

# Evaluating Interdisciplinary 'Welcome, Induction, and Transitions' Support in the Undergraduate Curriculum.'

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## Introduction

To start with, highlighting the importance of the term decolonisation in education, which holds meaning. The concept of decolonisation can have an umbrella term where that can hold a different meaning to different people, but the main idea is the abandonment of military, political, and governmental rule of a colonised land by the invaders.

There have been several decades of ongoing efforts to decolonise the curriculum to encourage the knowledge and development of all people to be valued and included in post-colonial higher education curricula. The decolonising of the curriculum was highlighted through the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign in Cape Town, South Africa, and Oxford, UK, in 2015 (RMF, 2016). From the events, the student union campaigns followed which then made the UK universities consider how to start to decolonise the curriculum.

This has involved addressing events and global histories to include the viewpoints of the colonised or enslaved people. It must examine the limitations and biases in the current curriculum. The National Education Union (NEU) have indicated several important elements to help decolonise education through having a balanced and broad teaching, change of curriculum and student participation to invite reflection, inclusive pedagogies and critical thinking to primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities (ECU, 2017).

Furthermore, when looking at the undergraduate curriculum it is important to look at the access to higher education and the different classifications of backgrounds. The groups include gender, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status. Some of the barriers to equal access, participation, and outcome include prior attainment of students, financial concerns, the prevalence of sexual and racial harassment on campus and insufficient advice or support during university.

Therefore, looking at a student's transition to university is a huge period of change, where expectations have been created that can affect adaptability and success (Hassel. & Ridout., 2018). For many students, this is their first time experiencing living away from home, and they will be required to adapt to new academic and social responsibilities (Smith, 2005). Even though frameworks have been developed to support students' transitions into higher education (HE), it does remain under-theorised (Thompson, et al., 2021). The support by institutions varies differently, and the literature concept of the period of transition is carried out differently, which makes it harder to evaluate. Universities do attempt to bridge the gap between further and higher education through communication and collaboration, but it is impossible to reach every student in a university. Having differences in how transitions are carried out in further education institutions as they support their own can cause differences in views between further and HE teaching staff that can cause student expectations to form (Smith, 2005).

For students, university is a personal investment of the cultural capital accrued through school and college education. It is also a compelling social displacement, which can be intensified if a student is mature, is the first in their family to attend university, or is from an ethnic group which is under-represented in the university

population (Batchelor, et al., 2020). The schools, colleges and universities work individually and in partnership to enable students to progress to degree courses where their education can be up-to-date and are ambitious for the future (Cage, et al., 2021).

This study aims to improve the understanding and enhance institutional learning across the transition bridge. It can identify ways where universities can help new students create and develop their new identity as higher education learners. Through a review of existing literature and providing conceptual thinking to offer guidelines for the university personnel seeking optimal conditions for effective transition and learner success beyond the welcome week to throughout the undergraduate curriculum.

## Literature Review

The significance of decolonisation lies in the process of recognising and addressing the relationship and power in institutions and how they have been shaped to continue impacting modern society. It can start by recognising that the knowledge taught in the curriculum is heavily Western, Anglo-centric, and white, which describes why that is and the bias and inequality it creates. It also needs to ensure the information and perspectives taught are diverse and can reflect the importance of minority indigenous and subaltern perspectives in research (Patel, 2020).

Equally, one of the reasons why decolonising the curriculum is of urgent importance in higher education, as well as campaigning for social justice, is the long-standing ethnicity awarding gap, known as the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic group (BAME). The Office for Students (OfS) shows the percentage of home students in England receiving a good (first or 2:1) degree was 22 percentage points lower for black students than for white students in July 2020 (OFS, 2021). The awarding gap limits particularly black students to access postgraduate research degrees, and therefore, decolonising the curriculum should be seen as part of a wider strategy to improve the representation of ethnically diverse students.

Many universities are beginning to decolonisation work with goals to coordinate activities, facilitate advancement and share good practices across the universities (OFS, 2021).

For example, the University of Reading 2021 held a race equality review where they found it was clear for them to engage in work to define and support colleagues to decolonise the curricula. One of the strategies used was to work in partnership with students. This is a critical part of being student-centred and inclusive to build a staff-student partnership. Creating a staff-student partnership is key to decolonisation as it will de-centre the idea of teaching and learning as disembodied practices focused on the passive consumption of knowledge (Laville, et al., 2022). The university took part in running a project for the Department of Speech and Language Therapy, which was aimed at building diverse learning communities to drive the urgent transformation of the Eurocentric curriculum. The students had co-produced each event with the support of the staff, and the staff were acting primarily as facilitators; having this partnership, broke down hierarchies, fostered collaboration, emphasised learning beyond classrooms, enhanced networking abilities and created a sense of community and belonging among marginalised students. This shows a great

example of pioneering inclusive teaching rooted in critical and decolonial principles (Laville, et al., 2021)

Furthermore, the issue for students who are in the BAME, LGBTQ, disability or socioeconomic backgrounds is they come to university to learn about a course they are interested in and look to the academic to be the expert on this (Tesema, 2019). What happens when they become aware of a lack of visibility of plural voices, or of people like them as having contributed to the subject, or who might have a different narrative to the 'story' being told? What happens to the student when they do not hear their voices at all, or when they do, it is glossed over or framed as a negative? The message that is being communicated is that you may not belong, or the people who are like you have made no contribution to this subject area (Patel, 2020).

There is growing research that shows that BAME students in higher education have entry qualifications like those of their non-BAME peers, but there is still a gap in the quality of degrees attained, which can be explained by a less-than-neutral effect of race or racism (Charles, 2019).

