

1B Preparing for the journey: supporting students to make successful transitions into and out of taught postgraduate study

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The growth in postgraduate taught (PGT) students at the University of Glasgow has illustrated the need to focus on a distinct student journey: the challenging transition into and out of PGT study. PGT students come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and are likely to have a range of needs in terms of support for transition that needs to be better understood and supported (O'Donnell et al, 2009). In order to better support PGT students into and out of PGT study we examine students' individual needs for support during transition throughout PGT study, assess the efficacy of the current support systems, and explore whether students feel they are integrating and feel 'at home' in their subject area.

We present findings from survey and focus group research that investigates students' experiences of a range of transitions, including transition between disciplines, transition to UK study from abroad, transition to postgraduate study, returning to study from the workplace, and transition mid-programme during January entrance. Such insights are designed to guide interventions that will enhance students' engagement with the learning community, inform curriculum design and develop and embed graduate attributes. In our presentation, we will set out some initial thoughts on where, when and how to integrate various forms of support into programme delivery.

The study focuses primarily on students within the College of Science and Engineering, but has been designed in collaboration with colleagues across the University so as to maximise the relevance and transferability of the recommendations. By enhancing the PGT journey through improved understanding of the experience it is hoped that this work could act to shape the support for the PGT community across the University and enhance the student experience and learning environment, especially for PGTs.

References

O'Donnell, V., Tobbell, J., Lawthom, R. and Zammit, M. (2009) 'Transition to postgraduate study: practice, participation and the widening participation agenda.' *Active learning in Higher Education*, 10(1): 26-40.