**RAISE WORLD CAFÉ May 2024**

**BASE 1: Curriculum for Wellbeing: Student Support**

Much of the discussion focused on the issues and difficulties associated with enabling students to get access to or engage with support services, but examples were given (in italics) of practice aimed at addressing those constraints.

**Issues/constraints**

* **Knowledge of the services available (applies to both staff and students)**: Academic staff have the potential to act as a gateway or conduit for students to access support services, but this is reliant on them having reliable and up to date knowledge of what those services entail. Students can be reliant on other students/word of mouth for information on services. Staff workload can make keeping knowledge of services up to date can be problematic.

*Training and guidance. Mandatory training for staff to include such things as: identifying students at risk; signposting to other services.*

*Repeated communication with students. Induction is an obvious opportunity to provide students with information on support services, but care needs to be taken not to overwhelm students. Example from SHU of annual ‘Booster Week’, which acts as a refresher - students can attend sessions on topics such as: imposter syndrome; how to support own wellbeing.*

* **Capacity to access services**: the students’ state of wellbeing may impact on their ability to reliably access services, particularly in making the first contact. A lack of agency or confidence to seek support may also be compounded by other aspects of a student’s background or prior educational experiences.

*Staff have a role here to identify struggling students and to support them in making the first step, perhaps by contacting relevant services on the student’s behalf.*

* **Boundaries**: this applied to staff and students. Students can feel unsure about what is/is not appropriate to raise with academic staff. Academic staff can also feel unsure/unwilling to ask questions/broach topics that might be sensitive for fear of what that might lead to and that they will feel ill-equipped/unprepared to deal with.

*Training and guidance. Mandatory training for staff to include such things as: identifying students at risk; signposting to other services. Additional training suggestions included: SafeTalk – active listening; discussion of sensitive topics.*

*Opportunities for staff to learn from each other and how they have dealt with particular situations – perhaps through programme team meetings*

*Recruitment of academic staff and consideration of their aptitude for managing complexity of student need and likelihood that they will have some role in respect of pastoral care*

* **Willingness/resistance to engage with services**: engagement with services is not necessarily representative of the student body. It seems that there may be cultural barriers for students to overcome in accepting help/accessing support services. This is an area that could benefit from more research to understand the different reasons impacting on students’ willingness, or otherwise, to access support.

*Involving students from under-represented groups in participatory research could be beneficial here.*

*Normalising need for support or that the concerns a student might have are an expected part of the student journey might be helpful here. Examples included ‘Coffee Connect’ sessions (MMU?) – these are frequent opportunities for informal catch-up sessions between the programme team and students – useful for hearing the ‘student voice’ but also sharing and responding to any general concerns that students have.*

*Need to think about language/terminology that’s used in reference to support services: language can suggest deficit or appear derogatory, which can inhibit students’ engagement with services.*

* **Referral and signposting processes:** lots of issues/constraints identified here. Signposting students to support services and, in more serious/urgent cases, actively referring students to support services are important staff responsibilities. Issues can arise, however, when staff are not clear or confident in discerning student need from how they present i.e. transient stress and anxiety as an expected response to situation or more serious mental health concern requiring treatment. Coupled with increasing complexity of student needs, services can become over-subscribed. Suggests a need for greater resourcing of student services but also more **pre-emptive measures** aimed at helping students develop coping mechanisms for such things as exam stress/anxiety, and promote positive wellbeing.

Staff felt that active referral was important particularly to democratise student access to support: some students may be less confident/persistent in seeking support, therefore staff advocacy is beneficial. However, referral can be problematic:

* + There can be inconsistencies between staff: not all may view referral as part of their role; and they may not be fully aware of services.
  + No feedback on referral outcome: staff can feel frustrated at not knowing whether students have taken up support.
  + Improved case management processes and sharing of information (as appropriate) would be helpful.

*Health Passport (Edge Hill) - developed between tutor and student – and is made available to staff (module leaders/programme leaders etc) and placement providers. Means that adjustments can be put in place more quickly and students do not have to share information multiple times themselves with module leaders.*

*Promote good wellbeing for both staff and students: staff model good wellbeing and authentic compassion. Too often the focus can be on addressing consequences of poor wellbeing, need to consider how to promote/maintain positive wellbeing. Multiple ‘small acts’ can have a big impact. NTU replaced coffee breaks during long lectures with opportunities for physical activity that also led to community-building.*

* **Quality of support**: students’ perceptions/experiences of support can be negative. Perceptions can be that support is ‘tokenistic’ and not sufficiently tailored to individual needs. Important that services are evaluated.