According to (Nahai, 2013), The University of California, Berkeley has managed to achieve one of the most radically, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse student populations of any US research-based university without any drop out academically. This has been achieved through a mandate "to seek an undergraduate student body that reflects the ethnic, racial and social class composition of the Californian state's high school graduating class" (Douglass & Thomson, 2012). There is a stated commitment to reduce the predominantly white students but even though this is almost impossible to achieve. Over 60 per cent of Berkeley's intake has at least one parent who is foreign-born, and they draw low-income students from increasingly diverse Asian and Asian-Pacific ethnic groups. On the other hand, compared to the UK Russell Group universities, it highlights that Berkeley is in a position of social and ethnic diversity, but UK universities are not near achieving. It would be important to institute policies that move towards a diverse intake that better reflects the UK population. Douglass and Thomson (2012) conclude the data from Berkeley's low-income and BAME students do just as well, if not better, than their wealthy white counterparts. This shows that if UK universities were to become more representative of UK society in general then they would not suffer increased attrition rates or lowering of academic quality (Douglass & Thomson, 2012).

The OfS has required all universities to increase the population of students that under-represented in higher education. The OfS is an independent regulator of higher education in England and has a strategic objective that "All students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education" (OfS, 2018). Looking at the data taken in 2020 from the Universities and College Admissions Service (UCAS, a UK-based organisation which operates the application process for British universities) report shows that those with low socioeconomic backgrounds, mature students, with a disability, ethnic minorities, and care leavers, are all groups of under-represented in UK universities (UCAS, 2022).

The measures of socioeconomic are done through two different measures such as the Participation of Local Areas in the UK (POLAR4) (HEFEC 2005) assessment.

This is calculated by areas which are ranked through participation rate and split into five quintiles, each of which represents a fifth of the young population. The lowest participation rates of 20 per cent are designated as 'quintile 1' and are considered the most disadvantaged, compared to the top 20 per cent, which are 'quintile 5' and are seen as the least disadvantaged. Another form is the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (MoH, 2019), which classifies areas of England into levels of deprivation based on income, health, employment, housing, crime, living environment and services. The UCAS report published in January 2020 has found that students in quintile 5 of the POLAR4 are more likely to apply to university by 2.24 times than POLAR4 quintile 1 (UCAS, 2020).

There is an increased focus on students from diverse backgrounds to fit into higher education institutions in the UK in relation to the widening participation agenda (Peterson & Ramsay, 2021). A report by Universities UK and the National Union of Students highlights significant gaps between white students and BAME peers. The research found that 81 per cent of white students graduated with first and upper-second-class honours in 2017/2018, compared to 68 per cent of BAME (Universities, 2019). There is a clear 13 per cent attainment gap, and there can be a complex and different range of factors that can influence attainment; even with controlled factors, there are still significant gaps (Buckley-Irvine, 2017). This cannot be solved with a single intervention or change in practice but instead will require a multi-pronged approach with various actions which can be impactful in small or large areas (Peterson & Ramsay, 2021).

The recommendations made by Universities UK were for institutions to become more inclusive to BAME students, they will need to transform their cultures, and one of the ways was to explore the hidden curricula (Universities, 2019). This approach can shift the attention of the students based on whether they are traditional or non-traditional, or if they meet ideal or implied projections, which highlights that the change and evolving is the responsibility of the institution rather than the student. The basic principle of inclusive education is that all learners, with no exception, belong in the learning encounter, and it is the responsibility of the institution as a requirement to provide the change and accommodate diverse learners rather than to assimilate them into a pre-existing culture (Frederickson, 2021).

Despite this, there has been a positive shift in the increase of numbers of black students applying to universities, with entry levels going from 21.6 per cent in 2006 to 44.5 per cent in 2019. On the other hand, white students from state schools had the lowest entry levels for 13 consecutive years (UCAS, 2019). Even though, white students in total of all social backgrounds are the biggest group which attend to university, according to UCAS admissions. However, if comparing the proportion of the population, then Asian and black teenagers are more likely to go to university than white adolescents (UCAS, 2019).

With students from diverse backgrounds, efforts need to be made both before entering higher education and to ensure that students who are in higher education can develop a sense of belonging and achieve their studies (Connell-Smith & S, 2018).

Additionally, international students are a group that seeks equity in higher education. They have traditionally faced issues of discrimination based on their being foreign and othered status (Park, et al., 2017). International students, who are from a racialised background have been categorised as difficult, disruptive, and problematic in the status quo of academia (Ye, 2018). These issues have raised the ethical and multifaceted restructuring of international student unions into academic communities. However, the experience of international students is examined through frameworks of internationalisation. So, the international student on campus is for recruitment and visibility for the purpose of internationalisation of higher education, which does not have meaning for a healthy organic commitment to creating structured equity and inclusion for international students (De Wit, 2019).

It is important to explore the experiences of international students through transitioning into higher education, and this will allow recommendations for the right support. There are many challenges they can face which occur in the academic setting. There have been various studies that use a sample of East Asian international students (Durkin, 2018) that suggest they struggle to adjust to Western pedagogy in universities due to cultural differences in education. Focusing on Western pedagogy that centres critical thinking and inspires discussion and debate. Whereas, in East Asia students would see this as a behaviour of disrespect to the academic's knowledge. This perception in such culture highlights the student focuses wholly on the teacher to give the knowledge as they are in a position of authority and power. Therefore, it is difficult for international students to see that being critical is a form of learning.

