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**STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF THE
TRANSITION FROM HN TO
DEGREE STUDY**

FINAL REPORT TO ELRAH

July 2011

The University of Edinburgh

Students' Experience of the Transition from HN to Degree Study

Final Report to ELRAH

by

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July 2011

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The articulation route to degree level study is a key element of government policy on widening access to degree study.

Articulation refers specifically to students with HNCs gaining entry to the second year of a degree programme and those with an HND entering the third year ie entry with advanced standing.

ELRAH commissioned the Centre for Educational Sociology to investigate HN students' preparation for degree study while at college and then during the first year of their degree programme and to consider their experience of degree study.

Internet based student surveys were carried out in December 2010 and then in late March 2011. The sample was all HN qualified entrants in their first year of degree study in the most active ELRAH HEIs; this enables comparison between articulating and non articulating HN students.

It is currently extremely difficult to easily identify articulating students from university records, and this made it impossible to obtain contact details for a comprehensive sample of students to be contacted by the survey. The web-link was therefore distributed and publicized by Articulation Support Advisers.

Findings of the First Student Survey

Respondents

Questionnaires were completed by 217 students, giving an approximate response rate of 25% of the HN student cohort. 76 were from Edinburgh Napier; 60 from Queen Margaret; 68 from Heriot-Watt; and 13 from Stirling University. The low figure for Stirling was due mainly to its late entry to the survey.

A higher proportion of survey respondents are female and in the 25 and over age group than in the full HN cohort in the universities concerned.

The majority of students had previously studied for their HN qualifications in a College that was part of the ELRAH group.

Progression from HN to degree study

Over three quarters of respondents had obtained their HN qualification in 2010, and therefore had no break between completing HN and starting degree study. Most believed their degree course was a natural progression from their HN course.

A small number of students had taken a break between HN and degree study, of whom most were resuming degree study to advance their career.

For most students progression from HN to degree study was partly or wholly within the same subject area. Although articulating students were more likely to be continuing with

the same subject, perhaps surprisingly a third of non articulating students also reported that their degree was in the same subject as their HN qualification.

Three quarters of students with HND articulated, entering the third year of their degree programme.

Just over half of students with HNC qualifications applied for and entered first year of their degree programme. The most common reasons for non-articulation were “I thought I would struggle academically in 2nd year”, “I wanted the full university experience”.

Most students thought that they had started their degree at the right year for them. A majority were planning to go on to Honours.

Information and advice from college

The majority of respondents had received at least some advice at College concerning their choice of degree and university and the application process.

Just over half had received at least some advice on general study skills for degree study but fewer students said they had received advice with respect to more specific skills.

Tutors were the main source of advice at college.

Transition from college to university

Just over half of all students felt they had been at least quite well prepared for degree study. Students who articulated were more likely to feel un-prepared than non articulating students.

Similarly, students who had articulated were more likely to say that they found the change from college to university difficult.

In their open-ended comments, students pointed out issues that made the change from college to university more difficult, including unfamiliarity with: computer and email systems; essay writing and research methods; referencing systems; assessment systems including timed written exams; and aspects of course content.

Three quarters of respondents who entered 2nd or 3rd year of their degree course had attended induction courses specifically for them. Among the small number of students who did not attend an induction programme the most common reason given was “I didn’t know there was one”.

The majority of students who attended the induction programmes found them helpful. Some suggestions were made for further improvement, including the need for course lecturers to identify essential course content and knowledge and skills covered in previous years of degree programmes, and to provide additional workshops covering these areas for direct entrants.

Findings of the Second Student Survey

Respondents

Questionnaires were completed by 155 students, giving an approximate response rate of 20% of the HN student cohort. 67 were from Edinburgh Napier; 42 from Queen Margaret; 27 from Heriot-Watt; and 12 from Stirling University.

As in the first survey, a higher proportion of respondents is female and in the 25 and over age group than in the full HN cohort in the universities concerned.

The majority of students had previously studied for their HN qualifications in a College that was part of the ELRAH group.

Progression from HN to degree study

Three quarters of HND students articulated compared with under a half of those with HNCs.

Older students aged 25 and over were more likely to have articulated than younger students.

For most students there was some continuity in the subject area of their HN and degree. HND students were more likely to be continuing with the same subject than were those with HNCs.

While just under two thirds of articulating students were taking a degree in the same subject as their HN qualification, a significant minority (a third) of non-articulating students were also continuing with the same subject.

Most students were positive about taking the HN route to degree study. It had variously provided: a way to get back into education after a break; a bridge between school and university; and a stepping stones approach with certificated intermediate exit points.

Most thought they had started at the right year for them and were satisfied with their choice of degree.

Students' comments indicate that concerns about workload and the different teaching and learning approaches had influenced their decision not to articulate but for some students personal circumstances had made articulation the best option for them.

Preparation for transition

Most thought they had been at least quite well prepared for degree study although older students were less positive about this.

Nevertheless, a majority of students had found the transition from HN to degree study difficult. Students who had articulated were more likely to have experienced the transition as a difficult one as were older students.

The perceptions of students who had completed both surveys had moved in the direction of finding the transition rather more difficult by the time of the second survey.

Some students thought their college could not have done more to prepare them for the transition but many suggested that colleges should offer more preparation for academic

writing, referencing and the type of assessment and level of independent study at university; the chance to try out the “university style”; and should improve curriculum matching. There was some suggestion that college was perhaps too easy and but also the recognition that teaching and learning approaches are different in college and university.

It appears from students’ comments that not all colleges are raising possibility of moving on to degree study with HN students.

Experience of degree study

The areas of degree study that students had most difficulty with were: teaching methods; time management; not knowing about a topic other students had done; and the level of independent study expected.

Articulating students were more likely to have found these aspects difficult as well as the type and level of assessment and social/making friends than did non articulating students.

Most students had not thought seriously about leaving their degree. Among those who had, a determination to complete a process they had invested in, a desire to improve their career prospects and the support of friends and staff had made them continue.

Advice and support

Under half of students had attended workshops and courses on degree study; the most commonly attended one were on using the library, academic essay writing and referencing. Lack of time and timetabling clashes appear to have prevented students from attending.

On-line and computer based materials on various aspects of degree study were used by a majority of students.

In terms of the sources of advice and support used by students, they were most likely to consult other students, their academic tutors or programme or course leader and university library staff. A minority used student support for financial advice and help with study skills; articulating students were less likely to consult study skills advisers than were non-articulating students.

What more could universities do to support HN students

Students commented at some length about what their university could do to develop its support for HN students.

They were appreciative of the support currently on offer but also suggested more awareness raising about the support available.

Students suggested that universities, especially, lecturing staff, should be more aware of HNC/D students, their previous learning experience and take this into account in their teaching. University staff could do more to enable HN students to get to know existing students.

They wanted universities to provide more opportunities before or early in the academic year for them to find out about and experience various aspects of degree study and to be given practical examples that exemplify the standard required.

Students also suggested greater liaison between colleges and universities to help prepare and support HN students.

Students' plans

Most students in third year were planning to continue to Honours; of the others, half were planning to find full-time employment.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of the study are an endorsement of the opportunity that the HN route offers individuals to access degree programmes.

A significant minority of HN students did not articulate. While this was a positive choice for some, others did not because of concerns about coping with the academic demands: more needs to be done to prepare students and to develop articulation routes so they have the confidence to articulate.

The decision of some students not to articulate should be respected.

Most students found the transition from HN to degree difficult and this was especially so for those who had articulated. The different pedagogy; gaps or lack of match in the formal curriculum; level of demand and insecurity about standards; unfamiliarity with the university environment; and lack of social support were all areas of difficulty.

There are significant gaps relating to specific study skill support at college. Lack of time and timetabling clashes prevented some students from attending advice and support workshops and other activities in their first year of degree study but these events are appreciated.

On-line or computer based materials are important sources of help for students in their degree study.

Current provision does not fully prepare HN students for the transition to degree study. The report makes a number of recommendations relating to: awareness raising about progression and articulation to degree; the more specific advice and support that is required; the involvement of teaching staff; the continued development of workshops and on-line or computer based materials; possible optional elements in HN programmes; and better curricular matching.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The articulation route to degree level study is a key element of government policy on widening access to degree study (SFC 2007¹). Articulation refers specifically to students with HNCs gaining entry to the second year of a degree programme and those with an HND entering the third year. As well as a means of widening access since colleges attract more students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds than universities (SFC 2011²), the articulation route is also seen as cost effective for the public purse since it enables college students to complete a four-year degree during the same time as a school-leaver entrant to university but at lower annual cost during the years at college. The cost effectiveness of the articulation route has recently acquired new resonance, as concerns about funding have encouraged discussion of more flexible pathways into and through higher education to reduce costs (Universities Scotland 2010, Scottish Government 2011³).

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has supported the articulation of students with Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) to degree study since 2004; this support was enhanced following the report *Articulation for All?* which resulted in increased funding being made available to develop new and more effective articulation routes between college and universities, to increase the number of students articulating and to improve the support available to them in their transition. The Regional Articulation Hubs, including the Edinburgh, Lothians, Fife and Borders Regional Articulation Hub (ELRAH) were established as part of this review.

One of the key areas of work for ELRAH is the development, in collaboration with its college and university partners, of a range of transition support and guidance for students to ensure they are able to take advantage of the articulation opportunities open to them, help them in the transition process and enable them to successfully complete their course of study once in higher education. As part of this work, ELRAH commissioned the Centre for Educational Sociology at the University of Edinburgh to carry out a study to investigate the impact of the transition support and guidance on the student experience and to highlight any areas where development might be needed.

Aims of the study

In discussion with ELRAH about how best to investigate students' experience of transition and the impact of the available transition support and guidance, it was agreed to conduct two internet surveys with students who entered their degree programme in the most active ELRAH HEIs in 2010-11

The surveys aim to investigate articulating students' experience and opinion of:

- (i) the preparation for undergraduate study received from their college and HEI before entry to their degree programme; and

¹ Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2007). *Articulation for All?* Edinburgh: SFC.

² SFC (2011). *Learning for All: fifth update report on measures of success.* Edinburgh: SFC

³ Scottish Government (2011). *Higher Education Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions, 2009-10.* Statistical Publication Notice. Edinburgh. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/347851/0115869.pdf>
Universities Scotland (2010). *Towards a Scottish solution.* Edinburgh: Universities Scotland

(ii) the ongoing activities and support during their first year of degree study.

While the prime focus of the study is articulating students ie those entering year 2 or 3 of a degree programme, it was decided that it would be valuable for the study to also include HN students who have gone into first year for comparison purposes and to investigate the reasons why some HN students do not articulate. The study also aimed to investigate the extent to which students had not entered degree study straight from college, the reasons for this and their activities and any additional qualifications undertaken in the time in-between.

The first survey took place in December 2010 and the second in late March 2011.

Methodology

The target sample for the survey was Scottish-domiciled students in their first year of degree study at Edinburgh Napier, Queen Margaret, and Heriot-Watt Universities whose entry qualification was an HNC or HND. The participation of Stirling University was agreed at a later stage of the survey planning process.

