



Academic transition and the first year curriculum

The following questions have been designed to prompt reflection and discussion around the first year curriculum. They are very much conceived as a starting point to help course teams to think about how curricula might be adapted and developed in order to support students' discipline-specific transitions to HE-level study. They are written with a post-school student cohort in mind so would need to be amended

1. What have students had to become good at in order to gain entry to your degree programme?
2. An oft-stated expectation of HE learning is that it will involve greater levels of 'independent study'. What is that students' teachers did that they are now expected to do for themselves?
3. Many first-year students have been used to fairly regular and structured routines of 'homework'. Now they are (often) away from home and far less likely to have work set on such regular and structured terms. How do students respond to this?
4. At school, in many cases the norm is to produce regular pieces of work for teachers to mark and provide feedback for, with the latter provided soon after submission and orientated towards the next, or current, piece of work the student is producing. How does this compare to typical experiences on your course(s) and, if significantly different, what might be the implications be for student learning?
5. How, and in what ways, do students come to understand and practise how knowledge is produced in your discipline (e.g. how knowledge is acquired, evidence gathered, ideas evaluated etc.)?

6. How, and in what ways, do students in your discipline come to know about and practise various norms and conventions of academic discourse (e.g. in essays, reports, dissertations, posters, presentations etc.?)

7. One of the most commonly referred-to virtues in HE is a willingness and ability to be 'critical':
 - a. What understandings and experiences of criticality do students come to university with (e.g. derived from their studies at A Level)?
 - b. How do students come to know what criticality means, and how it's practised, in your discipline?

8. At school or college, students are likely to interact with a smaller number of teachers who have overall ownership of the curricula they teach. In HE, they will typically interact with larger numbers of teachers who have only partial ownership of the curriculum (e.g. a module). What kinds of challenges do you find this presents to students?

9. How does your first year curriculum seek to excite and enthuse students about your discipline and the academic practices they will develop?

10. What do you want students to know and understand better by the end of their first year (about themselves, their discipline, the world at large etc.) than they know and understand at the beginning?