Furthermore, the role of social support in the student's adaptation is another focus point. From various research, most of the literature focuses on quantitative studies which measure the support against other variables. By having social support, it benefits psychological well-being and academic performance. On the other hand, having a lack of social support can result in negative psychological effects such as depression, tension and anxiety and affect academic performance. The research has concluded that international students can have more psychological issues than domestic students, which shows the importance of having recommended support (Talyor & Ali, 2017).

Finally, discrimination can be at the core of social aspects and psychological well-being. The type of psychological reception received by international students reflects their century of origin. For example, international students from Africa, Asia or South America have reported experiencing more cultural stress than those from Europe. Students who are non-European will experience more discrimination, which can lead to depression and low self-esteem. The differences in limited language proficiency and having strong accents are triggers of creating discrimination which the students from European countries will not have to face and will be welcomed into social settings quicker (Ammigan, 2019).

In the UK, social mobility is seen as a key indicator of equality of opportunity. This is within the higher education sector, where those from working-class backgrounds can improve themselves through economic, educational, and occupational status. The belief in equality has seen research, policy and practice aimed to increase the access of the underrepresented groups in higher education to be part of the most

competitive universities (Boliver, 2016). There is a range of literature which explores the difficulties faced by young people to get through admissions to higher education institutions; there is less research based on the experiences of working-class students after they attend these institutions. This is due to the experience of a student after admissions was not the focus of government policy (Crawford, et al., 2016).

This research found working-class students can face challenges based on their social background. It indicates when students enter university, it is an important life transition that can appear to be easier for some students than others (Jetten, et al., 2008). Those from working-class backgrounds in higher education their social class can have an impact on the university experience as it brings a change in lifestyle and social network. Attempts to transition seamlessly into the middle class can be unsuccessful, and the attempts can cause a loss of identity for the student. It would mean to let go of values, tastes, behaviours, and norms. This emphasises the pressure placed on working-class students to 'fit in' or get left behind essentially in the process of upward mobility (Attridge, 2021).

The theoretical framework of Bourdieu shows the lack of comfortable fit into with habitus can produce a double isolation. This experience suggests that to balance the two cultures, it creates double agents which come at the cost of never fitting in comfortably into either class group. Whilst most students struggle with the identity of their class within the university, it has been found that they can thrive academically. This is due to the institution being highly selective in their admissions process and allowing the students to be more comfortable academically, in their new habitus (Reay, et al., 2009). One of the research studies indicated that working-class students had a lack of self-belief or feelings of imposter syndrome occurring strongly throughout their studies. This was due to other students being more prepared for education at university from early education, whilst working-class students, it was something that would occur later.

The study continued to establish the experiences of working-class students in higher education continued to conflict between their home and university identity. The student's participation and adaptation to their university habits were seen to create a divide between both identities. The findings reflected Bourdieu's description of a 'habitus divided against itself' (Bourdieu, et al., 1990) and highlighted that working-class students can present themselves differently after going to university to be able to manage the transition. Even with government policy continuing to emphasise an increase in upward social mobility in higher education, it is still showing complications for the working-class student. This is because higher education institutions are designed or carried out with an expected student to meet the requirements of both social and academic aspects. In higher education, the changes need to extend to and focus on reconsidering wider structures and be more relatable in class and society to a representative society (Attridge, 2021).

However, these factors also influence building expectations for the student's transition to university, which can be a key issue in affecting success and adaptability (Money, et al., 2017). The transition supported by universities can vary deeply, and measuring success is difficult to evaluate due to the literature concept (O'Donnell, et al., 2016). Student expectations are complex factors that have

different contributing factors. The things that can influence are media portrayal, friends and family, previous experience, and communication from universities. All of these can form student expectations. By having a limited understanding of the reality of higher education, students can struggle to form accurate experiences (Borghi, et al., 2016). There has been found to be a mismatch between student experience and expectations, and lecturer and student expectations have been noticed, which can lead to impacting student transition and retention (Malyshonuk & Terentev, 2017) During and following the first year, retention rates are a vital issue and subsequent attrition can be costly for the universities and students which can impact factors significantly (Brinkworth, et al., 2009).

The relationship between student expectations, performance and satisfaction can be described using the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006). The model indicates that negative disconfirmation can occur when there are differences and expectations, which can then negatively impact student achievement, engagement, and retention negatively (Pather & Dorasamy, 2018). In the United Kingdom (UK), the importance of understanding the link between a student's reality, expectations and satisfaction is greatly valued, especially in the National Student Survey (NSS). The NSS carry out an annual survey once students have graduated from all the publicly funded universities in the UK (Lenton, 2015). It looks at a wide range of aspects of university life, including learning, teaching, assessment and feedback, opportunities, academic support, resources, organisation and management, student voice, community, and finally, overall rating of the course quality. This is critical for both the institutions and future students, as higher NSS scores for teaching quality it is thought to have higher application numbers and better retention (Lenton, 2015). However, in the UK in 2017 the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was introduced to help improve the quality and teaching status. The aim was to allow students to have informed choices on where to base their study facts rather than relying on reputation and to know the balance between research and teaching (Ashwin, 2017). The TEF ratings are hugely impacted by the learning-specific and teaching sections of the NSS, which further indicates how important student expectations can be in the HE landscapes.