**Opportunities for student-led activities and/or staff/student partnership**

* Student-led services: potential for greater empathy and might facilitate student engagement with support BUT important that students are paid/appropriately recompensed for their involvement in delivery – this would also incentivise engagement. Opportunity to draw on disciplinary expertise of students in delivery of services e.g. nursing, psychology
  + Nightline
  + Peer advisors
  + Peer Health Advocates
  + Residential Advisors
* Students as partners: curriculum enhancement. Example from NTU of staff/student partnership project to re-design pastoral support in Architecture. Students critiqued professional body guide as a starting point, which was felt to be overly simplistic/naïve. Linked to architecture discipline, active approach taken drawing on building design (stairs and landings) students were asked to reflect on what they would like to have known and how they would like to have been prepared for each level (stairs) and transition period (landings). Outcome from project is a curriculum for pastoral support that is due for implementation – includes such topics as ‘how to receive and respond to feedback/grades’.
* Staff/student participatory research projects – opportunity to explore topics in more detail but also to ensure that research teams reflect diversity relevant to the topic. For example, if topic relates to low participation rates of male students with wellbeing services, then research team must include male students.

**Base 2: Hidden Curriculum**

**Definitions**

There was significant interest and discussion regarding defining the ‘Hidden Curriculum’

- Hidden expectations – This was raised repeatedly and in multiple differing ways. Essentially it referenced policies and jargon that might not be immediately apparent to students, though also the opaque and sometimes unspoken expectations of academic staff with respect to work and attitude of students. It also spoke to the ability to engage with the extracurricular and those activities outside of the core academic transcript.

**- Unspoken academic rules**

Academic writing and the demystification of this was mentioned on a number of occasions also

**- Tacit knowledge**

The knowledge embedded within academic processes was seen as tacit and not always easy to articulate or share in an explicit manner

**- Association with tradition**

Many academic ‘rules’ were seen as associated with tradition, assessment methods for example, these do not necessarily align with expectations of young people entering HE

- **"Rules of the game"**

References to concepts of Cultural capital and habitus from Bordieu’s work around social exclusion and the ability to adapt to expectations based on lived experience. This also included Code switching and the ability to reframe one’s language and action based on context. These skills were largely more developed in students from higher socioeconomic classes who have a broader social and cultural experience base, with greater degrees of networks and social capital

- **Bridging & gatekeeping**

At what point does the ‘gatekeeping’ of maintaining academic standards become obfuscation and presenting barriers to student success

- **University the norm - how do graduates differ?**

Some of the students saw the ability to navigate the hidden curriculum as a way of separating themselves from the ‘pack’ where graduate level study is now the norm. They regarded the hidden curriculum and the ability to navigate as something which was desirable, if one had the means to navigate, as a mark of distinction especially with respect to employability.

- **Positionality & unconscious bias**

As gatekeepers of the Hidden Curriculum staff were aware of the impact their personal perspectives on students might impact the learners ability to navigate and parse this aspect of their learning. It was regarded as important to reflect on this.

**- Power relationships**

Likewise the exclusion of students and power imbalance might not be conducive to wellbeing

**- Capacity to engage**

**- Work experience**

These two were regarded as analogous as they spoke once again to the lived experience of students and what they were bringing to the educational domain. If some skills or experiences were not present how can this be supported. It was also an acknowledgement of how students who might have to work multiple jobs in addition to their studies might have less capacity to explore and engage with hidden curricula

**- Life skills**

**Learning not reflective of real world**

How connected is the hidden curriculum to meaningful skills which relate to the real world and employment.

**Wellbeing and hidden curriculum**

- Support positionality & consistency

- Students should feel safe

- Articulate norms and comms (communication)