It is currently extremely difficult to identify HN and articulating students accurately from university records (this problem was investigated by a separate ELRAH research project⁴), and this made it impossible to obtain contact details for a comprehensive sample of students to be contacted by the survey. In order to overcome this difficulty, the Articulation Support Advisers were responsible for collecting contact details of the students, and for publicising the survey to students through a variety of means. Due to the later stage at which Stirling University decided to participate in the survey, and the timing of students' vacation there, publicity to students at Stirling was limited. Response to the surveys was also encouraged by the offer of entry to a Prize Draw for all completed questionnaires.

The questionnaires were developed in collaboration with the Articulation Support Advisers and relevant ELRAH staff. The first survey focused on students' satisfaction with the preparation and support they had received while at college and in their first few months in their HEI. The second survey covered the subsequent support/activities they have received/participated in, their experience of degree study and suggestions for developing support provision for HN students. While most of the questions were pre-coded lists, the questionnaires also included a number of open-ended questions to allow respondents to say more about their own experiences and to raise issues that they perceived to be relevant. In both surveys students were offered the opportunity to request a contact with support services.

The surveys were internet-based, designed using SNAP software and were mounted on the CES website. Copies of the questionnaires are given in Appendix 1 and 2.

In the next section we present the findings of the first survey and then in section 3 we report on the second survey. Additional data from each of the surveys is contained in Appendices 3 and 4.

⁴ 'Recording and reporting student articulation from Scottish colleges to Scottish HEIs through UCAS: research report and specification of change requirement' Croxford L, Howieson C and Steele D. ELRAH, January 2011. <http://www.elrah.ac.uk/Documents.aspx?itemID=bc5bdc4e-9933-41e4-ab7f-745f88c0f247>

SECTION 2: FINDINGS OF THE FIRST STUDENT SURVEY

Characteristics of respondents

By the end of December 2010, questionnaires had been completed by 217 students; which is approximately a 25% response rate from the HN student cohort. The institutional distribution of respondents is summarised in Table 2.1; although there are substantial numbers from Edinburgh Napier, Queen Margaret and Heriot-Watt Universities, the sample size for Stirling University is too small to allow detailed analysis. As noted earlier, the late involvement of Stirling University in the survey limited the opportunities to publicise the survey while the particular timing of the vacation period at Stirling coincided with the survey; these factors account for the small number of respondents from this institution.

Table 2.1: Universities attended by respondents

	Number	%
Edinburgh Napier	76	35
Queen Margaret	60	28
Heriot-Watt	68	31
Stirling	13	6
	(n)	(100)
	(217)	

Of the 217 respondents to the survey 130 (60%) were female (Appendix 1, Table A1.1). The majority of respondents (55%) were under the age of 25, but the sample included a wide age-range (Appendix 1, Table A1.2). Most students (89%) were studying full-time at university (Appendix 1, Table A1.3).

The majority of students (64%) had previously studied for their HN qualifications in a college that was part of the ELRAH group, while most of the remainder had attended colleges elsewhere in Scotland (Appendix 1, Table A1.4). Some 13 respondents (6%) say they are studying for their degree in the college where they took their HN rather than at the university campus.

Comparing the characteristics of the students who completed the survey against the full HN cohort in the universities concerned, there are two main differences: a higher proportion of survey respondents are female and in the 25 and over age group than in the HN cohort as a whole.

Reasons for decision to progress from HN to degree study

Over three quarters of respondents had obtained their HN qualification in 2010, and therefore had no break between completing HN and starting degree study. Their reasons for going on to degree study are summarised in Table 2.2. The majority of respondents believed “it was the natural progression from my HN course”, “it fitted in with my career plans” and/or “I was interested in the course content/subject”.

Table 2.2: Why did you decide to apply to University?

	%
It was the natural progression from my HN course	74
It fitted in with my career plans	64
I was interested in the course content/subject	63
I enjoy being a student	30
It was suggested to me by staff in my college	19
I was encouraged by my family	18
I was encouraged by my friends/classmates	9
A lot of my friends/class mates were applying	7
I couldn't find a job	7
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(168)</i>

Experiences of respondents who took a break between HN and degree

Just under a quarter of respondents (23%) had not started a degree course straight after gaining their HN (Appendix 1, Table A1.5); they were asked about their main activity during this time and the reasons for not progressing immediately to degree study. Most had been in employment, either full or part time, in the period between their HN and degree; a few had been in education (Appendix 1, Table A1.6).

The most common reasons for taking time out between HN and degree study (Appendix 1, Table A1.7) were:

- I wanted a break from studying (33%);
- I couldn't afford to (23%);
- I was offered a job (21%).

Some respondents provided further open-ended comments:

"I only discovered i wanted to attend university during the break from studying"; "I was satisfied with my work for a short while but then realised I had to do something more challenging; "I thought I would be able to get a job related to my HNC qualification, but couldn't find anything so decided uni would be a good idea and will hopefully led to me getting a job that pays more than the minimum wage!"

The main reasons given for deciding to apply to a degree course now (Appendix 1, Table A1.8) were:

- To advance my career/part of my career plans (58%);
- I was interested in the course content/subject (35%);
- Change of career direction/re-train (27%);
- I always planned to apply after taking a break (23%).

Progression from HN to degree study

The survey explored the extent to which students with HN qualifications achieved articulation between the levels of their HN qualification and degree course. These results are summarized by Table 2.3. There is a considerable difference between HNC and HND

students in the extent of their articulation: less than half of students with HNC qualifications applied for entry to 2nd year of their degree course compared with around three quarters of HND students who applied for and entered the 3rd year (46% vs 74%, table 2.3). Overall, 61% of HN students articulated. Older students - 25 and over - were more likely to have entered with advanced standing (73%) than those aged 24 and under (51%).

Table 2.3: Articulation between HN and degree courses (% within HN level)

		HNC %	HND %
Year of study applied for:	1 st year	54	10
	2 nd year	46	17
	3 rd year	-	73
Year of study entered:	1 st year	54	9
	2 nd year	46	18
	3 rd year	-	74
		(n)	(114)

Table 2.4: Continuity of subject studied between HN and degree (% within HN level)

Is your HN qualification in the same subject as your degree?	All %	HNC %	HND %
Yes	51	43	56
Partly	36	39	34
No	13	18	9
(n)	(216)	(94)	(114)

For most students, progression from HN to degree study was partly or fully within the same subject area, but slightly more students with HNC were starting degree courses in different subjects than their HN qualification (Table 2.4). A higher proportion of those who articulated were taking a degree in the same subject areas as their HN compared with non articulating students (articulating: 62% “yes” vs non articulating: 36% “yes”, Table 2.5).

Table 2.5: Continuity of subject studied: articulating and non-articulating students

Is your HN qualification in the same subject as your degree?	Articulating students %	Non-articulating students %
Yes	62	36
Partly	33	44
No	5	20
(n)	(112)	(80)

Table 2.6 summarises the reasons given by HNC students for applying for entry to first year of their degree programme. The most common reasons were “I thought I would struggle academically in 2nd year”, “I wanted the full university experience”, and “I thought it would be easier to make friends”.

In the case of the students with HND qualifications who applied to enter 1st or 2nd year of a degree programme, the most common reasons they gave were “The course I wanted to do was only partly related/not related to my HN qualification” and “I thought I would struggle academically in 3rd year”.

Table 2.6: Reasons for non-articulating applications* (% within HN level)

	HN Qualification	
	HNC	HND
I thought I would struggle academically in 2 nd (3 rd) year	47	37
I wanted the full university experience	45	13
I thought it would be easier to make friends	31	10
The course I wanted to do was only partly related/not related to my HN qualification	25	40
The university wouldn't accept me to 2 nd (3 rd) year	20	30
I didn't know I could apply for entry to 2 nd (3 rd) year if I had an HNC (HND)	16	10
My friends/classmates were applying to 1 st or 2 nd year	10	10
I was advised by my college not to apply to 2 nd (3 rd) year	8	10
Other	4	10
	(n)	(51) (30)

* ie students with HNC applying to 1st year and students with HND applying to 1st or 2nd year

All respondents were asked whether, on reflection, they thought the year they had started was the right one for them: almost three quarters replied “yes”, with just 9% saying “no” and 18% “not sure” (Appendix 1, Table A1.9). There was no difference in the views of articulating and non articulating students about whether or not they had started at the right year.

A number of respondents provided further open-ended comments in response to this question. Some expressed frustration at repeating the same course material when entering 1st year:

“..for the most part I covered the aspects of my university course during my time at college. I feel I'm not learning anything yet”. (HND student, 1st year)

But others were glad that they had opted not to articulate:

“the jump between college and university is a large one. The work difficulty, the work load, the individual responsibility is much higher at university. If I had started in second year I feel that I would not have coped as there is a vast quantity of knowledge gained in first year which was not provided to nearly the same standard in my college”. (HNC student, 1st year)

Some who had articulated had found gaps in their knowledge and skills. For example one HND student entering 3rd year said:

“Entering at this year has been a challenge due to a lack of training in some key areas of the course. The current students learned these skills in 1st and 2nd year and so they are no longer covered, but are greatly required.”

Another commented:

“Sometimes in class I feel like a fish out of water ... the only the ones that have come from second year at university understand what is going on”. (HND student, 3rd year)

For others articulating was not a problem:

“it’s a natural progression”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“the course content follows on well from the college course introducing more detail and background to topics previously studied at college”. (HND student, 2nd year)

Students’ comments also reveal how individual circumstances influence what is the “right year” at which to start:

“As I have a family the quicker I could get my degree the better. I think 2nd year would have given me time to get used to university though”. (HND student, 3rd year)

Other responses indicated a desire for more help with the transition; for example one HNC student entering 2nd year said:

“I feel the level of work required in second year is at the appropriate level for me but that the lack of guidance in terms of finding my way about, knowing the correct procedures for submitting coursework, filling out exam paperwork etc. has made it very stressful. I think it would benefit future direct entry students to have some sort of separate information or guidance class so they can address some of the things they've missed by not entering in first year. It would also be beneficial to inform students about the level of IT knowledge needed for second year entry as I was a complete novice so found this element of my second year very difficult.”

Nearly two thirds of respondents were aiming to graduate with an Honours degree (65%); most of the others were still to decide (22%) while 9% planned on gaining an Ordinary degree (Appendix 1, Table A1.10). A very small number of students (8) were unsure of the difference between an Ordinary and Honours degree. Articulating and non articulating students had similar intentions and there was also no variation by age or gender.

Information and advice from college

The survey asked students how much information and advice they received at College concerning their choice of degree and university and the application process (Appendix 1, Table A1.11). The majority of respondents said they had received some or a lot of advice about how to apply through UCAS (67%), choosing a university (55%), choosing a degree course (54%), and how their HN qualification would link with their degree course (54%). A

minority also said they received some advice about options available on their degree course (38%).