In higher education institutions, it is important to understand student's expectations in teaching and learning, to raise awareness to inform any necessary action. However, it should take into consideration whether action needs to include meeting or managing these expectations. It has already been highlighted that when student expectations are not met, this leads to suffering in success, engagement, retention, and satisfaction, so meeting expectations needs to be seen as important (Lobo & L, 2014). In business literature, having an outside-in, customer-centric approach where companies focus on giving the customer what they want has been seen to be successful in meeting expectations (Baboolal-Frank, 2021). This has been written about in education literature if it is looked at the lecturers as service providers, which is plausible as higher education is a form of business and students are the customers. However, the negative effects of meeting expectations could be on the staff as workload may increase and a decrease in job satisfaction (Jones, 2010). Nonetheless, if lectures employ this concept, they could portray disregard for pedagogic evidence and knowledge and solely place value on student expectations, which could be unrealistic and ill-formed. However, managing expectations is a

collaborative process that needs to be centred around open communication to further acceptance and to create new realistic expectations (Wick, 2013).

Expanding the transitioning phase throughout the undergraduate curriculum may involve establishing student and lecturer roles and explaining module plans and teaching methods based on pedagogic literature. If possible, this could be done during student induction and before transition to ensure the expectations have been well informed (Jones, 2010).

Although, research has identified a variety of factors that can affect a student's performance during their first year in higher education (Zhu & M.Y., 2022). One factor is the induction into university. This opportunity is for students to be provided with information about the culture and expectations in higher education. It is an important point where course handbooks, reading lists and timetables are given to the students and details of their learning environments are explained. The induction phase is student-centred and has innovative ways to guide students through the transitional process. This process also starts to create social cohesion and skills needed for higher education. It allows for socialisation where students can interact with their peers and become aware of norms, behaviour and values that are required in a higher education environment. The importance of the induction phases has been demonstrated in the literature (Kornelakis & Petrakaki, 2020). Even though universities see the importance of having effective induction delivered, the planning of induction has become challenging.

On the other hand, a study looked at who attends induction and whether the attendance at induction predicted first-year achievements. It took into consideration that students who attended induction were able to get important information regarding their course, expectations and curriculum which helped their early experiences. There could have been other factors that were associated with attendance for each student, such as motivation levels, engagement, sense of belonging, lack of external pressures or eagerness to meet their peers (Yeager & Walton, 2011). However, for students who could not attend induction for a valid reason, the attendance levels could highlight any future issues that should be addressed earlier in the student's higher education journey. It was highlighted in the study that further research should be done to explore such mechanisms. From this, the question is, can it lead to not attempting to meet the required credits to successfully complete the first year in higher education (Murtagh, et al., 2017).

This study confirms that students' sense of belonging in higher education is strongly associated with retention, where both academic engagement and social engagement are crucial and function independently. The results provide useful resources for increasing students' prosperity and well-being in the future (Tett, et al., 2017). Our findings suggest that the strategies to make an immediate impact on students' living environment, such as accommodation and transportation, will be particularly beneficial to students' social engagement and, hence, belonging.

If students' belonging is to be used to promote academic success and retention, more conceptually refined approaches and empirically detailed evidence will be required, reflecting the importance of social engagement (Buckley & Lee, 2018). Institutional policies for student participation in social activities should be organised for those who have difficulties due to their socio-economic status. This study's

findings support the notion of non-traditional or disadvantaged students and the importance of belonging and retention in these groups (Ahn-Young & Davis, 2023).

## Methodology

The data analysis aim is to gather information from different student backgrounds, such as those who are the first in their family to go to university, working-class backgrounds, low socioeconomic backgrounds, international students, non-BAME students, and BAME students. The data will be collected through a questionnaire, with the aim of getting a better understanding of students' perspectives on the welcome week and what that looks like for them.

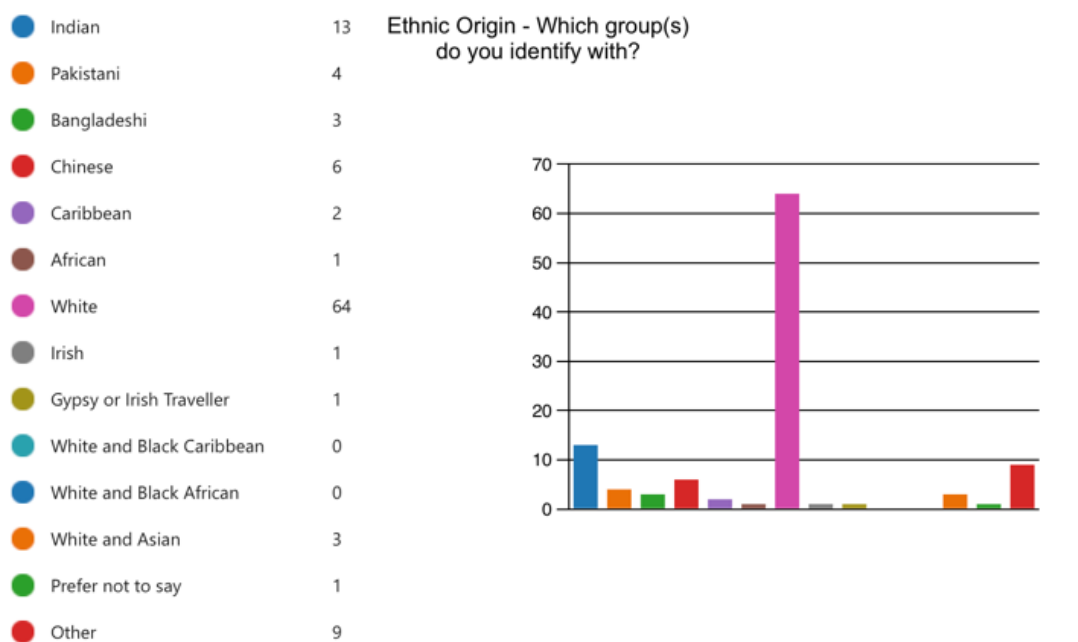
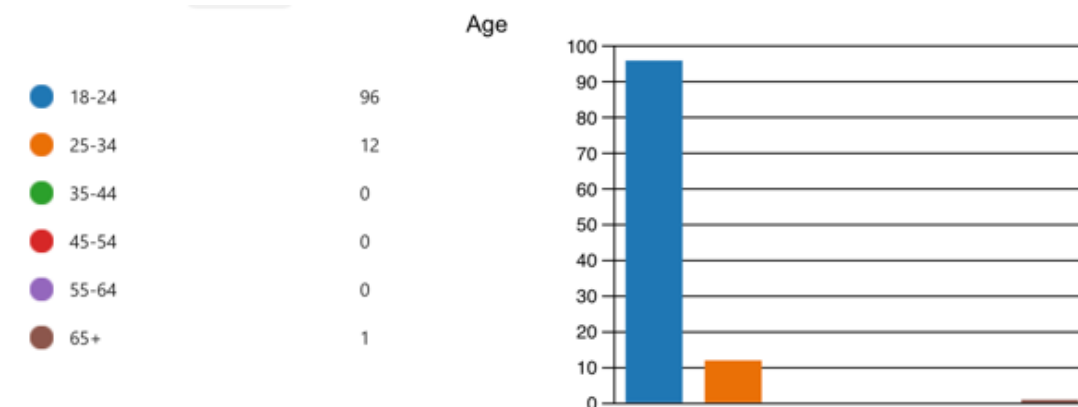
Participants will be asked if they meet the criteria for being from different classifications of backgrounds. The groups include ethnicity, which is underrepresented, and socio-economic status. The participants will email or scan a QR code on a poster with the opportunity to opt-in to this research. It will be made clear that students are not obligated to participate in further research, and there are no consequences for not participating. Participants will also be recruited by being in the category of 2<sup>nd</sup> year of an undergraduate course. Participants will read an information sheet and decide whether to consent before participating.

