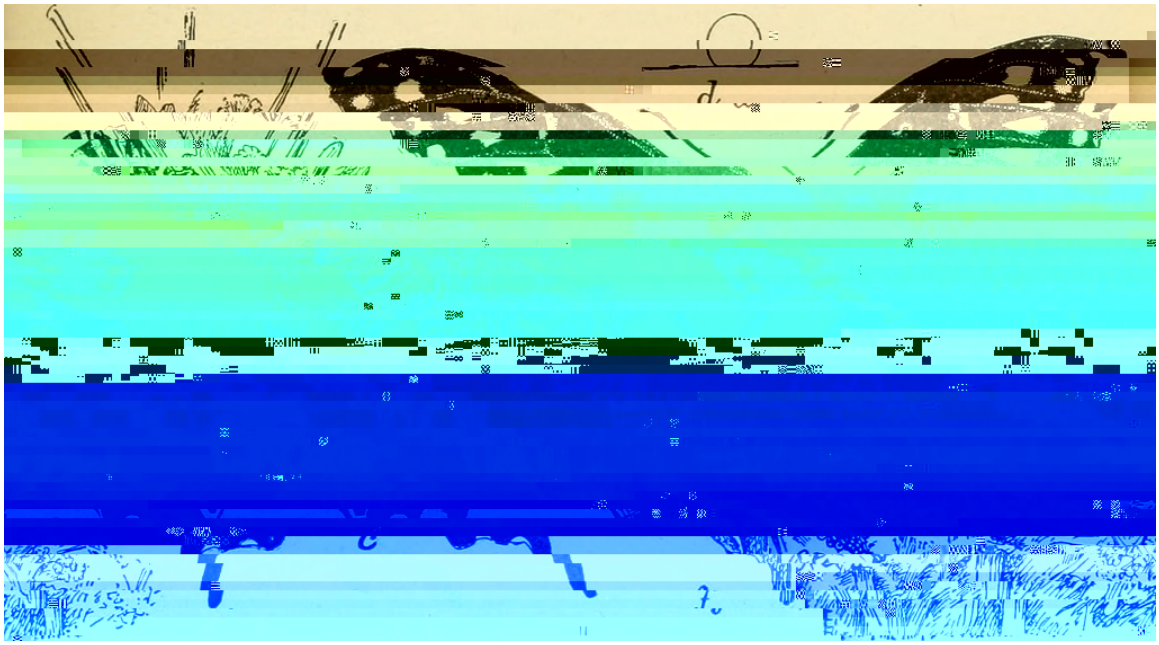

Critical perspectives on transitions into, through and beyond Higher Education

CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND EQUITY RESEARCH AND THE CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

JUBILEE LIBRARY, JUBILEE ST, BRIGHTON BN1 1GE
9.00 – 16.00, 15TH OCTOBER 2018

Morning Keynote: Dr Sarah O'Shea

Dr Sarah O'Shea is an Associate Professor in Adult, Vocational and Higher Education in the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Wollongong, Australia. Sarah has over 20 years' experience teaching in universities as well as the VET and Adult Education sector, she has also published widely on issues related to educational access and equity. Her publication record includes 27 peer reviewed journal articles, three scholarly books and five book chapters - this work has also featured in The Conversation, University World News and The Australian.

OLDER AND FIRST: NAVIGATING THE TRANSITIONS OF OLDER STUDENTS WHO ARE THE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILY TO ATTEND UNIVERSITY

Across higher education (HE) sectors, many universities are working towards equity of access amongst learners. The 'widening participation' agenda has led to a greater diversity of learners, many of whom are intersected by various biographical and cultural factors that can impact on transition into HE and educational achievement. One such group are those who are the first in their family (FiF), a collective grouping that includes larger proportions of students who are from lower socio-economic backgrounds, from ethnic minority backgrounds and also who are older (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013). Such demographics can lead to many FiF students having a limited sense of belonging within the university setting, resulting in a more complex transition to this environment and for some, greater difficulty in 'mastering the college role' (Spiegler & Bednarek, 2013, p. 330).

This presentation focuses on first-in-family students who are returning to education after a gap in learning. This older cohort is growing across a number of countries including the UK (Johnes, 2014), the United States (NESA, 2017) and also, Australia (ABS, 2012). Being older and first can have implications for student retention with higher rates of 'dropout' correlated to the age of the learner. For example, within Australia recent government statistics have indicated that students older than 25 are three times more likely to drop out in the first year of study compared to their school-leaver counterparts (Burke, 2017). Similarly within the UK, differences in retention rates amongst age groups are noted. Between 2014 and 2015, HEFCE reported that 12% per cent of older students left university, 5% higher that

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Challenging transitions: Learning from autistic students' experiences in transition to college to inform HE transitions

Dr Jacqui Shepherd, Lecturer in Education, University of Sussex

This paper will focus on the lessons learned from research into transitions of autistic learners to colleges of Further Education (FE) and how this informs a new research proposal for transitions of autistic learners into Higher Education (HE). Whilst an unsettling time for many young people, the prospect of leaving the school environment and moving on to college or university can be overwhelming for autistic students when even the smallest, everyday transitions can be problematic (Hume, 2008).