In response to questions about information and advice on study skills, just over half said they received at least some advice on general study skills for degree study (54%) (Appendix 1, Table A1.12). However, fewer students said they had received advice with respect to more specific skills, and a substantial minority said they had not received any information or advice with respect to the following:

- Using the university library (45% no advice);
- The type of assessment on degree courses (42% no advice);
- Lab work (40% no advice);
- Using electronic and on-line tools (38% no advice).

With respect to student finance, 45% said they had received at least some information and advice, but less than a third had received information and advice about the personal support services available at university (Appendix 1, Table A1.13).

Key sources of advice while at college (Appendix 1, Table A1.14) were:

- Advice from tutors (67%);
- Visit to university (41%);
- Friends (39%);
- Talks about your degree course from academic university staff visiting the college (30%).

In their open-ended comments about sources of advice, students' comments ranged from the positive to the negative:

"I was lucky enough to have a fantastic course leader and collection of tutors who supported me in many ways and helped me access as much help and support as I needed." (HND student 3rd year)

"Most advice came by request from class members and given by tutors if they happened to know, otherwise we were told to use the internet." (HNC student, 1st year)

"Was not encouraged at college to go on to Higher Education, despite very good grades...no information provided...". (HN qualification not stated, 1st year)

Several comments highlighted the fact that since HNC/Ds also have the function of preparation for employment then advice might not be focused on the transition to degree study:

"Not really...The main route of progression upon completion was to employment". (HNC student, 2nd year)

Transition from college to university

Students were asked to reflect on how well prepared they felt they had been for university, including a comparison between how well prepared they felt **before** starting university, and their perception **after three months** at university.

The majority of students responded that before they had started their degree programme, they had thought they were at least quite well prepared (70% very well/quite well prepared) (Appendix 1, Table A1.15). There was little difference in the perceptions of students who had articulated and those who had not about this.

After three months study, there was some decline in the number of students who still felt they had been at least quite well prepared for university with 58% responding that they had been very or quite well prepared (Table 2.7). But what is striking is that although responses to the first question about level of preparedness **before** starting their degree revealed no difference between articulating and non articulating students, when asked to judge their level of preparedness **after** three months of degree study, there is a considerable variation in the views of the two groups of students. By this point articulating students were more negative about how well prepared they had been with less than half of them responding that that they had been very or quite well prepared (47%). This contrasts with 72% of non articulating students who were relatively satisfied with how well prepared they felt for university.

Table 2.7: Opinion of preparedness for university after three months of degree study

Looking back now, how prepared were you?	All	Articulating students	Non-articulating students
	%	%	%
very well prepared	12	7	18
quite well prepared	46	40	54
not very well prepared	31	37	23
not at all prepared	11	16	5
	(n) (213)	(110)	(79)

Similarly, students who articulated had experienced more difficulty with the change from college to university than HN students who had not done so. Well over half of articulating students had found the change quite or very difficult compared with a quarter of non articulating students (59% vs 25%, Table 2.8). There were no significant differences between universities in the extent to which they found the change from college to university easy or difficult or the extent to which students felt prepared or un-prepared. The key differences in students' perceptions relate to whether or not they had achieved advanced standing and had articulated.

Table 2.8: Opinion of difficulty of change from college to university: if articulated or not

How have you found the change from college to university?	All	Articulating students	Non-articulating students
	%	%	%
very easy	9	3	16
quite easy	46	38	59
quite difficult	36	46	20
very difficult	10	13	5
	(n) (211)	(112)	(80)

In their open-ended comments, students pointed out issues that made the change from college to university more difficult, including unfamiliarity with: computer and email systems; essay writing and research methods; referencing systems; assessment systems including timed written exams:

“Confused about how the assessment process worked, was not sure what was expected from me in exams, was quite overwhelmed by the amount of things I needed to deal with for example email systems, how to use the library etc. I felt quite isolated because I did not know any one and was not sure what the procedure was to contact my student mentor”. (HND student, 2nd year)

An issue for some students was simply establishing what was expected of them:

“Uni does things very different from the way we were taught and its hard trying to find out the way the university wants things done”. (HND student, 2nd year)

“The way the university works is different from college way and is hard to know what is expected when we are direct entries to 3rd year”. (HND student, 3rd year)

Other noted that because they had entered second or third year, staff could assume that they were familiar with the system:

“Because I was a direct entrant into level two, I found it was automatically assumed that I knew how the online systems worked, such as WebCT, elibrary, Turnitin, etc which I felt had put me at a disadvantage”. (HND student, 2nd year)

‘Lecturers could refrain from using statements such as “you’ll have learned that last year”. Some of us haven’t.’ HNC student, 2nd year

Essay writing and referencing were mentioned by a number of HN students:

“We did do referencing at college but not to the same standard of what the University wants us to do, for example: Harvard referencing never heard of it till I came to the university”. (HND student 2nd year)

“The lack of preparation I had when I started university was the importance of the Harvard reference system and writing essays. During the college we were barely taught the subject and in addition I had never before wrote an essay”. (HND student, 3rd year)

One student entering 2nd year with HNC expressed the difficulty as follows:

“The change in terms of workload is significant but the level of work required is manageable and I feel for this reason entering into first year would have been a waste of a year. However, entering into a large class, who all know each other and who all have the experiences of first year is daunting and stressful, especially as no extra guidance was provided for direct entry students. There were first year introductory classes, which direct entry students attended, but they were very much aimed at first year students with little relevance to me. Overall I think the academic transition was quite easy but that lacking the “assumed knowledge” which would have been acquired in first year has made it difficult.”

Another set of comments contrasted the different ethos and approach of college and university that made their transition more difficult:

“Due to having a family, having to go into university to practice group presentations is very difficult. College is aimed at every kind of student, university seems to be aimed at students that have no other commitments eg children”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“College was better in that the lecturers were approachable and easy to talk to. Don’t feel that way at university”. (HND student, 3rd year)

Induction

The majority of respondents (76%) who entered 2nd or 3rd year of their degree course had attended induction courses specifically for them (Appendix 1, Table A1.16). The proportion attending was highest at Queen Margaret University, where 94% of respondents had attended an induction programme. Among the small number of students who did not attend an induction programme the most common reason given was “I didn’t know there was one” (Appendix 1, Table A1.17).

At all universities the majority of students who attended the induction programmes found them helpful: 27% said their induction programme was “very helpful”, and a further 47% said it was “quite helpful” (Appendix 1, Table A1.18).

Finally, students were asked for suggestions for improving the induction programme for students starting 2nd or 3rd year. Many said that the induction programme was already very good but there were a number of suggestions for induction to be staggered over a longer period, and one suggestion for a summer school. Others suggested that it would be helpful for induction to include mentors, and also more practical and also specific course-related input:

“My University did a great job with the induction, that set me up particularly well. The only suggestion I have is perhaps 1 hour seminars from lecturers who will be taking your modules to give you a greater insight into what is expected. This is because I believe the lecturers don't spend enough time “bringing us up to speed” on their particular subject or way of working. I certainly felt in my classes the lecturers often assumed that the students knew the way of things.” (HND student, 3rd year)

“The induction was all about what we expected from university... but we needed more practical information eg about the timetable, the library, essay writing skills, how to study for exams (as personally I didn’t have exams in college)”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“Give more direct information and segregation into more specific classes and have the opportunity to meet fellow students on the same course in the same year”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“Bring along the mentors so students can get to know there are mentors and know where to find them and what they can do for you”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

Several students highlighted the difficulty of knowing about the induction programmes and getting accurate information about timing and venue:

“My lack of internet and fixed abode etc was most likely the contributory factor in missing this information. Not all prospective students have regular internet access or phone credit and perhaps a system which enables the university to access information regarding which of the enrolled students had accessed this information and who have not would allow university staff

to personally chase up any students who have not accessed this information". (HND student, 2nd year)

A number of students said it would be helpful if course directors could provide information on the knowledge and skills that had been covered in previous years, so that direct entrants could be alerted to things they had missed. Some asked for specific workshops to cover things they had missed, with areas such as essay writing, referencing, timetabling, assessment procedures and computer systems being mentioned by a number of students:

"I think we should have been given a clearer idea of what we had missed in 1st year, what we'd need to read to catch up. On my course we found that out 7 weeks into the course that we needed to do extra reading on a new topic... whilst revising for exams and getting coursework in". (HNC student, 2nd year)

"Emphasise that webCT, referencing, and essay writing skills are imperative to a successful transition to uni. Look at simplifying the timetable. Organise for the handbooks for each module to be available to be purchased and delivered prior to uni starting, I would say at the beginning of the summer, that would have been an immense help. Finally all modules to have a handbook". (HND student, 3rd year)

SECTION 3: FINDINGS OF THE SECOND STUDENT SURVEY

Respondents to the second survey

A total of 155 students responded to the second survey, an overall response rate of 20%. 54 of these students had also completed the first survey and we report on this specific group where relevant but all other analyses – the vast majority – are of all students who completed the second survey.

Table 3.1 shows the universities attended by respondents. As in the first survey, more women than men completed the survey (59% female: 41% male) (Appendix 2, Table A2.1). The age range of respondents was also similar to the first survey with a majority of respondents under 25 (59%) but with a wide spread of ages again evident (Appendix 2, Table A2.2). Respondents were overwhelmingly studying on a full-time basis (Appendix 2, Table A2.3). A small number of students, 12 in total, were studying for their degree in the college in which they had gained their HN.

Table 3.1: Universities attended by respondents

	number	% of all respondents
Edinburgh Napier	67	45
Queen Margaret	42	28
Heriot-Watt	27	18
Stirling	12	8
	(n)	(100)

Just under two thirds (63%) had taken their HN qualification at one of the ELRAH partner colleges, virtually all of the others had studied for their HN at a college elsewhere in Scotland (Appendix 2, Table A2.4).

Comparing the characteristics of the students who completed the survey against the full HN cohort in the universities concerned, the main differences are that a higher proportion of survey respondents are female and in the 25 and over age group than in the HN cohort as a whole.

Progression from HN to degree study

The extent to which students with HN qualifications articulate ie achieve advanced standing, is a key issue for ELRAH. Table 3.2 shows considerable differences between students with HNCs and HNDs in the extent to which they articulate. Over a half of HNC students did not do so with 54% starting in 1st year compared with just over three quarters of HND students who articulated, going into 3rd year (76%). There was also a difference in the extent of articulation relating to students' age: older students - 25 and over - were more likely to have entered with advanced standing than younger students aged 24 and under (71% vs 58%) (Appendix 2, Table A2.5).

Table 3.2: Articulation between HN and degree (% within HN level)

Year of study entered	HNC	HND
	%	%
1 st year	54	4
2 nd year	42	20
3 rd year	3	76
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(59)</i>
		<i>(90)</i>

This second survey did not ask students which year that had *applied for* but on the basis of the results of the first survey, it is very likely that most of these students will have actually applied for year 1 entry despite the articulation routes that have been mapped out.