The quantitative approach is a survey method involving a questionnaire that includes closed and open-ended questions. The questions will include equality monitoring – protected characteristics, general data, and sections on inclusivity, welcome week, transitioning to university, and support beyond the welcome week. The outcome from the data is looking at decolonisation and how it affects the undergraduate curriculum, the student's transition, and the sense of belonging to the university. The questionnaire will be shared through societies, LUU, LinkedIn, and by email or social media posts to target as many students as possible and to recruit participants if students feel they meet the research criteria. The advantage of open-ended questions is that they gather respondents' opinions and thoughts, offering much deeper, more thorough, and often subjective information. It allows to find common themes and patterns. One of the biggest reasons to use questionnaires was to allow anonymity to encourage honesty in the responses. Another reason is that it is easier to analyse the data for the purpose of the research.

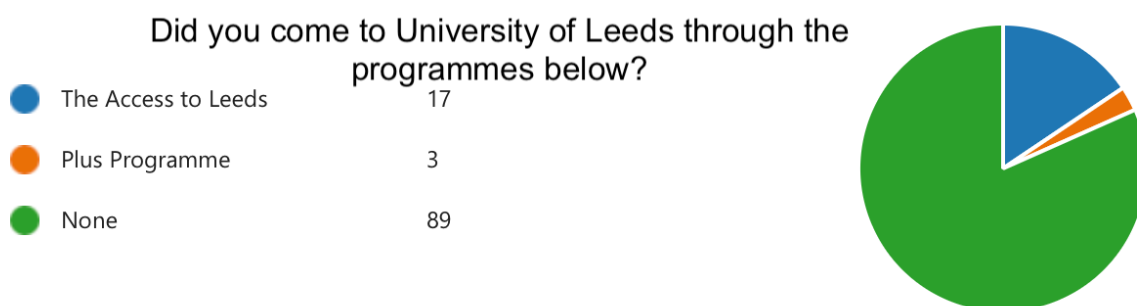
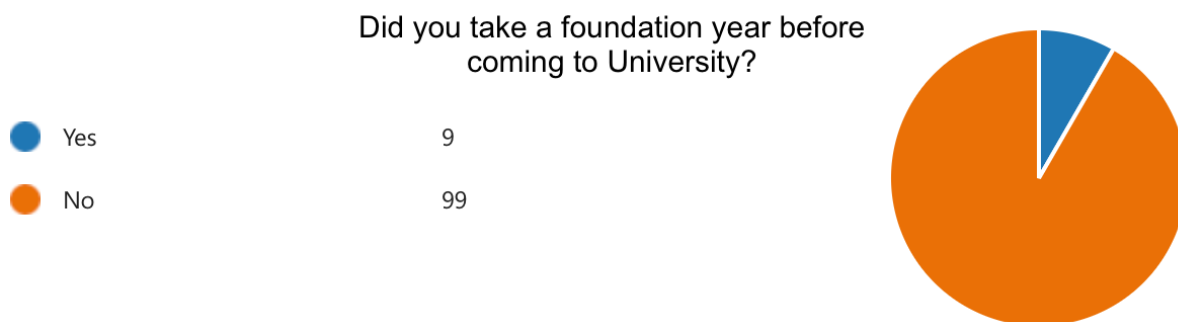
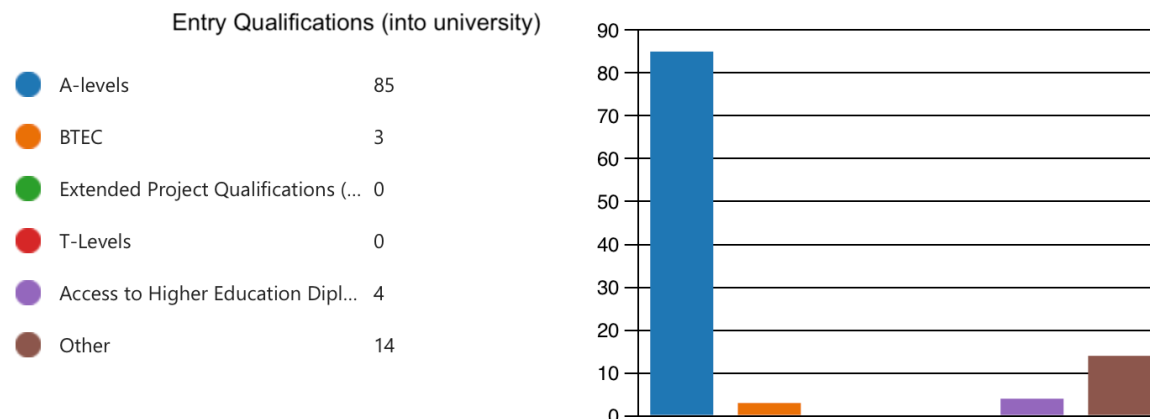
The response rates were low to start off with and then increased when approaching a different method. The reach was limited due to time constraints, but there was still a high response in the number of respondents to the questionnaires. Other techniques were considered, like doing a focus group, but with the delay in ethics and time constraints, it was decided not to carry on with them. The technique could have allowed for broad and detailed data, but this has also been gathered from the questionnaire with open-ended questions that would have been used in the focus group.