- L3/L4 induction

- Authentic & reflective

- Access to social capital

- Work more connected to real world

**Barriers/challenges**

- "Hidden rules" antithesis to inclusivity

- High neurodiversity among staff & students

- Not overloading students

- Opaque terminology

- "High stakes" of work

**Support students**

- Invite students to share hidden curriculum

- Student charter

- Meaningful to students

- Acknowledge diverse student population

**Base 3: Teaching**

* Teaching
* Learning to learn
* Learning rather than teaching
* Differences between school and uni systems – change can be too much
* Level the dynamic
* Initial contact is really important
* ‘human’
* Relationship, rapport, connections
* Communication
* Student expectations
* Engaging and interesting
* Time
* Consistency in delivery
* Fear of failure for both staff and students
* Inclusive
* Relevance
* Support
* Unknown unknown
* Open to learning from each other.
* Taking risks together
* Trust issues
* Transitioning into HE
* Expectation/reality gap
* Transparency of methods
* What, why, where and when
* Link to LO’s
* Role of teacher
* Conversations – free to share opinions.
* Curriculum framework
* Blend culture
* Group size
* Choice
* Constraint
* Outside learning
* Learning to learn
* Communication v non communication
* Confidence in being a student
* Differences in delivery styles
* Often an afterthought
* Los are often an afterthought
* Los are a bit of a riddle
* Connections student to student and student to tutor
* Negotiation
* Location of students in the room
* Fear
* Travel
* On line
* Establishing the vibe
* Flexible and creative staff
* Adaptability
* Every student as an individual
* Fear of failure
* different approaches/variety
* Confusing
* Staff need to show that they are human
* Human connections
* How to be a student?
* Descriptions of module at the beginning
* Module credit
* Creative assessment

**Students as partners**

* Collaboration
* Engage in risk taking in a safe environment
* To learn from each other
* Creative risk
* Teachers take the first step
* Students as partners
* Have LOs linked specifically to wellbeing
* Student at centre of change process
* To give students confidence in what they know
* Safe space to have conversations within classroom environment.
* Compassionate group work
* Learn from mistakes!
* Learning not teaching
* Timetable is constraint
* Learning from each other, student to student, staff to staff, student to staff, staff to student
* Share knowledge
* Peer learning
* Connections
* Have projects outside the curriculum
* Have non-credit bearing modules
* FAIL – first attempt in learning
* Encourage curiosity
* Build curriculum together – build it and they will come!
* Tailor curriculum to students needs
* Co creation for needs of the group
* Ownership
* Choice
* Voice
* Co creation a common language with our students
* Modelling vulnerability
* Reduce fear

**BASE 4: Curriculum**

* Learning outcomes - specifically linked to health and well-being with students co-
* Proactive rather than reactive
* Timing - start at 9:30 AM to take account of care responsibilities
* Consider timetabling student support sessions
* Decolonizing the curriculum interventions and activities
* Avoid unconscious bias
* Welcome students
* Design of space
* Consider the impact of visuals, provide safe spaces
* Sound... playlists
* Decrease teaching and increase learning
* Recognise individuality
* AI
* Training for staff to develop expectations
* Provide a safe space for failure, allowing it to become a more positive concept.
* People's own beliefs influence policy making
* Transparency
* Balance between integrity
* Evaluate policy around exams and assessments
* New policy to ban exams
* Prevent 100% assessment items
* Conduct assessment audits
* Ignore is that quote what we do and don’t do impacts learning. Consider this in relation to assessment support, safe spaces, scaffolding, managing impostor syndrome, stage assessments
* Assessment literacy
* Assessment variety and choice to promote inclusivity
* Student ownership of assessment to support international students
* Feedback literacy
* Diversity for operationality
* Non assessment at level 4 or offer portfolios as pass fail
* Failure ... academic skills... capacity

**BASE 5: Assessment**

**Could some assessments be ‘negotiated’?**

* Co-creation of module guide
* Selected modules could be negotiated
* Freedom and choice valued by students
* Flexible presentation options for individual/ group work

**The Importance of Scaffolding**

* Formative, staged assessment for which credit is given
* Modelling important
* Potential in peer scaffolding
* Preparation for mode of assessment crucial
* Value in ‘Writing Retreats’

**Alternative Assessment: Level 4 Portfolio**

* Credit-bearing
* Reflective log – add throughout Level 4
* Staged formative feedback – one single submission at end

**The Significance of Culture**

* Clearly articulated/ negotiated cultural norms within a partnership approach is highly desirable

**Modes of Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

* Moving away from traditional written assignment? AI
* Careful use of assignment rubric (tailored)
* Assessment literacy – what does the rubric mean – develop metacognition
* Consider assessment palette at Programme level – authentic assessment/ defended
* Careful set up of VLE important from a student experience perspective
* Integration of digital skills important

**What Students Say….**

* Seeking value for money
* Assessment context/ discussions/ information needs to represent ‘safe space’
* Mid-module preferred so that interventions can be made

**‘Compassionate Curriculum Pilot’**

* Piloted by colleague from New York!

**Constraints imposed by Regulations**

* Need to exploit the grey areas/ look for loopholes!
* ‘Self-imposed straightjackets’
* Pockets of good practice but need wider change at Institutional level – improve experiences for both staff and students

**‘Campaign for Failure’?**

* Learning curve – less stigma, more value in getting it wrong

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