments in learning and teaching across the University. The centre developments focus around the quality, relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of our learning environment, so as to enhance the educational experience of students across the whole institution. The CELT aims to improve retention, progression and achievement within a diverse student body.

Learning and teaching for social diversity: This research project explores ways of enhancing the learning and teaching environment to improve the academic engagement and participation of a diverse range of students, particularly in relation to differences in class and academic background, age, gender and ethnicity.

<http://asp.wlv.ac.uk/Level5.asp?UserType=4&Level5=5500>

Economic and Social Research Council: Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP)

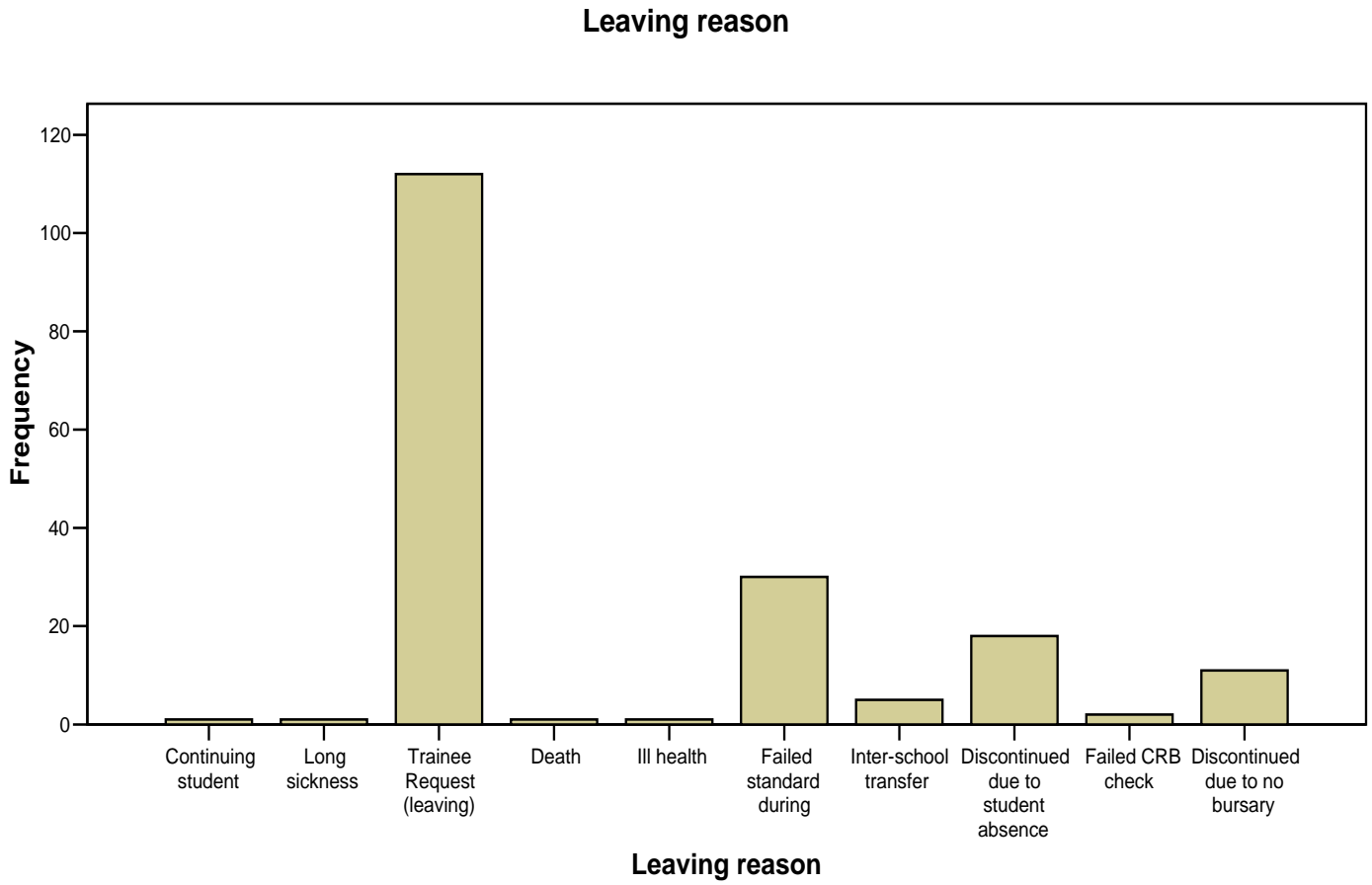
<http://www.tlrp.org/index.html>

TLRP is concerned with supporting and developing the UK's educational research to improve outcomes for learners of all ages. Projects cover many topics in sectors across the lifecourse. A specific theme linked with widening participation is **Learners through the lifecourse**.

TLRP is interested in how some people develop confidence and succeed as learners, whilst others do not, and in how education can contribute to work, careers, social inclusion and fulfilment through life. To take stock of such issues, the Programme initially funded a thematic group on Learning, Identity and Agency and the major output from this group will be found in a special issue of *Studies in the Education of Adults* due for publication in 2006. Additionally, TLRP is now supporting a more focused thematic seminar group on the key issue of 'transitions'. For further information, please see: *Transitions through the Lifecourse* . http://www.tlrp.org/themes/themes/learners_nero.html

APPENDIX F: EIHMS Leaving Reasons

* Analysis based on 182 students who left EIHMS nursing programmes in the period October 2002 until September 2005



APPENDIX G: LOGISTIC REGRESSION PREDICTING DROP OUT

Predictor variables	Odds Ratio
<i>Gender – reference category, female</i>	
Male	1.432
<i>Ethnic origin – reference category, white</i>	
Black	1.047
Asian	5.321*
<i>Qualifications – reference category, degree or above</i>	
‘A’ levels	1.230
Access course	0.778
GCSE , ‘O’ levels	2.408*
Other qualifications	1.387
No formal qualifications	2.551
Not known	2.408
<i>Disability – reference category, no disability</i>	
Known disability	0.497
<i>Entry Age</i>	
	0.962*
Significance * <0.05 ,	

Looking at the above table we can see that significant predictors of dropping out are ethnicity, qualifications and age. Gender and disability have no significant bearing on the odds in this model. Age is coded continuously; therefore the interpretation of the odds ratio is that for each additional year of age, the odds of dropping out reduce by 4% (controlling for other variables in the model).

The only significant ethnic category was for students with Asian background, this category included respondents originating from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Asian students are 4.3 times more likely than white students to drop out, controlling for age, gender, disability and entry qualifications. Although these results were significant, it must be noted that the sample of students used for this regression analysis (around 1000 students) only contained 10 students from Asian ethnic background.

The significant entry qualification level which predicts drop out is students entering with GCSE or ‘O’ levels (again, controlling for all other variables in the model). Respondents in this category are 1.4 times more likely to drop out than respondents with a degree or above.