For most students there was some continuity between the subject area of their HN qualification and their degree: over a half were taking a degree in the same subject area and for another third or so their degree was partly related to their HN (53% and 36%, Table 3.3). Students with HNCs were somewhat more likely than their counterparts with HNDs to have embarked on a degree in a different subject than their HN qualification but we know from the first survey that this is not the only or indeed the main reason why students do not articulate (see Table 2.6 in Section 2).

Table 3.3: Continuity of subject area between HN and degree

If HN qualification in the same subject as degree	All	HNC	HND
	%	%	%
yes	53	48	56
partly	36	35	38
no	11	17	7
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(155)</i>	<i>(59)</i>
		<i>(59)</i>	<i>(90)</i>

As might be expected students who articulated were much more likely to be continuing to study in the same subject area than non-articulating students: 64% of articulating students were taking a degree in the same area as their HN qualification compared with 34% of non-articulating students (Table 3.4). Nevertheless the fact that just over a third of non-articulated students were actually continuing with the same subject at degree level is perhaps less expected in view of the articulation routes that have been mapped.

Table 3.4: Continuity of subject studied: articulating and non-articulating students

Is your HN qualification in the same subject as your degree?	Articulating students	Non-articulating students
	%	%
yes	64	34
partly	34	42
no	2	25
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(95)</i>
		<i>(53)</i>

Student views on their progression from HN to degree study

Most students were positive about having taken the HN route to degree study with 83% responding that it was right for them. Only 3% said no while the remaining 12% were unsure (Table 3.5). Opinion in this respect did not differ between articulating and non-articulating students nor did it vary by students' age or gender.

Table 3.5: If the HN route to degree study was right one

	%
yes	83
no	3
not sure	14
	(n) (155)

Students' comments relate to the benefit of the HN route as a way to get back into education after a break; as a bridge between school and university; and as more gradual "stepping stones" approach:

"I had been out of education for a year or so and it helped me get back into it...college definitely created a good bridge". (HNC student, 1st year degree)

"I think I would've struggled going straight from school. Doing the HNC allowed a more gradual learning curve which suited me better". (HNC student, 1st year degree)

"It was a quick and easy stepping stones way of seeing whether returning to Uni as a mature student was the correct move". (HNC student, 2nd year degree)

"I have my HND behind me should I fail the degree". (HND student, 3rd year)

Students were asked if they thought that the year they had started at had been the right one for them and over three quarters responded positively about their starting point (78%); a small minority thought that it had not been the right year (13%) while the remainder were unsure (9%, Table 3.6). There were no differences between the views of students who had articulated and those who had not. The only variation in opinion related to age with younger students being slightly more positive than those 25 and over that they had started at the right year for them (81% vs 72% right year).

Among the group of students (54 in total) who completed both surveys, their views had not changed in the time between completing the first and second surveys: the large majority were still of the same view that they had started at the right year for them.

Table 3.6: If started at the right year of degree study: student opinion by age

	All students	24 & under	25 & over
	%	%	%
yes	78	81	72
no	13	8	21
not sure	9	11	7
	(n) (152)	(88)	(61)

Students' comments give an insight into their thinking about the year at which they had started. Many comments concerned the workload and different teaching and learning approaches at degree level and for some students this had influenced their decision not to articulate:

“A lot more is expected of students at degree level than in HNC. The first year of university is vital for learning how to do independent studies effectively...the first year is a process of skill learning just as much as it is related to subject knowledge”. (HNC student, 1st year degree)

and

“I don't think I would have been able to manage the workload if I had entered into 2nd year”. (HNC student, 1st year degree)

Others, while recognizing the differences at degree level, had felt they would be able to cope:

“At first I was considering going into second year. However, I am glad I made the right choice going into 3rd year as college helped prepare me for the workload and I have coped well so far”. (HND student, 3rd year degree)

For some students, other considerations influenced their decisions about which year of degree study to start at:

“It was difficult picking up a new way of learning at first and perhaps if I did not have a family entering 2nd year would have been better, but as I do have a family 3rd year was the best choice as an extra year would have been too difficult”. (HND student, 3rd year degree)

Students were generally also satisfied with their choice of degree course; over a half were very satisfied (52%) while another 39% said they were quite satisfied (Table 3.7). There were no significant variations by articulation/non articulation, age or gender. Only a very small number had changed their degree subject over the course of the year (3%) and another 2% intended to do so in the coming academic year.

Table 3.7: Satisfaction with choice of degree course

	%
very satisfied	52
quite satisfied	39
not very satisfied	7
not at all satisfied	1
	(n) (100)

Although most student were satisfied with their choice of degree, this did not mean that their degree course had proved to be entirely what they had expected: well under a half responded “yes” to this question (42%) and a similar proportion thought it was only “partly” what they had expected (46%); the remainder (12%) thought their degree course was not as expected (Table 3.8). Opinion on this differed between students who had articulated and those who had not. Although articulating students were more likely to be continuing to study in the same subject area as their HN qualification than were non articulating students, nevertheless a smaller proportion of articulating students found their degree course to be

what they had expected (34% articulating vs 56% non articulating). Their comments suggest that some were taken aback by the different expectations in respect of degree study:

“It was never going to be easy but I didn’t realize how much you would be left to your own devices, I was used to being spoon fed material at college and wasn’t expecting to be doing so much individual work/sourcing material”. (HNC student; 2nd year)

“The course was as in-depth and involved as I expected but I was not prepared for the level of the academic style of assignments etc”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“Coursework has been a challenge, entering in third year, lecturers incorrectly assume you are familiar with their terms and expectations”. (HND student, 3rd year degree)

Table 3.8: If degree course was as expected: articulating and non articulating students

	All students %	Articulating students %	Non-articulating students %
yes	42	34	56
partly	46	52	37
no	12	13	8
(n)	(147)	(90)	(52)

Preparation for transition

When asked almost at the end of the first year of their degree to reflect on how well prepared they had been for degree study, a majority of respondents were positive that they had been very or quite well prepared (71%, Table 3.9). In contrast with the first survey, there was little difference in opinion according to whether or not students had articulated. It may be the fact of having managed through to nearly the end of their first year when the second survey took place has altered students’ perceptions of how well prepared they had been. Certainly comparing the responses to this question of those who completed both surveys suggests a tendency for responses to be a little more positive in the second survey compared with the same students’ responses in the first survey.

The main variation in responses to this question relates to students’ age. There is a considerable difference in the perceptions of older and younger students with students aged 25 and over less likely to think that they had been quite or well prepared (58% vs 80%).

Table 3.9: Preparation for degree study: student opinion by age

How well prepared were you for degree study?	All students %	24 & under %	25 & over %
very well prepared	14	17	10
quite well prepared	57	63	48
not very well prepared	25	19	34
not at all prepared	5	1	8
(n)	(153)	(88)	(62)

Despite the generally positive views of students about their preparation for degree study, a majority had, nevertheless, had found the change from HN to degree study quite or very difficult (60%, Table 3.10). Students who had articulated were more likely to have experienced the transition as difficult compared with non articulating students and, in particular, to have found it “very difficult” (articulating 28% vs non articulating 15% very difficult, Table 3.10).

Students’ age also made a considerable difference to their experience of the move to degree study, those in the 25 and above age group were much more likely to have experienced difficulty than younger students (25+: 78% quite/very difficult vs 47% 24 and under, Table 3.11).

Focusing on the group of students (54 in total) who completed both surveys, there are some differences in their perceptions between the first and second surveys about their transition largely in the direction of thinking that it had been rather more difficult. Just under half of those who had initially found the transition “quite easy”, later responded that it was “quite difficult” and over a half who had thought it “quite difficult” rated the change as “very difficult” at the time of the second survey. The numbers involved are small and the changes in opinion are not extreme (from one category to the adjacent one) but it may be indicative of a tendency for students to struggle more as the academic year progresses.

Table 3.10: Perception of difficulty of change from HN to degree study: articulating vs non-articulating students

	All students %	Articulating students %	Non-articulating students %
very easy	7	1	14
quite easy	34	34	33
quite difficult	36	37	37
very difficult	24	28	15
(n)	(155)	(95)	(54)

Table 3.11: Perception of difficulty of change from HN to degree study by age

	All students %	24 & under %	25 & over %
very easy	7	8	5
quite easy	34	45	18
quite difficult	36	30	44
very difficult	24	17	33
(n)	(155)	(89)	(63)

Students were asked, looking back from the vantage point of nearly a year of degree study, what their college could have done to make the move to degree study easier for them and/or other HN students.

A number thought that their **college could not have done any more:**

“College did all that was possible to prepare me”. (HND student, 3rd year degree)

“Not much, the lecturers at [X college] were always telling us about the difference throughout the HND. Saying what we would and wouldn't get or have to do”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“The lecturers in [X college] made the transition from HN to degree really easy, mainly due to the Graded Unit that was involved in the HNC, where I had to research and put together a project by myself. This helped me to learn how to come up with designs and successfully present them without any supervision or help”. (HNC student, 1st year)

Students also recognized that colleges could only do so much to prepare them and that they too had a responsibility:

“Nothing [more]. The college prepared me for the course as well as they could, it was more that I hadn't prepared myself.” (HNC student, 2nd year degree)

But many comments related to the need for **college to provide more preparation** for academic writing, referencing and the type of assessment and level of independent study at university:

“They could have introduced us to essay writing. . . . when it came to writing the essay I had no idea what to do and I felt completely un-prepared. Also, at college, everything was handed out to you. On the other hand, at university, nothing was handed out to you. We had to make our own notes, print off our own guidelines, do our own research etc. I found this difficult to start with and it was such a change from college where we were handed coursework on a plate”. (HNC student, 1st year)

“They could have prepared us more in terms of the style of writing, referencing and academic knowledge. I struggled with these as most of what I did at college was very hands-on”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“I feel that college didn't prepare me for the volume of work expected of me at university and the technical level in which exam questions are asked”. (HND student, 3rd year)

A number of comments suggested that **college was perhaps too easy** and that this had made their transition to university more difficult:

“I think the collage did a great job with the facilities they had and the method of teaching the subject was spot and very interactive. but looking back now i feel we had it too easy and didnt do enough to prepare for us for the volume of self research need for university.” (HND student, 1st year)

“maybe if college wasn't so lenient ie spoon feeding I may have been more prepared”. (HND student, 2nd year)

“College would never provide us with feedback on our English writing skills. A correct answer to a question in very bad english would make no difference to the tutors as they would mark it correct and never comment on our written English ability. There was never any essay writing either. I think my year at college made my English skills very lazy”. (HND student, 2nd year)

Some students made **practical suggestions about what colleges could do** to make their transition easier, many of which related to the chance to **try out the “university style”** and/or see examples of type and level of work required:

“Perhaps have ran additional classes or summer workshops to get students used to the way they'd have to work. For example, doing group work with i.e. case studies and spending a day finding materials in the library, online journals etc that are relevant to the case study provided”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“College could have arranged for samples of work which were at university level to be done after graded unit was completed. Also doing research into topics needs to be looked at, at University you are basically left to research yourself compared to very little self research at college”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“I think some HN students would have benefitted from participating in a sample exam to demonstrate to them the step up from college to Uni”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“It could have had us writing essays etc in similar format and use more journals to get used to using that type of literature. The marking could have been stricter at college as well”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“It would maybe be helpful to let college students sit in on a lecture at university if this was feasible, to get a “taste” for the “real” lecture experience. University lectures are much larger and less interactive than college”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

But several students recognised that teaching and learning approaches are different in college and university and that there **may be inherent limits on what colleges can do** in terms of preparation:

“I suppose that if we had a couple of lectures in university style, but to be honest I dont think theres much that could be done without actually making it a university”.(HNC student, 1st year)

Another theme of the comments was that **better curricular matching** would help to make the move to degree study easier:

“Improve the continuity of content between the modules taught at [X]university and what is taught at [X]college”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“Include the missing module of the HNC to allow entry to Year 2 of degree, so that it does not feel as though you are repeating a year”. (HNC student, 1st year)

A final issue that emerged from students' comments was that not all colleges appear to be raising possibility of moving on to degree study with HN students:

“Other than make students aware of the possibility of going on to University, nothing”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“The college I attended did not support or offer advice on how to progress to university”. (HNC student, 3rd year)

“could have told me that it was an option. I decided to do a degree on several years after college. Progression to degree was never mentioned at college”. (HNC student, 1st year)

Experience of degree study

Students were asked if they had experienced difficulty with various aspects of degree study (Tables A2.6 and A2.7 in Appendix 2). The areas that they had found most difficult were:

- methods of teaching (47% lot/some difficulty);
- organising their time between study and other commitments (47% lot/some difficulty);
- not knowing about a topic that other students had already done (44% lot/some difficulty);
- how much they were expected to study on their own (42% lot/some difficulty).

Other aspects of degree study that a substantial minority had experienced difficulty with were “work being harder than expected” and the “level and type of assessment” (32% and 31% lot/some difficulty). Over a third reported financial difficulties (38%). Overall, age did not make a difference to students’ responses; the exception was in relation to the “type and level of assessment”. In this case, older students reported that they had found this more difficult than did younger students under 25 (43% vs 24% lot/some difficulty).

Articulating students were more likely to have found certain aspects of degree study difficult than their counterparts who had not articulated:

- not knowing about a topic that other students had already done (lot/some difficulty: 56% articulating vs 22% non-articulating);
- methods of teaching (lot/some difficulty: 42% articulating vs 28 % non-articulating);
- type and level of assessment (lot/some difficulty: 34% articulating vs 26% non-articulating);
- social/making friends (lot/some difficulty: 21% articulating vs 9% non-articulating).

Some students added comments about the difficulties they had experienced:

“Initially it was very daunting and at times I thought perhaps I should have gone into 1st year as lecturers often refer to “last year” which is often things I didn’t cover so will have to search for materials, read them and attempt to understand them on top of the already heavy workload ...”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“Time and money management has been extremely difficult, unlike the HN course the degree is compressed into less time requiring full attention to be given to the degree studies, leaving little time for earning money to pay my domestic bills”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“College did not prepare me for the level of essay/report writing expected at university”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“Don’t think I would ever have expected the difficulty and jump from college to uni even when told this by others”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

When asked if they had ever thought about leaving their degree course at any time since they had started, the majority of students reported that they had not thought about this at all (63%, Table 3.12). Just over a quarter of students had thought about this once or twice but only a small minority had contemplated this more seriously, or at least, more often (11%). Articulating students were no more likely to have considered leaving than other students nor were there differences between older and younger students. However, female

students were more likely to have frequently thought about leaving their course than their male counterparts (often thought about leaving: 16% female vs 5% male).

Table 3.12: Possibility of leaving their degree course

Have you ever thought about leaving your degree course?	All %	Male %	Female %
no, not at all	63	71	54
yes, once or twice	26	24	30
yes, often	11	5	16
	(n) (155)	(59)	(86)

Students who had had thought about leaving were asked to explain what had made them stay. Their comments suggest that determination to complete a process that they had already invested time and energy in and the desire to get a degree to improve their career prospects were key factors as well as the importance of support from friends, other students and staff in helping them through:

“I’m not a quitter and its already taken 3 years of me life”. (HND student, 2nd year)

“Determination to complete what I started. Support from course leader”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“My sheer determination and my friends supporting me”. (HND student, 2nd year)

“The fact that I need a degree to progress along the career route I want, that I would regret leaving later in life”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“ ... financial difficulties. Speaking with my PAT [academic tutor] - who is very approachable and very encouraging - helped me to seek some additional support and he helped me to see the situation in a better light which motivated me to stay”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

Advice and support

The universities have a range of workshops and courses available dealing with various aspects of degree study and students were most likely to have attended ones on (Appendix 2, Table A2.8):

- using the library (49%);
- academic essay writing (35%);
- referencing (34%).

The only difference between articulating and non articulating students is that the former were less likely to have attended a workshop or course on using ICT in their studies (“yes”: 14% articulating students vs 31% non articulating students). Respondents were able to indicate if they had not known about any of the workshops and courses and between 11% and 17% gave this answer depending on the workshop/course in question.

Students’ comments about workshops and courses suggest that lack of time to attend and timetabling clashes with their classes prevented some from attending:

“cant find the time to go to classes. also in a new building and not all classes that i would like to attend are in the same building that saves me running about the place”. (HND student, 3rd year)

and

“I had difficulty booking workshops that interested me and many clashed with classes - evenings would be good, or inviting college students before they begin would be better”. (HND student, 3rd year)

A higher proportion of students used on-line or computer based materials to help them with various aspects of their study than attended workshops or courses (Appendix 2, Table A2.9). They were most likely to use such materials to help with:

- referencing (74%);
- academic essay writing (60%);
- researching a topic (55%);
- presentations (52%);
- using the university virtual learning environment, e-portfolio, blogs etc (49%);
- how to use the library (43%).

In terms of the sources of advice and support used by students, they were most likely to consult other students, their academic tutors or programme or course leader and university library staff (Appendix 2, Table A2.10):

- academic tutor/adviser (77%);
- other students (75%);
- programme/module leader or degree/course co-ordinator (71%);
- University library staff (62%).

In addition, other sources used were:

- Other lecturers (55%);
- administrative/clerical staff (42%).
- student support service dealing with finance (22%);
- study skills support (17%).

There was little difference in the responses of articulating and non articulating students or of younger and older students about sources of advice and support; the exception concerns study skills advisers. Articulating students were less likely to say that they made use of a study skills adviser compared with non articulating students (11% vs 24%). A higher proportion of older students, those 25 and over, reported contact with a study skills adviser than did students aged 24 and under (26% vs 9%).

What more could universities do to support HN students

Students were asked the open-ended question “What could the university do to develop its support for HNC/D students during their degree studies? What would you suggest? “Over a

third of respondents commented at some length in response to this. A number of themes emerge from their comments and suggestions.

One theme is **appreciation of the support currently on offer** although also the need for **more awareness raising** about the support available:

"...direct entrants had to attend a module during semester 1...which told us everything we had to know from library tours to how to write a report. This module was very helpful and no more needs to be done". (HND student, 3rd year)

"They've done well, I know of additional courses for HNC/D graduates helping them with essay writing and workshops on all of the options listed in previous questions...Keep the workshops running...". (HND student, 2nd year)

"I feel the university is working well to provide support for this through student support services, such as the study skills staff, who I have approached". (HNC student, 1st year)

Other students pointed out that:

"There is a lot to take in with X [the university's on line learning environment] and how the university portal works. A lot of students on my course did not know how to book onto the workshops. None of us were aware there was messages via email on webct until into second term". (HND student, 3rd year)

"More awareness of workshops - I hadn't realised some existed". (HNC student, 2nd year)

and

"Before the beginning of all lectures, provide students with more information about ... the importance of different workshops and how to find information relating to them. This should not be done in one day because it a lot of information and students may forget if given in one session of 3hours". (HND student, 3rd year)

Another area of comment and one that was not restricted to students who had articulated, concerned the need for **the need for the university, especially, lecturing staff to be more aware of HNC/D students** and their previous learning experience:

"Lecturers and tutors would ideally be more informed about the number of HND students in their class in order to hopefully avoid acting like the entire class has done certain specific modules before". (HND student, 3rd year)

"being aware of HN students when starting a module that non HN students have studied the previous year and provide more examples with answers if students are having difficulty". (HNC student, 2nd year)

"It would be helpful if lecturers were made aware that there are direct entrants (as I think some forget about direct entrants or presume there aren't any)". (HNC student, 2nd year)

"More understanding of the level of study just completed and realise where the main differences lie between the two. Understand what study skills have been taught and to what level and which ones haven't been covered at all. At HNC level it is more about what you know, whereas at degree level it's just as much ... has your argument been effectively put across is not something your asked at HNC level. It would be helpful for the university to realise that we haven't been asked question like this before and to help us to know what to change in a paper when a question like this does arise, say on a feedback sheet". (HNC student, 1st year)

A large number of comments related to having more **opportunities to find out about and experience various aspects of degree study**, preferably in advance of starting their degree or at the very beginning and also **more exemplification of standards**:

“Maybe offering workshop sessions on academic writing before the actual start of the year, so that student would have time to adapt without risking to affect their performance during the first semester”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“I think examples of what level of work is expected would be extremely helpful, I have only had this from one lecturer and it really helped me pitch things at the right level but other lecturers are reluctant to do this”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“Prior to coming to uni run more workshops over summer to prepare students for writing styles and time management etc. So they are further prepared for the start. Also have college lecturer perhaps give a normal mark for college and then a mark similar to uni standards for essays during HN courses. This will encourage students to improve marks and get the fright early that makes them look at writing style”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“To be able to attain what information is missing from our learning - for example even on expectations and useful knowledge reference exams and essays would definately be beneficial. Also to have access to the previous years information and slides would have been helpful”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“Give readings to fill in some of the missing information from previous years and maybe practice essays so they have a better understanding of what is expected of them”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“Communicate better what reading/learning could be done prior to direct entrance into 2nd year. If not, then have some catch up classes for those who have missed out on things by not attending 1st year. Also, peer mentoring would help with confidence in areas not covered at HNC level ...”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

A number of students suggested that university staff might do more to enable **HN students to get to know existing students**:

“Doing more to integrate direct entry students into classes”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“Informing class mates would help too because its easy to be lost in the crowd and people don't notice a new face. Perhaps setting up a meet and greet session with some free coffee during a lecture break (that would always drag students in)!”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“Group meetings to be given an opportunity to meet some of the students that were moving from 1st yr into 2nd yr - I found it quite lonely in the first few weeks being the only HNC student moving into adult nursing”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

Another theme of students' comments concerned **greater liaison between colleges and universities** to help prepare and support HN students:

“... you could have some interaction between the college and university student support for the first 6 months to assess how an individual is getting on”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“Maybe have satelite courses in the colleges ...”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“More communication between the colleges and universities on course content”. (HNC student, 2nd year)

“Be more aware of the differences between the subjects studied at both institutions. They should consult with the colleges that they admit from to ensure that modules are in line and that colleges are using the best of materials/resources”. (HND student, 3rd year)

“Maybe encourage colleges to use your preferred methods of writing, essays reports, presentations etc”. (HND student, 3rd year)

Students’ plans

When asked about the type of degree they were aiming for, overall, most students stated an Honours degree (70%); just under a fifth were undecided (19%) and only 10% were planning to graduate with an Ordinary degree.

