

Developing the autonomous learner: supporting transitions from FE to HE

A workshop for access & widening participation practitioners, Programme Leaders teaching staff in FE & HE, Guidance Managers, and HE Admission Tutors

Wednesday 12 March 2008 9:00am - 1:00pm at

**Centre for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Level 2
Owen Building, City Campus, Sheffield Hallam University S1 1WB**

What's the event about?

This conference is organised by Aimhigher Vocational Progression Project in conjunction with the Sheffield Hallam University Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (Promoting Learner Autonomy) - the CPLA CETL - Transitions Special Interest Group. It is supported by Higher Futures (South Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network). The event will be held on the morning of 12th March 2008 and is a logical progression from previous years' workshops organised by Aimhigher in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University Learning and Teaching Institute. These events were attended by managerial, support and teaching staff from partner FE colleges and HE institutions in the sub region. This half day event will again be a mixture of presentation and discussion workshops and a plenary session followed by a buffet lunch.

Who will present the workshops?

Presenters will showcase some of the research activities and findings carried out through the Transitions SIG, and also those relating to Higher Futures. The Transitions SIG is an important sub-group of the CPLA CETL.

CETLs are funded by The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and have two main aims:

- to reward excellent teaching practice, and
- to further invest in that practice so that CETL funding delivers substantial benefits to students, teachers and institutions

Established in September 2005, the CPLA empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and to work in partnership with tutors and other students. It exists to enable students to make successful transitions within their University careers. It supports change, innovation and risk-taking by both staff and students.

Special Interest Groups provide an opportunity to communicate good practice within the University, and to spread and develop new and exciting learning teaching and assessment approaches. The Transitions SIG focuses specifically on processes and experiences that students go through in their educational career. It promotes research of this transitional period, by focusing on issues such as study patterns, assessments, placements and induction experiences.

Higher Futures is the South Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network, a sub-regional partnership, bringing together different types of learning provider in a single network.

Its mission is to transform access and progression to higher education for vocational and work-based learners.

Workshops will be designed around discussion of how the research could be utilised in informing and assisting progression and transition of vocational learners into and through Higher Education programmes.

What issues it will explore?

The skills agenda continues to be high on the priority list of government. Research and experience has shown that groups of vocational and other learners will not generally be fully fledged autonomous learners. Effective Autonomous Learners are defined by the CETL as having

- well rounded conceptions of learning
- a range of learning skills and approaches
- the ability to organise their own learning
- a range of motivations to learn
- good information processing skills

This year's conference aims to explore some of the issues supporting the transition of learners to Higher Education programmes and especially those concerned with the development of the above range of skills deemed important in retention, progression and success of such students. We are hoping to showcase the work of projects from the Transition SIG which are designed to support the transition of learners into and through HE programmes. The issues are central to meeting Aimhigher objectives and also to supporting the aims of the new Lifelong Learning Networks of which Higher Futures is our local entity. Work concentrating on particular curriculum areas will be showcased whilst it is hoped this will generate ideas for development in others. However through the workshop approach we hope to allow opportunity for sharing of experiences, good practice and a consideration of opportunities for both implementation and development.

Who should come?

A workshop for access and widening participation practitioners, teaching staff on vocational programmes in Further and Higher Education, Programme Leaders and Admission Tutors in FE and HE, Guidance managers in Colleges and Aimhigher Co-ordinators.

What outcomes will be expected?

It is planned that participants will develop a better understanding of factors and emerging strategies in assisting the progression and achievement of vocational learners through the development of the '*Effective Autonomous Learner*'. This will be achieved through discussion and exchange of ideas around the possible development and implementation of strategies to develop the autonomous learner through vocational programmes at level 3, and how these can then match with likely learning experiences of students on higher education courses.