The original research set out to learn more about the lived experience of transition to FE for autistic learners and used a longitudinal case study approach to interview young people, their parents and tutors. Using 'interrupted interviews' (Shepherd, 2015) including visual methods and walking interviews, allowed for access to the substantive lived experiences through the methodological process. This paper will reference the key themes of time management, independence and vulnerability, social transition and communication in building a new participato 9.7 nwsc paacipr9-22 (c)-0.ct.9 (c)3.50 (d)-3.(to)-7.(to)-7.49 (-1(

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Breakout Presentations: Session Three

IDENTITIES, PEDAGOGIES AND ACADEMIC PRACTICES

The transition from teaching International to Home Students: Identities, Challenges and Strategies: An EAP Tutor's Experience

Deirdre McKenna, Teaching Fellow, Sussex Centre for Language Studies, University of Sussex

The EAP (English for Academic Purposes) practitioner, specialising in language and skills development for international students, may need to adapt to a changing HE sector by delivering such content to 'Home' students. At the University of Sussex, for example, a core first year (FY) module, 'Academic Development', has been designed for a cohort of over 700 'Home' students, the majority of whom are native English speakers; however, the module is delivered by Teaching Fellows largely from an English Language Teaching (ELT) background, specialising in working with non-native speakers. This diversification in the EAP/ELT role suggests that the teaching culture itself may be changing (Munn, 2017), raising questions for the practitioner in terms of their teacher identity, the methodology they apply, and their role within the wider HE context (Ashwin, 2015; Kreber, 2010).

This talk presents the recent experiences of Teaching Fellows in ELT delivering academic skills to 'Home' students. Participants completed a questionnaire focusing on areas such as teaching identity, the transferral of teaching skills from a 'non-native' to a 'native' speaker context, the challenges this poses, and the strategies found most effective in this new context. The findings highlight the difficulties, and rewards, involved in this 'identity trajectory' (Wenger, 1998 cited in Ashwin, 2015, p. 5). They also emphasise that the needs of the Home FY student can be similar to those of the international student, particularly in terms of training for academic writing (Jones, 2017, p.935). In addition, the principles which are applicable in EAP course design (Basturkmen, 2010) can also be applied to the 'Home' student context. This means that the EAP practitioner has a broad range of transferrable skills which can be evidenced through the experiences of the University of Sussex Teaching Fellows.

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How Transitions are Navigated and Experienced: Threshold Concepts in the Discipline of Writing Studies

Sue Robbins, Teaching Fellow, Sussex Centre for Language Studies, University of Sussex

The idea of threshold concepts emerged in 2003 following a UK national research project into the possible characteristics of strong teaching and learning environments in the disciplines for undergraduate education, when Meyer & Land (2003) drew up a set of concepts which they held to be central to the mastery of their subject (Economics).

The idea of a threshold concept or 'conceptual gateway' that opens up 'previously inaccessible way[s] of thinking about something' is intuitively appealing (Meyer & Land 2003). I expect we've all experienced a 'light bulb' moment, where something suddenly or finally makes sense to us. And we may have noticed this happen for one of our students or someone we work with.

Since 2003 threshold concepts have been drawn up for many other disciplines, including the discipline of writing studies where Adler-Kassner & Wardle (2015) have identified 5 metaconcepts that they deem critical for epistemological participation. In that time there has been little critical analysis of threshold concepts, and yet the concepts in themselves are slippery.

This presentation will consider the question 'whose threshold concepts?' Because whoever controls the narrative decides the threshold concepts. As Fister says 'we need to bear in mind how these thresholds we define are cultural constructs.'

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Boys from the Black Country: The educational expectations of white working-class males at a school in the West Midlands

Alex Blower, Doctoral Researcher, University of Wolverhampton

The educational success of white working class boys has been a significant focus of Government discourse within education (House of Commons, 2014). In recent times policy makers have expressed concerns with specific regard to the low number of young white working class males participating in Higher Education (BIS, 2015). This study investigates how discourses surrounding the educational success of white working class boys can play out within their lived experience as students. Utilising a qualitative methodology, this

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Afternoon Keynote: Dr Richard Waller

Dr Richard Waller is Associate Professor of the Sociology of Education at the University of the West of England, and has expertise across post-compulsory education, sociology of education, student experience/s, qualitative research methods, identity and the intersections between education, gender and social class. He is co-leader of the departmental research group, jointly leads their PhD and Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) programmes and co-convenes the universities Education Research Network (ERNie). Dr Waller is the editorial board of four journals, and a trustee of the British Sociological Association, for whom he has previously been Education Study Group convenor and conference stream co-ordinator

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