The plans of students in 3rd year show a similar focus on achieving an Honours degree, nearly three quarters of these students were intending to continue into Honours (74%) and given the timing of the survey, they are likely to have had a realistic idea that this was feasible for them. Of the small number of 3rd year students not intending to go on into Honours (n = 17), half were planning to find full-time employment.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A large majority of students were positive about having taken the HN route to degree study. It should be borne in mind, however, that the study did not include HN students who had discontinued their degree programme. That said, the results are an endorsement of the opportunity that the HN route offers individuals to gain access to a degree in a way that meets their particular needs - whether after a break in their education or as a bridge between school and university or providing them with a way to keep their options open with the possibility of certificated intermediate exit points.

The study highlights the fact that progression from HN to degree may not be immediate: just under a quarter of students had taken a break between gaining their HN and starting a degree course. This has implications for ELRAH and its partner institutions in relation to the planning of articulation numbers and the provision of advice and support for these students.

As we noted in the introduction, the SFC strongly supports the articulation of HN students to degree programmes with “no loss of time” but the study found that over half of students with HNCs did not articulate, instead applying to the first year of a degree. HND students were more likely to articulate, nevertheless, over a quarter of them did not do so. Although for some HNC students this was a positive choice because they wanted the “full university experience”, it was also for less positive reasons in that they thought that they would struggle academically if they went directly into second year. Concern about coping with the academic demands of the course was also one of the main reasons given by the HND students who did not articulate. These findings suggest that more needs to be done to prepare HN students for degree study and to further develop articulation routes (eg in terms of curriculum matching) so that students have the confidence to take advantage of the opportunity to articulate with advanced standing. But the findings also demonstrate that some HN students do not want to articulate and we suggest that this choice should be respected.

While students were appreciative of the opportunity to progress from HN to a degree, this does not mean that they found their transition to be an easy one: around three months into their degree just under a half judged the transition as “quite or very difficult” and towards the end of their first year of degree study nearer two thirds rated it as such. Students who had articulated were more likely to have experienced the transition as difficult and, in particular, to have found it “very difficult” than had non articulating students.

There was consistency across the two surveys in the areas that HN students had difficulty with in their degree: the different modes of study, learning and assessment at university; gaps or lack of match in the formal curriculum; the level of demand and insecurity about standards; unfamiliarity with university environment eg computing and email systems; and lack of social support. These were areas of difficulty for first year entrants as well as for students who had articulated.

The extent of the information and support that students received while at college was variable and highlights areas for further development. There were significant gaps in respect of a number of specific study skills areas such as the type of assessment on degree courses, using the university library, referencing and use of electronic and online tools. It was clear from students’ responses that when at college their main source of information and advice about the transition to degree study was their tutors rather than specialist staff or special

activities, workshops or courses. This suggests where staff development and support activities might be focused.

ELRAH and its partner institutions have developed a range of workshops and other activities on various aspects of degree study and students were positive about the events they had attended in their first year at university although lack of time and timetabling clashes prevented some from participating. On-line or computer based materials is another area where ELRAH and its partners have been active and these were clearly an important source of information and advice for students. Academic tutors/advisers and programme or course leaders were the members of staff students were most likely to go to for advice and support; university library staff were another commonly used group. Peer support informally from other students was also important.

While students were appreciative of the information, advice and support they had received at college and university, the difficulties they experienced in their degree study indicate that current provision is not fully meeting their needs and further development is required. Students themselves made a range of practical suggestions and these have been taken into account in developing the recommendations. In thinking about how provision might be developed, it should be acknowledged that the dual function of HNCs/Ds of preparing students for employment as well as entry to degree, the need for them to retain integrity as qualifications in their own right and the distinctive ethos and approach of colleges compared with universities, do impact on how colleges can respond. That said, there is scope for colleges as well as universities to develop their information, advice and support for HN students entering degree programmes.

Recommendations

- Ensure that all HN students are made aware of (i) the possibility of progressing to degree study and (ii) of the opportunities for gaining advanced standing. In doing so it should be borne in mind that some HN students will take a break between their HN and starting a degree but would still benefit from some basic information, especially on sources of information and advice if and when they decide they wish to take a degree.
- More attention should be given when students are at college to providing advice and support on *specific areas* of study skills eg academic writing, referencing etc to address the gaps identified in this study.
- It would be beneficial for students while at college to have as much opportunity as possible to experience the “university approach” and to see examples of the type and level of work and of assessment at degree level. University staff already contribute to college provision but this could be extended, in particular, with greater involvement of staff from subject areas in addition to those with a support or liaison function; these staff could provide more course specific input including the particular demands and approach of their subject area.
- Tutors in FE are students’ main source of information and advice about the transition to degree study and as such, ELRAH and its partner colleges should consider how they can best be supported to do this; this may be a role for the Articulation Support Advisers (among others).

- Current workshops and other activities for HN students are valued by students and should continue to be funded and further developed. It would be useful to review how they are publicised to students and also whether there is scope for greater flexibility in their scheduling to enable as many students as possible to attend. It would be helpful to students if universities organise workshops, courses and other transition support activities early in the academic year; they might also consider if there is scope to offer activities over the summer or just prior to the start of the academic year.
- It may be useful for ELRAH to consider whether there is a need for a greater element of differentiation in provision in response to differences within the student body eg between HNC and HND students, younger and older students and also in terms of providing support that takes more account of the demands of different subject areas.
- ELRAH and its partner institutions have been active in the development of on-line and computer based materials; this is a widely used resource by students and should continue to be developed and updated.
- There is a need for awareness raising among academic teaching staff in the universities about HN students, their previous learning experience and how they might be supported, especially in the first few months of their degree study. Universities should consider, at least in the subject areas which recruit significant numbers of HN students, strategies to ensure that academic teaching staff are aware of the areas that HN students will have covered and where there may be gaps. Making previous years' materials available, possibly on line, may be a useful approach. Academic teaching staff should be encouraged to provide examples that exemplify the standard of work expected to enable HN students appreciate what is required before submitting work that counts towards their grades.
- ELRAH and its partner institutions should develop the monitoring and tracking of the performance of HN students in their degree and use the results in the planning of support activities and articulation agreements.
- ELRAH should continue to work with its college and university partners to ensure better curricular matching in the main articulation subject areas to avoid significant gaps in students' knowledge and to enable students to gain advanced standing.
- The extent to which it is possible to include optional elements or units within an HN to allow students to cover certain subject content and/or develop relevant skills for their degree should be explored and exploited.

APPENDIX 1: FIRST STUDENT SURVEY: ADDITIONAL TABLES

Characteristics of survey respondents

Table A1.1: Sex of respondents

	%
male	40
female	60
	(n) (217)

Table A1.2: Age of respondents

	%
under 20	21
20-24	34
25-29	18
30-39	17
40-49	9
50-59	2
60+	1
	(n) (217)

Table A1.3: Mode of study

	%
full-time	89
part-time	4
not answered	8
	(n) (217)

Table A1.4: College where respondents had gained their HN

	%
ELRAH	64
other Scottish	33
not Scottish	3
not answered	1
	(n) (217)

Table A1.5: Year in which HN gained

	%
2010	77
2009	7
2008	2
2007	4
2006	1
2005 or before	7
not answered	1
	<i>(n)</i> <i>(217)</i>

Table A1.6: Main activity between gaining HN and starting degree: respondents who had taken break between HN and degree

	%
full-time employment	54
part-time employment	27
full-time education	10
part-time education	2
at home looking after children/other dependents	2
travelling	4
	<i>(n)</i> <i>(48)</i>

Table A1.7: Reasons for taking time out between HN and degree (multiple responses): respondents who had taken break between HN and degree

	%
I wanted a break from studying	33
I couldn't afford to	23
I was offered a job	21
I didn't feel confident enough	15
I missed the deadline for applying	14
I didn't need a degree for the job I wanted to do	13
I didn't want to go on to a degree	13
I didn't think I'd had enough preparation at college for deg	10
I had childcare/ other caring responsibilities which made it	8
I applied to university but wasn't accepted	6
I applied to university but wasn't offered entry to 2nd or 3	2
I had used up my fee/loan entitlement	2
other	15
	<i>(n)</i> <i>(40)</i>

Table A1.8: Reasons for applying to university/degree now: respondents who had taken break between HN and degree

	%
to advance my career/part of my career plans	58
I was interested in the course content/subject	35
change of career direction/re-train	27
I always planned to apply after taking a break	23
I had earned enough money	17
I was encouraged by my family	17
I was encouraged by my friends	15
I enjoy being a student	15
I couldn't find a job	10
I couldn't think what else to do	0
other	4
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(48)</i>

Table A1.9: If think started at the right year of degree study

	%
yes	74
no	9
not sure	17
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(216)</i>

Table A1.10: Type of degree aiming for

	%
Ordinary	9
Honours	62
haven't decided yet	24
not sure of the difference	4
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(215)</i>

Table A1.11: How much information and advice received at college

	a lot	some	a little	none	not wanted
	%	%	%	%	%
... choosing a degree course?	24	30	23	18	5
... choosing a university?	25	30	25	14	7
... how to apply/about UCAS?	40	27	15	14	4
... how your HN qualification would link with your degree course?	23	31	21	21	5
... the options available on your degree course?	13	25	24	31	7

Table A1.12: How much information and advice received at college

	a lot	some	a little	none	not wanted
	%	%	%	%	%
... general study skills for your degree study?	17	39	22	19	3
... writing essays and reports?	22	27	30	19	2
... how to do referencing?	12	25	27	32	4
... lab work?	11	12	16	40	21
... using electronic and on-line tools used at university eg VLE, e-portfolios, MSM?	15	20	21	38	6
... using the university library?	11	21	19	45	4
... the type of assessment on degree courses?	8	18	28	42	4

Table A1.13: How much information and advice received at college

	a lot	some	a little	none	not wanted
	%	%	%	%	%
... the help available to you in your academic work at university?	8	28	27	33	4
... the personal support services available at university eg counselling, additional support needs?	10	20	25	38	6
... student finance?	19	26	25	26	5
... the social side of university?	9	21	30	34	6

Table A1.14: Sources of information and advice while at college (multiple responses)

	%
advice from tutors	67
visit to university	41
friends	39
talks about your degree course from academic university staff visiting the college	30
advice from student adviser/guidance counsellor etc at college	23
workshop on UCAS application	22
encouraged to use on line material	17
introduction to the university library	10
peer mentors from the university	7
workshops on study skills	7
term time special classes or courses for students going on to university	5
extra classes to cover topics you would need on your degree course	3
summer courses for students going on to university	3
other	6
	(n) (204)

Table A1.15: Opinion of preparation for degree study

Before you started university, how well prepared did you feel?	%
very well prepared	14
quite well prepared	57
not very well prepared	25
not at all prepared	4
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(216)</i>

Table A1.16: If attended an induction programme specifically for students who have gone straight into 2nd or 3rd year?

