



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

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Staff guide to student induction and transition

Swansea Academy of Inclusivity and Learner Success

swansea.ac.uk/inclusivity-academy

Introduction

Student transition is:

“... a process of identity development and change, brought about through complex interactions between students, staff and institutional contexts, all shifting over time”. (O’Donnell et al, 2016).

Induction is a time-bounded intervention during a key period to support transition into a higher education learning environment. It typically comprises a series of events and activities held immediately before and/or at the beginning of the academic year. The main learning objectives are usually to welcome new students, provide an opportunity to meet other students as well as staff, and help new students settle into and navigate university life.

Transition begins before students arrive and continues essentially until they leave. However, the challenges of transition are more significant in the first year. **Therefore, this guide focuses on pre-arrival, initial induction and continuing transition interventions throughout the first year.**

This guide will give you ideas on how to plan, run and evaluate your student induction and transition provision and processes.

It includes top tips to help you provide a smooth transition into and through Higher Education and a successful initial induction period.

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Transitioning into and through the first year

Consider the transition phases for your first year students.

What will students need to successfully transition **into** higher education and **through** their first year?

- What are the **key transition phases** for your first year students?
- **What information** will the students need and **when** will they need it?
- **What skills** will the students need and **when** will they need to have developed them by?
- What **interventions** could be offered to ensure students get the information they need, develop the necessary skills and feel prepared?

This table highlights some of the key transition phases during the first year and possible interventions to help.

Transition phase	Interventions
Pre-arrival	What do students need to know before they arrive? The rest can wait! For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Summer reading lists● Required text books● Induction event information● Twitter handles and Facebook pages
Initial induction	Initial information to welcome students and help them settle into university life, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Where to go✓ Who to ask for help in the College✓ Essential information for getting started

Transition phase	Interventions
<p>3-4 weeks into term</p>	<p>Some students might be having problems settling into University life, some may be finding the new style of learning and teaching a challenge, others may be missing home. This is an ideal time to introduce College and central support services such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Academic Success • Library Services • Welfare@CampusLife • Wellbeing Service
<p>Lab work/field work First assignment</p> <p>First assessment</p> <p>First placement</p> <p>Transition into the second year</p>	<p>Consider:</p> <p>✓ The information a student will need to prepare for and transition through these key phases</p> <p>✓ The skills needed, for example, time management, independent learning, self-reflection, referencing, assessment / exam preparation, using feedback</p> <p>✓ Appropriate interventions to help students develop the necessary skills and feel prepared e.g. workshops, embedded study skills, signposting to central services (see page 11 for some suggested activities)</p>



Top tips

- Transition to and through HE is an individual **process** of development and change of which induction is only the beginning.
- **Work with students** throughout. They can help plan, deliver and evaluate activities and identify key transition phases.
- **Set learning objectives** for your induction and transition provision. What do you and the students want to get from the activities being offered?
- Think about **the timing**. Getting the timing right will ensure students understand the context and make the best use of the intervention.
- Create and maintain a **sense of community** and belonging by providing opportunities for students to meet and mix with key members of staff.
- Make sure that your interventions are **accessible to all** students even if they cannot attend. Use a mix of communication methods, not just email.
- Consider the **diversity of the cohort** and ensure that activities are varied and inclusive by providing a range of social & academic activities at different times.
- **Evaluate** to find out what is going well and what areas need more thought.

Don't forget:

- ✓ Late arrivals such as international students
- ✓ Joint honours students
- ✓ Students returning from a year abroad
- ✓ Students arriving through clearing

Why not set up a College working group involving staff and students to:

- Consider internal and external good practice

- Evaluate this year's induction and the transition throughout the first year
- Start planning for next year

Purpose of induction

Students starting University are often coming into a very different environment and the transition can be difficult. Induction activities can help students settle and should:

- Set and manage expectations.
- Allow students to meet new people and get their bearings.
- Create a sense of belonging.
- Introduce key members of staff and services.

In planning your induction it is helpful to set clear objectives:

- What do you want the students to get from their induction?
- What do the students want to get from their induction?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What is the purpose of each activity or intervention?

Speak to the students...their priorities for induction may be different to what you think!