The topics covered in the questionnaire could be sensitive and potentially cause some students to feel uneasy or anxious. Therefore, students will be told beforehand about the topic of the questionnaire. They will be informed that they are not obligated to participate if they feel it will trigger a negative response. We will provide further support.

## Results and Discussion



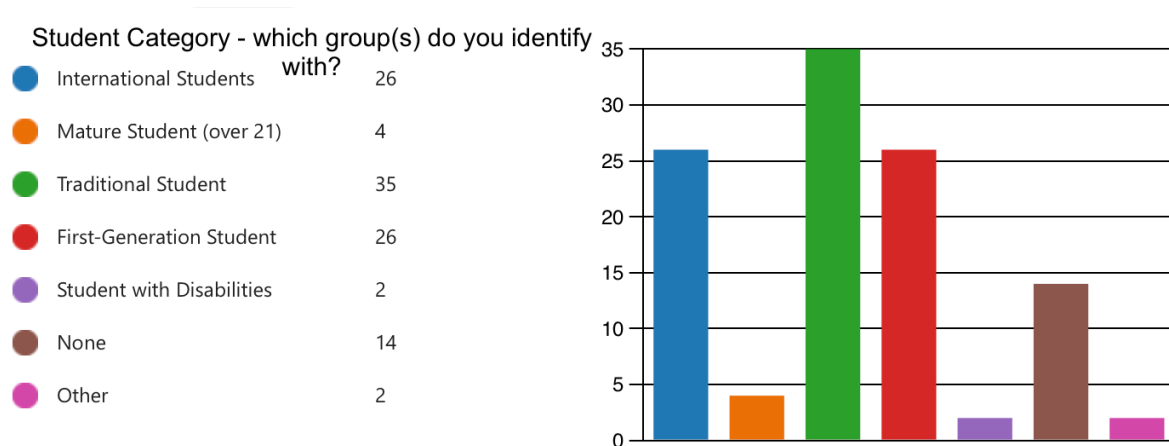
The data collected from the figures shows that age, gender, and ethnic origin are varied, which gives a good amount of perspective to understand some of the participants' views.



Some of the results indicated the lack of students coming through other routes than the traditional route of a-levels. This highlights the lack of representation for other students to come through other qualifications to university. This goes back to highlighting what the OfS has asked universities to increase the representation of under-represented students. Although the survey only got 109 participants, this does not mean that there are no students who have come through other pathways. It requires a wider survey to be carried out to have a better understanding.

Some participants came through by taking a foundation year and going through University of Leeds (UoL) programmes. UoL offers a plus programme and access to Leeds, which is aimed at non-traditional students who want to have an opportunity to come to the university and not be disadvantaged.

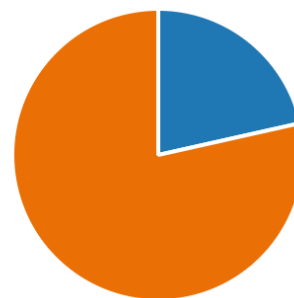
The Plus programme is a place created for students who come from non-traditional backgrounds. It allows for students to get prepared and settle into the university life and provides support. Even though this program is available, from the survey, there were not many participants, even though many came through the Access to Leeds program. The Access to Leeds programme is an option to have entry requirements lowered than what is required if the student comes from a form of a disadvantaged background. With these options, it highlights that UoL offers good programmes for non-traditional students to come to Leeds. However, it is important to find out if the participants from the survey felt they were able to transition into the university through the welcome week and how it affected the support throughout.



From this data collected, there has been a wide range of participants from different student categories. This will help to get a better understanding of how they have transitioned into university and if they have felt a sense of belonging. Looking at the data, there is a high number of participants who identify as 'first-generation students' and 'international students'. Both categories are underrepresented at the university. It has been researched that when entering university is seen as an important part of life transition and it can be difficult for certain groups of students. Most students who are first-generation are normally from working-class backgrounds. They can struggle to fit in, which can have an impact on their education and place pressure on them. This can lead to having imposter syndrome occurring strongly and continuing to struggle to fit in comfortably. This relates back to having a sense of belonging and having individuals to relate to at university. Hence why, it is important to consider decolonisation through all aspects of university.