	%
yes	54
no	46
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(214)</i>

Table A1.17: Reasons for not attending the specific induction programme

	%
I didn't know there was one	63
It wasn't at a suitable time	20
I didn't think it would be useful	10
I didn't know what to expect	3
the venue was difficult to get to	3
I didn't feel confident about going	0
I couldn't find the venue it was being held in	0
other	17
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(31)</i>

Table A1.18: Opinion of the specific induction programme for students starting 2nd or 3rd year

	%
very helpful	27
quite helpful	47
not very helpful	18
not at all helpful	8
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(136)</i>

Table A1.19: Method of application to university

	%
through UCAS	81
directly to university	6
through college	10
college & UCAS	3
no answer	9
<i>(n)</i>	<i>(217)</i>

Table A1.20: University/Degree course of respondents (JACS2 coding*)

	%
B Health, subjects allied to Medicine	7
C Biological & Sports Sciences	11
G Mathematical & Computing Sciences	7
H Engineering	7
J Technologies	1
K Architecture, Building & Planning	8
L Social Studies	5
M Law	1
N Business & Administration studies	23
P Mass Communications and Documentation	4
V History & Philosophical studies	1
W Creative Arts & Design	9
Y Combined subjects	2
not answered	18
	<i>(n)</i> <i>(217)</i>

* JACS2 is the Joint Academic Coding System used for subject coding of provision across higher education in the UK by UCAS and HESA

Table A1.21: HN qualification of respondents (JACS2 coding)

	%
B Health, subjects allied to Medicine	9
C Biological & Sports Sciences	8
D Vet Sci, Ag & related	1
F Physical Sciences	1
G Mathematical & Computing Sciences	8
H Engineering	7
J Technologies	2
K Architecture, Building & Planning	5
L Social Studies	10
M Law	1
N Business & Administration studies	24
P Mass Communications and Documentation	7
W Creative Arts & Design	12
X Education	2
Y Combined subjects	1
not answered	4
	<i>(n)</i> <i>(217)</i>

APPENDIX 2: SECOND STUDENT SURVEY: ADDITIONAL TABLES

Table A2.1: Sex of respondents

		%
male		41
female		59
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(147)</i>

Table A2.2: Age of respondents

		%
under 20		12
20-24		47
25-29		9
30-39		18
40-49		13
50-59		1
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(152)</i>

Table A2.3: Mode of study

		%
full-time		97
part-time		3
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(151)</i>

Table A2.4: College where respondents had gained their HN

		%
ELRAH		63
other Scottish		35
not answered		2
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(155)</i>

Table A2.5: Articulation between HN and degree (% within age group)

	24+ under	25+ over
	%	%
articulating student	58	71
non-articulating student	42	29
	<i>(n)</i>	<i>(88)</i>
		<i>(59)</i>

Table A2.6: Experience of degree study (1)

Since you've started your degree, have you had any particular difficulties relating to...	A lot of difficulty %	Some difficulty %	A little difficulty %	No difficulty %
... methods of teaching	18	29	31	21
... how much you're expected to study on your own	10	32	31	27
... type and level of assessments	7	24	38	31
... timing of assessments	7	22	28	44
... feedback on assessments	7	22	30	42
... meeting assessment deadlines	4	14	29	53
... using the library	5	11	19	66
... work being harder than expected	8	24	30	39
... not knowing about a topic that other students have already done	12	32	24	33
... organising your time between study and other commitments	18	29	31	21
... other area	20	9	5	67

Table A2.7: Experience of degree study (2)

Since you've started your degree, have you had any particular difficulties relating to...	A lot of difficulty %	Some difficulty %	A little difficulty %	No difficulty %
... university ICT systems eg e-library, e-timetabling, electronic submission of work	5	18	26	51
... the large size of lectures	1	10	29	60
... tutorials	1	10	18	71
... lab work	3	6	16	76
... travel	3	17	20	60
... social/making friends	7	11	17	66
... finding your way around	3	9	25	63
... finance	16	22	21	41
... other area	6	5	4	86

Table A2.8: Workshops and courses attended since starting degree

	Yes %	No %	Didn't know about them %
oral presentations	20	63	17
academic essay writing	35	54	11
referencing	34	54	12
writing reports	23	66	12
reflective journal writing	12	75	14
group work	23	65	12
using ICT in your studies eg virtual learning environment, e-portfolio, blogs etc	20	65	15
how to use the library	49	44	7
researching a topic	22	66	12
time management	15	73	12
other	8	74	18

Table A2.9: Use of online or computer based materials since starting degree

	Yes %	No %	Didn't know about them %
presentations	52	42	6
academic essay writing	60	33	7
referencing	74	18	8
group work	39	50	11
using ICT in your studies on line courses on using the university virtual learning environment, e-portfolio, blogs etc	49	40	11
how to use the library	43	48	9
researching a topic	55	36	9
time management	22	68	11
other	11	80	9

Table A2.10: Sources of advice or support at university used by students

	%
academic tutor/adviser	77
programme/module leader or degree/course co-ordinator	71
other lecturers	55
admin/secretarial staff	42
study skills adviser	17
finance	22
accommodation	12
counselling	3
health	4
special needs/additional support needs adviser	10
university library staff	62
other students	75
student mentor	23
students' union/association	11
other	2

APPENDIX 3: FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE

Did you study an HNC or HND at a college in Scotland before starting your degree? Did you start your degree in September 2010?

If you did, we really hope that you'll complete this survey, your answers are needed to help colleges and universities plan services for you and other students who are moving on to degree study after taking an HNC or HND.

Everyone who returns a completed survey will be entered into a
prize draw for Amazon vouchers
1 @ £50; 2 @ £20 and 3 @ £10

AND

Everyone who returns their questionnaire by **28th January** will also be entered into
ANOTHER draw for the **new IPOD Nano**

It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

All the information you have provided will be treated in confidence. It will only be used by members of the project for the purposes of research about students going on to degree studies. No information on any individual will appear in any report or be passed on to any college, university or other body.

If you have any queries about the survey, please contact

Cathy Howieson
Edinburgh University
c.howieson@ed.ac.uk
tel: 0131 651 6241

- Q1 Please indicate if you are
male
female
- Q2 What age group are you in?
under 20
20-24
25-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
60+
- Q3 Which HN qualification do you have?
HNC
HND

Q4 How did you apply to university?
through UCAS
directly to the university
through Clearing
through your college

Q5 Which university are you studying at?
Edinburgh Napier
Queen Margaret
Heriot-Watt
Stirling

Q6 Are you studying for your degree in the college where you took your HN rather than at the university campus?
yes
no

Q7 Are you studying?
full-time
part-time

Q8 What's the name of your degree course?
Drop down list of subject areas
Other, please say what

Q9 What is the name of your HN qualification?
Drop down list of qualifications
Other, please say what

Q10 Which college did you obtain your HN qualification from?
Drop down list of colleges
Other, please say what

Q11 Which year did you gain your HN qualification?
2010
2009
2008
2007
2006
2005 or before

Q12 What was your main activity during the time between gaining your HN and starting your degree?

(please tick one box for your main activity)

Full-time employment

Part-time employment

Government training programme

Full-time education

Part-time education

At home looking after children/other dependents

Looking after the home

Voluntary work

Travelling

Unable to study or work due to sickness or disability

Other

Other, please say more

Q13 If you were in a job, what was your job title?

(if you had more than one job, please answer for the main job)

Q14 What type of business did you work in (eg office, hospital, hotel)?

Q15 What sort of work did you do?

Q16 If you were in education, what course did you do?

Q17 What institution did you study at?

Q18 Have you gained any other qualifications since getting your HN qualification?

yes

no

If yes, what qualification have you gained?

Q19 Why did you take time out after gaining your HN qualification before going on to degree study?

(please tick the top 3 reasons)

- I didn't want to go on to a degree*
- I applied to university but wasn't accepted*
- I applied to university but wasn't offered entry to 2nd or 3rd year of the degree*
- I didn't need a degree for the job I wanted to do*
- I was offered a job*
- I couldn't afford to*
- I had used up my fee/loan entitlement*
- I had childcare/ other caring responsibilities which made it difficult*
- I didn't feel confident enough*
- I didn't think I'd had enough preparation at college for degree study*
- I wanted a break from studying*
- I missed the deadline for applying*
- Other*

Other, please say more

Q20 What decided you to apply to university now?

(please tick the top 3 reasons)

- I always planned to apply after taking a break*
- I had earned enough money*
- To advance my career/part of my career plans*
- Change of career direction/re-train*
- I couldn't find a job*
- I was interested in the course content/subject*
- I was encouraged by my family*
- I was encouraged by my friends*
- I enjoy being a student*
- I couldn't think what else to do*
- Other*

Other, please say more

Q21 Why did you decide to apply to university?

(please tick the top 3 reasons)

- It was the natural progression from my HN course*
- It fitted in with my career plans*
- I was interested in the course content/subject*
- I was encouraged by my friends/classmates*
- A lot of my friends/class mates were applying*
- It was suggested to me by staff in my college*
- I couldn't find a job*
- I was encouraged by my family*
- I enjoy being a student*
- Other*

Other, please say more

- Q22** Is your HN qualification in the same subject as your degree programme?
 yes
 no
 partly
- Q23** What's the highest qualification you have?
 HNC
 HND
- Q24** If you have an HNC, which year of study at degree level did you apply for?
 1st year
 2nd year
- Q25** If you applied to 1st year, why was this?
(please tick all that apply)
- I didn't know I could apply for entry to 2nd year if I had an HNC*
 - The university wouldn't accept me to 2nd year*
 - I thought I would struggle academically in 2nd year*
 - I thought it would be easier to make friends*
 - My friends/classmates were applying to 1st year*
 - I was advised by my college not to apply to 2nd year*
 - I wanted the full university experience*
 - The course I wanted to do was only partly related/not related to my HN qualification*
 - Other*
- Other, please explain* _____

- Q26** If you have an HND, which year of study at degree level did you apply for?
 1st year
 2nd year
 3rd year
- Q27** If you applied to 1st or 2nd year, why was this?
(please tick all that apply)
- I didn't know I could apply for entry to 3rd year if I had an HND*
 - The university wouldn't accept me to 3rd year*
 - I thought I would struggle academically in 2nd/3rd year*
 - I thought it would be easier to make friends*
 - My friends/classmates were applying to 1st or 2nd year*
 - I was advised by my college not to apply for 3rd year*
 - I wanted more time at university*
 - The course I wanted to do was only partly related/not related to my HN qualification*
 - Other*
- Other, please explain* _____