Timing is everything

To support **student success**, transition should be viewed as a process of development and change of which induction is only the beginning. Information should be given at **key points** throughout the student journey.

[My worst experience was] “all the information given! It was too much too soon, I did not have time to get my head around it”.

Don't overwhelm students with too much information:

- Keep talks clear and succinct
- Give key information at the right times and signpost the rest

See [page 12 “Make it accessible”](#) for ideas on how to get your messages to students.

Have you thought about...

...When the information will be needed

...Pre induction activities, online and offline e.g. social media groups, summer events or preparatory e-learning

...Staggering information and events throughout the year; bring in specialist support services at the right time!

Make it personal

Creating and maintaining a sense of community and belonging, whether at programme, subject, College or University level, is important in helping students to settle into University life and stay. Run some “getting to know you activities” as early as possible so new students can mix and start to make friends. It is important for all students to make links with staff members.

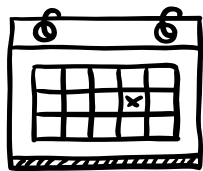
For all students you may want to:

Mixing with other students

- Provide a [peer mentoring](#) / buddy scheme or use family groups.
- Provide opportunities for students to interact with student reps.
- Arrange small group work and activities to complement long and / or large lectures.
- Create an online community using social networks (#...Community or #Team...).
- Run off campus trips.
- Promote societies.
- Provide t-shirts / hoodies.

Meeting staff

- Introduce key members of staff and their roles early.
- Put staff photos and contact details outside offices/teaching spaces and on noticeboards to help put faces to names and orientate students.
- Use social media to introduce staff.
- Give students staff business cards with contact details and office hours on.
- Provide departmental bookmarks with key contact information.
- Hold an Academic Mentor lunch with students.
- Hold meet and greet sessions / coffee mornings prior to the start of Semester 1 for new students.
- Include academic and professional service staff.
- Send students personalised emails using their name.



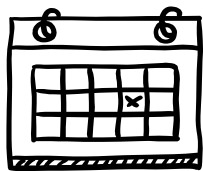
Induction activities

Provide a range of activities during the first week and beyond, both academic and social in nature. Think about the name of the activity being offered; does it appeal to students? Induction activities should welcome new students to the University, help them make friends, inform them about the kind of learning involved in the degree programme and help navigate university life. Here are some ideas to get you started...

- **Pre entry information** - provide a reading list over the summer or stimulate discussion on academic topics via a social network.
- Pre enrolment **coffee mornings** for mature students, commuter students and those from non-traditional backgrounds - to help reduce feelings of isolation.
- **Social events** such as lunches, away days or Bingo. Food always helps to increase numbers! Include staff in the events to help build links.
- **Ice breakers** - get students to mix with others and start to build a sense of belonging.
- **Group campus tours and scavenger hunts** - locate teaching areas, resources, identify key members of staff and find out more about the area. Why not use peer mentors or student ambassadors to help?
- The Swansea University Autistic Spectrum Condition Service offers an **orientation event** to students with ASC.
- **Question and answer sessions** with current students, ambassadors and peer mentors - set expectations and reassure students that they will cope.
- **Discussions about differences** - run discussions with student groups about differences between learning before and at university.

For Swansea University staff only

- **Academic Success: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life (on Blackboard)** designed to help with the transition to HE; Course 1 and Course 2 in induction programmes, and Course 3 prior to the first assignment being undertaken.



Transition activities

Provide a range of activities and events to support the student transition into and through Higher Education. Think about the skills students will need, particularly throughout their first year. Transition provision should help students develop the necessary skills and prepare for the key transition phases ahead (see the timeline on page 3 for more information). Here are some ideas to get you started...

- Get students to **vote on the information** they want using a system such as [Kahoot](#); what matters to them? What do they need to know?
- **Sample some learning activities** - provide opportunities to try a range of learning skills e.g. using feedback effectively.
- Interactive **quizzes** with clickers – encourage team work in a fun relaxed environment.
- **Course related team building activities** - get students working together and thinking about course content.
- **Group presentations** on academic issues relevant to the subject area.
- **“Speed debating”** - discuss academic ideas or practical issues like basic study skills, employability or student societies.
- **“Welcome back” events** at the beginning of semester 2 and for Years 2 and 3 near the end of induction week.
- **Skills workshops and drop in sessions** to address academic transition issues at key times of the year.
- **Talks from alumni or graduate recruiters** - focus students on thinking about their goals.