Would you consider yourself to have struggled to get into university?

● Yes	23
● No	84



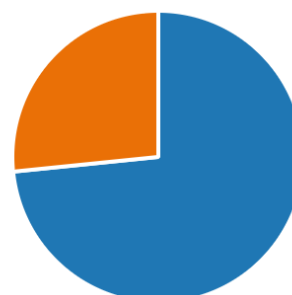
From the data, not many participants struggled to get into university, although some did feel they did, although this is less than those who did not. It is important to acknowledge this as it could be a wider voice for a larger number of individuals who have struggled in the past and who might in the future.

Looking at the responses to the survey's questions about barriers to university, they differ from language, mental health, being first generation, having care responsibilities, and a competitive environment to loneliness. There are higher responses here than from the previous question, indicating that nearly most of the participants faced some form of struggle. The highest responses were language, mental health, and loneliness. These are important to address and explore to understand the individual experiences of the participants. It is clear there are many challenges faced when transitioning to higher education and students who face language barriers are normally international students. It has been discovered they face quite a lot of discrimination and have labels put on them, such as being difficult or problematic. This can lead to psychological issues and stress, highlighting mental health. It is vital to know how the university stays on top of this even if students do not come forward, as for many international students, mental health conditions have a lot of stigma surrounding them. Further leads to loneliness as many non-traditional students can face this for many reasons, including social isolation, not fitting in, language barriers and not finding a sense of belonging within the university. It does explain why those three responses were the highest, as they all link together and can affect many students.

For the university, it is important to expand further on the transition phase into higher education, especially for non-traditional students, so they can have a better time finding their place. There needs to be more activities and events held for different student categories. For example, there are not many events or activities targeted at mature students, making them feel uncomfortable and not important to the university. Even though there is the Lifetime Learning Centre (LLC), it does not provide much support for transitioning into university as the support occurs once the term starts.

Did you attend welcome / induction week events?

● Yes	80
● No	29



Would you consider these events to be important?

● Yes	77
● No	32



The data shows more participants attended welcome and induction week events, but some did not attend. However, some found them important, and some found them not important as shown in the data. It is interesting to compare the numbers that even though participants attended the events, they all did not find them important enough. This gives a perception of a laid-back or have-to-attend attitude to the events. It raises the question if these events are advertised properly to all types of students, if there are enough events to suit students or if the events do not seem interesting enough.

There was further information collected on this, giving the participants to explain further how important or not important they feel these events are and why. The responses once again were varied and very dividing to see how a lot of students experienced welcome and induction week. One of the highest responses was 'people', this expanded on participants explaining:

*"meeting new people and getting to know the campus"*

*"chance to meet people early on and familiarise myself with campus"*

*"good for orientation"*

*"the events I attended were way too busy and the people I spoke to I never spoke to again"*

*"very overwhelming events"*

*"felt I did not enjoy the events or speak to people after them"*

This data highlights how some participants used the events to meet new people and get comfortable in the university, but on the other hand, some participants did not speak to the students they met again. This is because the events are for everyone who is a student at the university, so sometimes students will not meet other students with whom they have things in common. This can make the events seem insignificant and ineffective. From some of the responses the events were too much. This is important to investigate further to understand why students feel like this and if the events need to be spread out more or reduced if not informative.

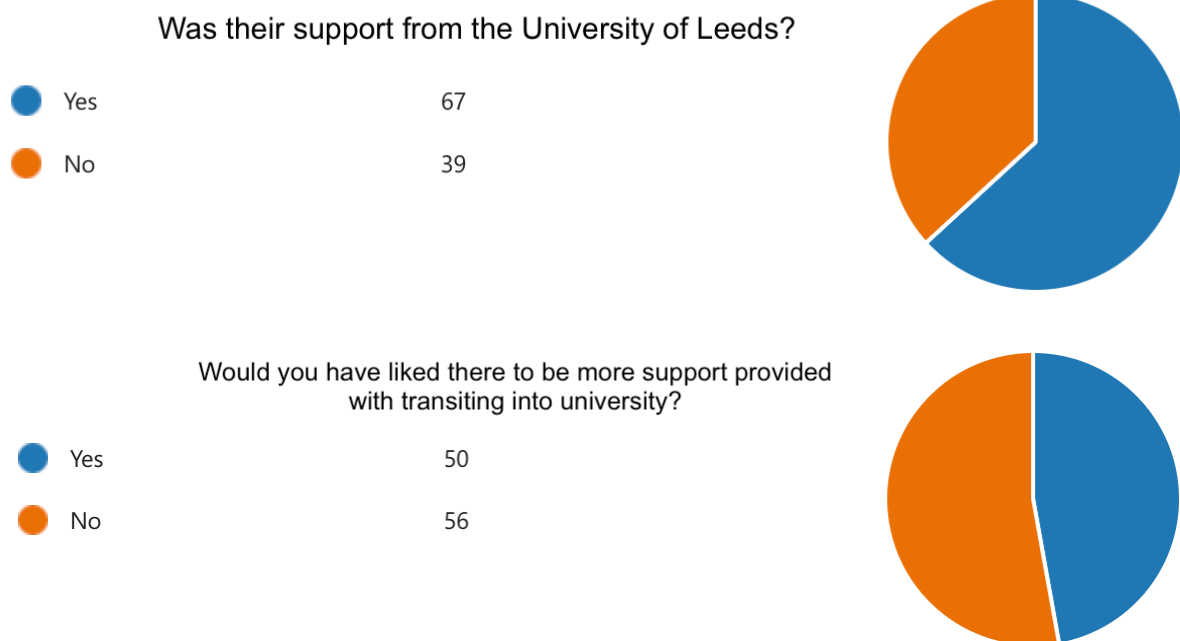
Other responses from participants included:

*"I feel that they are pointless for mature students. My priority is completing the course to the best of my ability"*

*"University society fairs gave me the opportunity to learn about ways to engage in university culture outside academics. Whether or not to engage beyond that is more complex"*

*“Felt like an overview of the course that we already knew”*  
*“Felt like a waste of time especially when trying to adapt to new surroundings”*  
*“Not that important”*  
*“I don’t feel I missed out having not attended these events”*  
*“I believe these introductory events had little impact on my course. Also there was great difference in the quality or information given about social events varied based on accommodation”*

These responses show how each student can experience the same week so differently, and it is important to acknowledge these responses as they are vital to changing the welcome and induction week. The last response is very interesting, as it reveals why this occurred and whether there was some disadvantage to students in different accommodations based on affordability.



Understanding if students found transitioning into university easier or harder and if there was any support provided beforehand or even after coming to university. This gives a good insight into student expectations for transition, and if it is not seen as important, then it can lead to suffering in success, engagement, retention, and satisfaction, so meeting expectations needs to be seen as important.

The data highlights different responses, with many participants saying ‘No’ and fewer saying ‘Yes’. This means there is a form of struggle in higher education and the university lifestyle, with many feeling not supported by the university, having social anxiety, falling behind on studies, or not being able to keep up with the workload. For some participants, moving far away from home, whether that meant within the UK or internationally, was a major challenge.

When asking the participants if they would have liked to have more support when transitioning to university, half of the participants from the survey said ‘yes’. This highlights the lack of support they felt from the university prior to attending and during their first week. This is something to consider for change for the university as

it can affect the success, motivation levels, engagement, sense of belonging, and lack of eager to meet their peers.

Further responses explained the need for better events for mature students as there were not enough. Having accommodation events to meet people in the building, more department events, or smaller group events would make it less overwhelming.

Other responses included:

*“More support with getting to know peers before the course begins / more social activities”*

*“Better access to information regarding mental health and disability support especially when one has moved far from home and doesn't have the same support network to preserve mental wellbeing”*

*“More part-time job availability in university”*

*“More information before moving to Leeds”*

*“More regular check-ins”*

*“More about actually living as many people have never lived away from”*

*“I would have felt more supported if things were in person”*

*“More opportunities for learning to write essays instead of thrown in the deep end”*

The data gathered has indicated what the participants have found most challenging since starting at UoL. Many similar answers include not being able to stay on top of the workload, being motivated, relating to peers, commuting to university, engaging in social events to not feel left out, loneliness, racism, independent learning, time management, and money management. These responses demonstrate how disconnected a lot of students can start to feel once term time begins and the reality of being independent kicks in. There are a lot of struggles and trying to balance everything when a lot of the experience is new to students, and the lack of support can affect a student's chance to succeed and fulfil their full potential at university. This highlights the importance of induction week and to carry it throughout the undergraduate curriculum to ensure students are not feeling like the responses and have a sense of belonging within the university. The induction phase should be student-centred and innovative aimed at as many different types of students to help guide students through the transitional process.

The final responses were asked to have an understanding if the participants felt a sense of belonging at the university and if there was anything more or different that could be done for the future.

The participants' responses to feeling more belonging at the university included consideration for mature students, more support throughout the year, better opportunities to engage with students, more communication prior to coming to university, better advertising of welcome week, and more mental health support.

More than half of the students felt more support was needed throughout the curriculum beyond welcome week. The participants suggested that even though loads of emails are sent out during the first week, there should be some sent out after to keep up with the support and help students transition better, like a weekly guide. This could be more useful to students and help them transition in slowly so this can reduce the overwhelmed feeling and be more helpful. The findings suggest that even though students attend a welcome and induction week, it is not enough for students to transition into university and be confident.

## Conclusion

The research provides important insight into how important it is to provide support for the welcome, induction, and transition weeks for students. The findings show that even though students attend the events, they do not seem to get much out of them and continue struggling for the support that they need, which is then not available. It shows that students want further support on a lot of different things mentioned in the findings during this week, but it is not delivered or can be overlooked due to the chaos of the first, which can overshadow this information if provided. Hence why, I think it is important to suggest something that can be done weekly, like a checklist, which also then can make it less stressful and overwhelming. A lot of studies have shown how important transitioning is as it can help a lot of non-traditional students to be able to fit in better, find their place and provide comfort, especially if students have chosen to move away from home. For universities, it is vital to understand that non-traditional and traditional students can struggle to adjust to a new way of living, and they should be providing more support beyond welcome week. This can help provide a further sense of belonging for students and give them a better experience at university. There needs to be more collaborative with students to have a better understanding for students. Even though the university says it provides a variety of events and support to suit many types of students, this is not being collaborated with students themselves as they feel the week is jam-packed and the events are not advertised well enough for all students to have access to them. Universities understanding and acknowledging that they are the source students turn to for guidance and support will help them better respond to helping students achieve a realistic view of what university entails. Treating transition as a longer process can give time for expectations to adjust, and universities may consider conforming to the realities of students' lives rather than expecting students to adjust to institutional norms. There should be a consideration to having more each term, more check-ins and providing resources for support and guidance throughout the curriculum with collaboration with each department so students can continue to have the support when they require it. The tailored approach can help improve the university experience for each student, and from the findings, it details having a better transition can be more important than course details.

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