- Q28** Which year of degree study did you enter?
 1st year
 2nd year
 3rd year

Q29 **On reflection, do you think the year that you've started at is the right one for you?**

yes

no

not sure

Please say more _____

Q30 **What type of degree do you aim to graduate with?**

Ordinary

Honours

haven't decided yet

not sure of the difference between the two

Q31 **At college, how much information and advice did you receive about ...**
(please tick one box on each line)

	<i>a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>not wanted/not relevant</i>
... choosing a degree course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... choosing a university?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... how to apply /about UCAS?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... how your HN qualification would link with your degree course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... the options available on your degree course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q32 **At college, how much advice and help did you receive about ...**
(please tick one box on each line)

	<i>a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>not wanted/not relevant</i>
... general study skills for your degree study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... writing essays and reports?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... how to do referencing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... lab work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... using electronic and on-line tools used at university eg VLE, e-portfolios, MSM?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... using the university library?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... the type of assessment on degree courses?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q33 **At college, how much information did you receive about ...**
(please tick one box on each line)

	<i>a lot</i>	<i>some</i>	<i>a little</i>	<i>none</i>	<i>not wanted/not relevant</i>
... the help available to you in your academic work at university?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... the personal support services available at university eg counselling, additional support needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... student finance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... the social side of university?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q34 **How did you get the above information and advice while at college?**

advice from tutors

advice from student adviser/guidance counsellor etc at college

workshop on UCAS application

extra classes to cover topics you would need on your degree course

workshops on study skills

- term time special classes or courses for students going on to university*
- summer courses for students going on to university*
- talks about your degree course from academic university staff visiting the college*
- visit to university*
- encouraged to use on line material*
- friends*
- peer mentors from the university*
- introduction to the university library*
- Other*
- Other, please say more*

- Q35** **Before you started university, how well prepared did you feel for university?**
- very well prepared*
 - quite well prepared*
 - not very well prepared*
 - not at all prepared*

- Q36** **Looking back now, how well prepared were for university?**
- very well prepared*
 - quite well prepared*
 - not very well prepared*
 - not at all prepared*

- Q37** **How have you found the change from college to university?**
- very easy*
 - quite easy*
 - quite difficult*
 - very difficult*
 - Please say more*

- Q38** **What else could your college have done to make the move to degree study easier?**
-
-
-

- Q39** **At the start of your degree did you attend an induction programme specifically for students who have gone straight into 2nd or 3rd year?**
- yes*
 - no*

- Q40** **If you did attend a specific induction programme for students starting in 2nd or 3rd year, was it helpful?**
- very helpful*
 - quite helpful*
 - not very helpful*
 - not at all helpful*

Please add your contact details here

Your contact details will NOT be passed to anyone else. We will only use them to check who has returned the survey so we don't keep reminding you and to notify you if you win the prize draw.

- Q81 Name
- Q82 Telephone number
- Q83 Email address

Entry to prize draws

- Q84 Please enter me into the prize draw for the Amazon vouchers
- Q85 Please enter me into the prize draw for the Ipod NANO

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

All the information you have provided will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of research about students going on to degree studies. No information on any individual will appear in any report or be passed on to any college, university or other body.

Contacts for information and advice

If you feel you would benefit from information or advice about any aspect of your degree study please contact:

Edinburgh Napier: Emily Alder em.alder@napier.ac.uk 0131 455 2971

Heriot- Watt University: Keith MaCaskill K.MacKaskill@hw.ac.uk 07913 483 712

Queen Margaret University: Keith MaCaskill KMacKaskill@qmu.ac.uk 0131 474 0000

Stirling University: Tracey Kerr tracey.kerr@stir.ac.uk

Carnegie College: Carole Mooney c.mooney@napier.ac.uk

Edinburgh's Telford College Kate Heighington k.heighington@napier.ac.uk

West Lothian College: Mairi Taggart m.taggart@napier.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4: SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

From HN to degree - what's been your experience?

Did you study an HNC or HND at a college in Scotland before starting your degree? Did you start your degree in September 2010?

If you did, we really hope that you'll complete this survey. Your answers are needed to help colleges and universities plan services for you and other students who are moving on to degree study after taking an HNC or HND.

Everyone who returns a completed survey has the chance of winning a **prize draw for Amazon vouchers (2 @ £50)**

Closing date: **27 May 2011**

All the information you have provided will be treated in confidence. It will only be used by members of the project for the purposes of research about students going on to degree studies. No information on any individual will appear in any report or be passed on to any college, university or other body.

If you have any queries about the survey, please contact

Cathy Howieson
Edinburgh University
c.howieson@ed.ac.uk
tel: 0131 651 6241

Q1 Which university are you taking your degree at?

- Edinburgh Napier
Queen Margaret
Heriot-Watt
Stirling

Q2 Please indicate if you are

male female

Q3 What age group are you in?

under 20 25-29 40-49 60+
20-24 30-39 50-59

Q4 Which HN qualification do you have?

(please tick all that apply)

HNC HND

Q5 What is the subject area of your HN qualification?

Drop down list of subject areas

Other, please say what

Q6 Which college did you obtain your HN qualification from?

Drop down list of colleges

Other, please say what

Q7 Is your HN qualification in the same subject as your degree programme?

yes no partly

Q8 Are you studying for your degree in the college where you obtained your HN qualification rather than at the university campus?

yes no

Q9 Do you think that continuing at the same college to do your degree was the right choice for you?

yes

no

not sure

Please say more

Q10 Are you a ...?

... full-time student? ... part-time student?

Q11 What's the subject area of your degree course?

Drop down list of subject areas

Other, please say what

Q12 Which year of degree study did you enter?

1st year 2nd year 3rd year

Q13 On reflection, do you think the year you started at has been the right one for you?
 yes no not sure
 Please say more

Q14 How satisfied are you with your choice of degree course?
 very satisfied quite satisfied not very not at all
 satisfied satisfied
 Please say more

Q15 Have you changed your degree subject this year or do you intend to change it for 2011-2012?
 yes, changed this year no, no change
 intend to change for 2011-2012
 Please say more

Q16 Have you dropped back a year or do you plan to do so?
 yes, dropped back this year no, no change
 will repeat year in 2011-2012
 Please say more

Q17 What type of degree do you aim to graduate with?
 Ordinary haven't decided yet
 Honours not sure of the difference between the two

Q18 How have you found the change from HN to degree study?
 very easy quite easy not difficult very difficult

Q19 Is your degree course what you expected?
 yes no partly
 Please say more

Q20 Looking back now, how well prepared were you for degree study?
 very well prepared not very well prepared
 quite well prepared not at all prepared

Q21 Looking back, what could the college (where you did your HN) have done to make the move to degree study easier for you and/or other HN students?

Q22 Have you ever thought about leaving your degree course at any time since you started?
no, not at all *yes, often* *yes, once or twice*
 If yes, what made you stay?

Q23 Do you think that the HNC/D route to degree study was right for you?
yes *no* *not sure*
 Please say more

Q24 Since you 've started your degree, have you had any particular difficulties relating to ...
 (please tick one box on each line)

	<i>a lot of difficulty</i>	<i>some difficulty</i>	<i>a little difficulty</i>	<i>no difficulty</i>
<i>... methods of teaching?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... how much you're expected to study on your own?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... type and level of assessments?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... timing of assessments?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... feedback on assessments?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... meeting assessment deadlines?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... using the library?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... work being harder than expected?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... not knowing about a topic that other students have already done?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... organising your time between study and other commitments?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>... other?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If other, please explain

Q25 Since you 've started your degree, have you had any particular difficulties relating to ...
 (please tick one box on each line)

<i>a lot of difficulty</i>	<i>some difficulty</i>	<i>a little difficulty</i>	<i>no difficulty</i>
----------------------------	------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------

... university ICT systems eg e-library, e-timetabling, electronic submission of work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... the large size of lectures?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... tutorials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... lab work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... travel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... social/making friends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... finding your way around?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... finance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... other?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If other, please explain

Q26 Have you attended any workshops or courses on the following since you started your degree study?

(please tick one box on each line)

	yes	no	didn't know about them
oral presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
academic essay writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
referencing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
writing reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
reflective journal writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
group work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
using ICT in your studies eg virtual learning environment, e-portfolio, blogs etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
how to use the library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
researching a topic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
time management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If other, please explain

Q27 Have you used any on-line or computer based materials since you started your degree study to help with the following ...

(please tick one box on each line)

	yes	no	didn't know about them
... presentations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... academic essay writing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... referencing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... group work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... using ICT in your studies online courses on using the university virtual learning environment, e- portfolio, blogs etc?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... how to use the library?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... researching a topic?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

... time management?

... other?

If other, please explain

Q28 Have you used any particular sources of advice or support at university?

(please tick one box on each line)

	<i>used</i>	<i>not used</i>
academic tutor/adviser	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
programme/module leader or degree/course co-ordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other lecturers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
admin/secretarial staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
someone in student support services:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- study skills adviser	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- finance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- counselling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
- special needs/additional support needs adviser	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
university library staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
student mentor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
students' union/association	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If other, please explain

Q29 What could the university do to develop its support for HNC/D students during their degree studies? What would you suggest?

Q30 Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences of moving from HN to degree study?

Q31 If you are currently in 3rd year, what are your plans for the future?

(please tick all that apply)

continue into Honours	<input type="checkbox"/>	look after the home	<input type="checkbox"/>
go on to further full-time study	<input type="checkbox"/>	look after children/other dependents	<input type="checkbox"/>
go on to further part-time study	<input type="checkbox"/>	Traveling	<input type="checkbox"/>
find a full-time job	<input type="checkbox"/>	voluntary work	<input type="checkbox"/>
find a part-time job	<input type="checkbox"/>	not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>
continue with current part-time job	<input type="checkbox"/>	other	<input type="checkbox"/>

If other, please say more

Contacts for information and advice

If you feel you would benefit from information or advice about any aspect of your degree study please contact:

Edinburgh Napier: Emily Alder em.alder@napier.ac.uk 0131 455 2971

Heriot- Watt University: Keith MacAskill K.MacAskill@hw.ac.uk 07913 483 712

Queen Margaret University: Keith MacAskill KMacAskill@qmu.ac.uk 0131 474 0000

Stirling University: Tracey Kerr tracey.kerr@stir.ac.uk

Carnegie College: Carole Mooney c.mooney@napier.ac.uk

Edinburgh's Telford College Kate Heighington k.heighington@napier.ac.uk

West Lothian College: Mairi Taggart m.taggart@napier.ac.uk

Please add your contact details here

Your contact details will NOT be passed to anyone else. We will only use them to check who has returned the survey so we don't keep reminding you and to notify you if you win the prize draw.

Q32 Name

Q33 Telephone number

Q34 Email address

Entry to prize draws

Q35 Please enter me into the prize draw

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

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