

INTRODUCING P-SYC: A TOOLKIT SUPPORTING STUDENTS TRANSITIONING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr Ashleigh Johnstone, Ella Hatton, Nick Shaw

✉ ajohnstone@arden.ac.uk 🐦 @ArdenUniPsych



BACKGROUND

- The Preparing to Start Your Course (P-SYC) project aims to educate students about the hidden curriculum prior to starting their course, therefore easing the transition to Higher Education
- Arden University has both blended and distance learning programmes, and a high proportion of students from non-traditional backgrounds
- The toolkit has been designed to reduce barriers to transition in non-traditional learners (Wozniak & McEldowney, 2015)
- Designed in line with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), the toolkit aims to increase competence and relatedness (Birtill et al., 2022)
- By providing this asynchronous toolkit to students that have accepted a place, but not yet enrolled, an early process of induction is provided



CO-CREATION

- To ensure the toolkit addressed student needs, we took a collaborative approach to developing P-SYC
- Staff worked alongside students from a range of backgrounds and levels
- Internal impact funding was gained by project lead (EH) to kick-start this project and also to thank student contributors
- Students were invited to contribute asynchronously to a Padlet board for initial idea generation
- Focus groups were held with student contributors to discuss which topics should be included and how they should be approached. Students also gave input on ideas previously suggested by staff



IMPLEMENTATION

- We wanted this resource to be easily accessible to students and so considered online platforms to share the toolkit due to the digital-first nature of Arden University
- As the toolkit is to be shared with students who are pre-enrolment, we didn't want to lock it behind the university's VLE
- Version 1 was launched using Wakelet, however we wanted it to be more interactive for students and so we have recently moved over to Genially
- The P-SYC toolkit is accessible to students via their laptop, tablet, or smartphone
- Signposting to the toolkit has been placed in pre-enrolment information, in our virtual Student Lounge, and on early modules once students have begun their course

KEY CONTENT THEMES

- **Self-directed learning:** what it means to be an independent learner and how to take responsibility for self-development
- **Teaching formats and roles:** how to make best use of synchronous and asynchronous learning materials, and differentiating between programme leads, module leads, and personal tutors
- **Assessments and feedback:** how to read an assessment brief, different types of assessment, academic integrity, and how to build upon feedback and feedforward
- **Practical considerations:** resources required by students across their course and how they can be accessed, as well as important soft skills
- **Careers and employability:** how to access in-house careers support, overviews of the BPS and their divisions, alternative careers, and how to reflect on transferrable skills

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- Plans to develop relevant content for postgraduate students as well as undergraduate students – there is some overlap in relevant information but the toolkit would benefit from wider focus for postgrads
- We would love to implement more multi-media content. By adding more videos and ensuring they have appropriate captions and more images alongside the written content, we hope to develop the accessibility of the toolkit even further
- Discussions in place with regards to best way to evaluate toolkit

REFERENCES

Birtill, P., Harris, R., & Pownall, M. (2022). Unpacking your hidden curriculum: A guide for educators. Available from: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/members/unpacking-your-hidden-curriculum-guide-for-educators>
Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie canadienne*, 49(3), 182-185. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012801>
Wozniak, H., & McEldowney, R. (2015). Layers of transition: the lived experiences of online distance learners. 38th HERDSA Annual International Conference