Make it accessible

The **more readily available information** is the more likely students are to access it. By putting information online students can revisit it whenever they need to and it is useful for students who have arrived late and missed the induction activities. Using a range of delivery methods will ensure all students receive the information.

You may want to:

- ✓ Develop **videos** for students to watch before arrival or before returning.
- ✓ Release **bite-sized information** on the run up to Welcome Week (see [Countdown to Psychology](#)).
- ✓ Develop a **dynamic online area** for induction materials, quizzes, FAQs and key contact details.
- ✓ **Record activities** for students who may have missed them.
- ✓ Consider alternatives to email such as **social media, text messaging or digi-screens** to give important messages.
- ✓ Put together a **PowerPoint containing key information** to play on a loop at the beginning and end of lectures.
- ✓ Develop an **online course** on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- ✓ **Embed study skill** information into modules.
- ✓ Invite **key speakers** at the start or end of lectures at key points of the year to give a brief overview of specialist services and the help and support available.

For Swansea University staff only:

- Direct students to the Academic Success: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life Online Courses (on Blackboard) and consider embedding the courses into modules.

Make it inclusive

Induction and transition should be inclusive of all students and should take into consideration the size, diversity and specific needs of the cohort. A variety of provision should be offered with thought being given to:

- Students with disabilities
- Cultural backgrounds
- International students
- Students with non-traditional qualifications
- Mature students
- Commuter students
- Students with caring responsibilities
- Direct entrants to a later year
- Students with faith

✓ Think about the **timing** of your events. Give plenty of notice so students with support needs and other commitments can plan ahead.

✓ Is the event and information being given **accessible**? (For Swansea University staff only: [Guide on making resources accessible](#)).

✓ How will you make sure information continues to be **available** to all students?

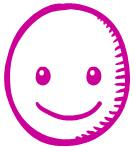
✓ Is the information being provided **appropriate to the needs** of the cohort?

✓ Are you providing a **range of activities**, including alcohol free social events?

✓ Are you providing students with opportunities to **integrate and mix** with others from different cultures and backgrounds?

Evaluation - How did we do?

Evaluation and student feedback is essential to the success of future induction and transition activities. It will help to identify the things that went well as well as areas for improvement. To gather feedback you could use...



- Student focus groups
- Online student surveys
- Staff focus groups or surveys
- Facebook polls
- Suggestion boxes
- Food for thought sessions – a few short answers in exchange for food!
- Student representative committee meetings

Swansea University staff only: Evaluate induction for new students using a [student survey](#) and [staff reflection tool](#).

Working with students

Working with students to **plan, deliver and evaluate induction and transition** provision will help provide valuable insight into what information is needed and when. Collaborative working will promote feelings of joint ownership and will help to increase engagement.

- Hold planning meetings with current students; what information did they need and how would they like to have received it? What would have helped them in their transition to HE? What are the barriers to engaging with induction and transition provision?
- **Work with the new students – what do they want to know? You could do this through Facebook polls pre-entry to help organise events for the first week.**
- Involve student ambassadors, peer mentors, course reps and alumni in the planning and delivery. They could provide campus tours, run talks, interactive Q&A sessions or just be on hand at events. Year 3 students could provide talks for Year 2 students to help set expectations, answer queries and allay fears.
- **Provide welcome packs from current students containing some words of encouragement and advice about being a new student.**
- Use student feedback as you go. If something isn't working, change the approach!

Swansea University staff only:

Why not use a **SPIN placement** to help gather feedback, evaluate last year's induction period and plan next year's timetable of events.

Read how **Swansea University Medical School worked with their students to improve their induction.**

Find out what's important to students for induction.

Contact us

Swansea Academy of Inclusivity and Learner Success (SAILS)

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Additional resources for Swansea University staff only can be found in the [SAILS Collaborate folder](#) including:

- Information from workshops
- Notes and papers from the task and finish group
- The SAILS report on student transition

Acknowledgements

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