



Editorial

Welcome to the Special Issue of JPAAP on Student Transitions. The inspiration for this Special Issue is the current national Enhancement Theme of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education, Scotland, and we are delighted to bring you this Special Issue in partnership with the QAA Scotland.

JPAAP has come to develop a wide readership in recent years, and for colleagues who are unfamiliar with the Enhancement Themes their purpose are to enhance the quality of the student learning experience within Scottish Higher Education through a co-ordinated period of enhancement activity that is focused on a specific developmental theme. Every Higher Education Institution (HEI) across Scotland engages with the Enhancement Themes, through internal and cross-institutional initiatives. The Enhancement Themes are managed by the QAA Scotland in collaboration with a Theme Leaders Group (TLG) comprising institutional and student representatives from each HEI in Scotland.

The current Enhancement Theme of Student Transitions has been running for the last three academic years, since summer 2014. The work for the theme is currently drawing to a close, and will be marked by the 3rd International Enhancement in Higher Education Conference to be held in Glasgow from 6–8 June 2017, and also by the publication of this Special Issue.

While this Special Issue of JPAAP is brought to you in conjunction with the current Enhancement Theme of Student Transitions, and indeed features several articles that relate to work undertaken in Scotland as part of the theme, we are delighted to also feature a number of contributions from colleagues based in universities across the UK and Australia.

Within this Special Issue, one of our largest issues to date, we are pleased to feature a rich range of original research papers, case studies and reviews, opinion pieces, and On the Horizon articles which report on emerging work. Between them, the full papers and other articles within this issue address several important dimensions of Student Transitions to, within, and beyond Higher Education.

Widening participation and the articulation of students from further education to higher education are addressed in the respective papers by Neil Speirs and colleagues from the University of Edinburgh, and Debbie Meharg and colleagues from Edinburgh Napier University.

The capturing of the student voice to ease transitions into and through Higher Education is the focus of the case study by Hope Christie and Karl Johnson, while other important dimensions of peer support and social integration are addressed in the papers and articles by Rick Hayman and colleagues from Northumbria University, Sidonie Ecochard and Kirsteen Wright from Edinburgh Napier University, and Shona Robertson from the University of Dundee.

Transitions within the undergraduate student journey are explored by Celine Caquineau and colleagues, in their consideration of assessment practice and transitioning to Junior Honours, and by Margaret-Anne Houston and Lindsey Carey from Glasgow Caledonian University who look at the academic reintegration of final year students following work placements and study exchanges.

Supporting the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study, and student experiences of becoming postgraduates, are to the fore in the contributions from Jessica Bownes and colleagues at the University of Glasgow, and Charlotte McPherson, Samantha Punch and Elizabeth Graham from the University of Stirling. Furthermore, in the case study by Jennifer Scally and Andrea Cameron from Abertay University, you can read about the experience of an undergraduate student who transitioned to becoming a postgraduate research student through interning as a research assistant.

Student transitions beyond Higher Education and into employment and professional practice, in areas including veterinary nursing and teaching, are explored by Patricia Logan and colleagues who represent a number of Australian universities, and by Donna Dey, Angela Lindsay and Patricia Thomson from the University of Dundee.

Cultural and intercultural dimensions in student transitions are the focus of the literature review on the challenges faced by international students that has been contributed by Sidonie Ecochard and Julia Fotheringham from Edinburgh Napier University, and in the opinion piece on 'multilingual mindset' by Argyro Kanaki from the University of Dundee.

In the second of our two opinion pieces for this Special Issue, Mike Murray and colleagues ask "Are career academics gatekeepers to students' tacit knowledge?", while in the remaining case study paper that we are pleased to feature Josephine Adekola and colleagues from the University of Glasgow report their work to support students in making the transition to blended learning.

Perhaps fittingly, in the remaining contribution to be mentioned Ashley Dennis and colleagues present their research into stakeholder perceptions of the current QAA Scotland Enhancement Theme of Student Transitions, including recommendations for future Enhancement Theme activities.

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Whether you have been engaged directly with the work of the current Enhancement Theme on Student Transitions, are engaged in your own practice and research relating to student transitions, or are simply looking to learn more about some of the work underway across the sector, we hope that this Special Issue will be of some relevance and value to yourself and colleagues.

With thanks equally to our contributing authors, reviewers, editorial officer, and the publishing students at Edinburgh Napier University who worked on this Special issue and made it possible.

Guest Editors

Dr Lorraine Anderson, University of Dundee (Deputy Chair Enhancement Theme Leaders Group)

Professor Roni Bamber, Queen Margaret University (Chair, Enhancement Theme Leaders Group)

Professor Keith Smyth, University of the Highlands and Islands (Professor of Pedagogy)