# *Developing an Institutional Policy: Retention and Student Success*

**Professor Mike Bramhall**

Sheffield Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

# Key Points

- Developing the framework
- Research/ Review of what is out there
- Common issues and interventions across SHU
- Reasons why students withdraw
- Factors that enhance retention & success
- Guiding principles for the SHU Framework
- The SHU Retention & Student Success Framework

# Developing the framework

- Corporate Plan (2008-13) - Central theme to 'Improve the student experience'
- Retention and Student Success Group formed in 2009 (Chaired by PVC)
- Initially looked at Retention data: - withdrawals, module pass rates, HESA non-continuation statistics
- Internal review of retention practices across the university - processes, common issues/ interventions
- Background research - HEA, conferences etc.

# What works? Student retention and success

A total of £1 million has been made available by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and HEFCE over a three year period to support projects that identify, evaluate and disseminate institutional good practice relating to student retention.

The Higher Education Academy

hefce

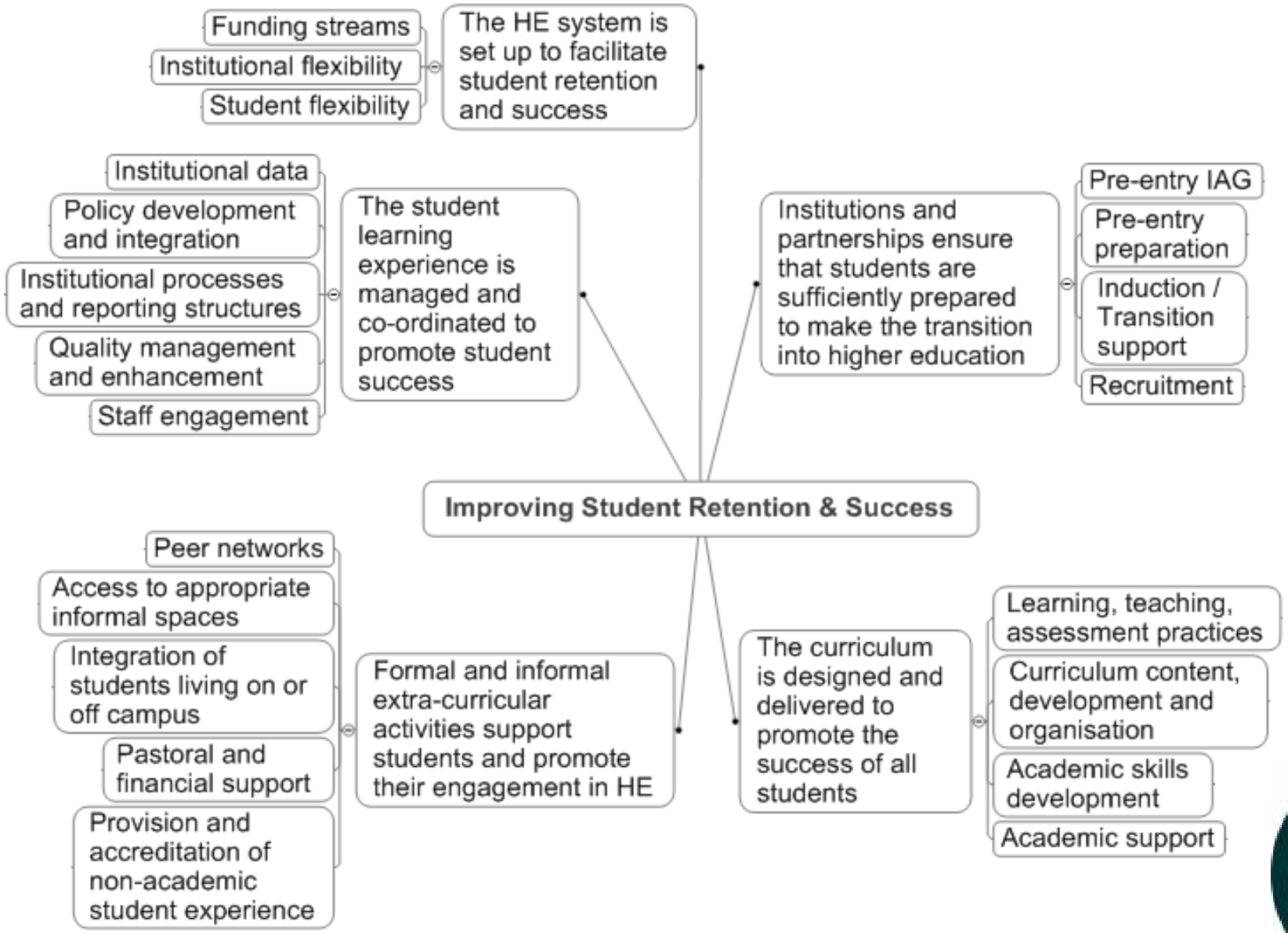
phf

Action on Access

# National Projects

- Project 1 – ‘Belonging’ and ‘Intimacy’ Factors in the Retention of Students: an Investigation into Student Perceptions of Effective Practice and how that Practice can be Replicated University of Leicester
- Project 2 - Dispositions to Stay: the Support and Evaluation of Retention Strategies Using the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) northumbria UNIVERSITY
- Project 3 - Good Practice in Student Retention: an Examination of the Effects of Student Integration on Non-Completion University of Sunderland
- Project 4 - HERE! (Higher Education Retention & Engagement) NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY
- Project 5 - Pathways to Success through Peer Mentoring Aston University
- Project 6 - A Comparative Evaluation of the Roles of Student Adviser and Personal Tutor in Relation to Undergraduate Student Retention Anglia Ruskin University
- Project 7 - Comparing and Evaluating the Impacts on Student Retention of Different Approaches to Supporting Students through Study Advice and Personal Development University of Reading

Ref: Action on Access, http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=11_3




The Higher Education Academy

# Griffith University

" …the transition experience is about us enabling students to have a strong and competent and confident student identity and that will be a function where they're working with their diverse entry pathways. At the other end I think our challenge is to help them embrace what you might call an emergent graduate identity …."

Prof Alf Lizzio, Griffith University
http://www.griffith.edu.au/gihe/senior-year-experience

# Griffith University

**Enhancing Student Engagement in the first year-**

**10 Strategies for success:**

1. Create and maintain a stimulating intellectual environment
2. Value academic work and high standards
3. Monitor and respond to demographic sub groups
4. Ensure expectations are explicit and responsive
5. Acknowledge the challenges in student lives
6. Foster social connections
7. Provide targeted self-management strategies
8. Use curriculum structures - Assessment & Feedback to foster engagement
9. Manage online learning experiences with care
10. Support and engage teaching colleagues

http://www.griffith.edu.au/gihe/pdf/gihe_tipsheet_web_ese.pdf

# The main reasons that students withdraw are:

- Inadequate preparation for Higher Education
- Poor institutional and course match
- Not coping with academic demand/ making poor progress/ lack of engagement
- Poor social integration with their peers and academic/ support staff
- Financial issues and personal circumstances

Yorke (1999), Yorke and Longden (2008), and the National Audit Office (NAO, 2007) and House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2008)

# The factors that enhance student retention and success

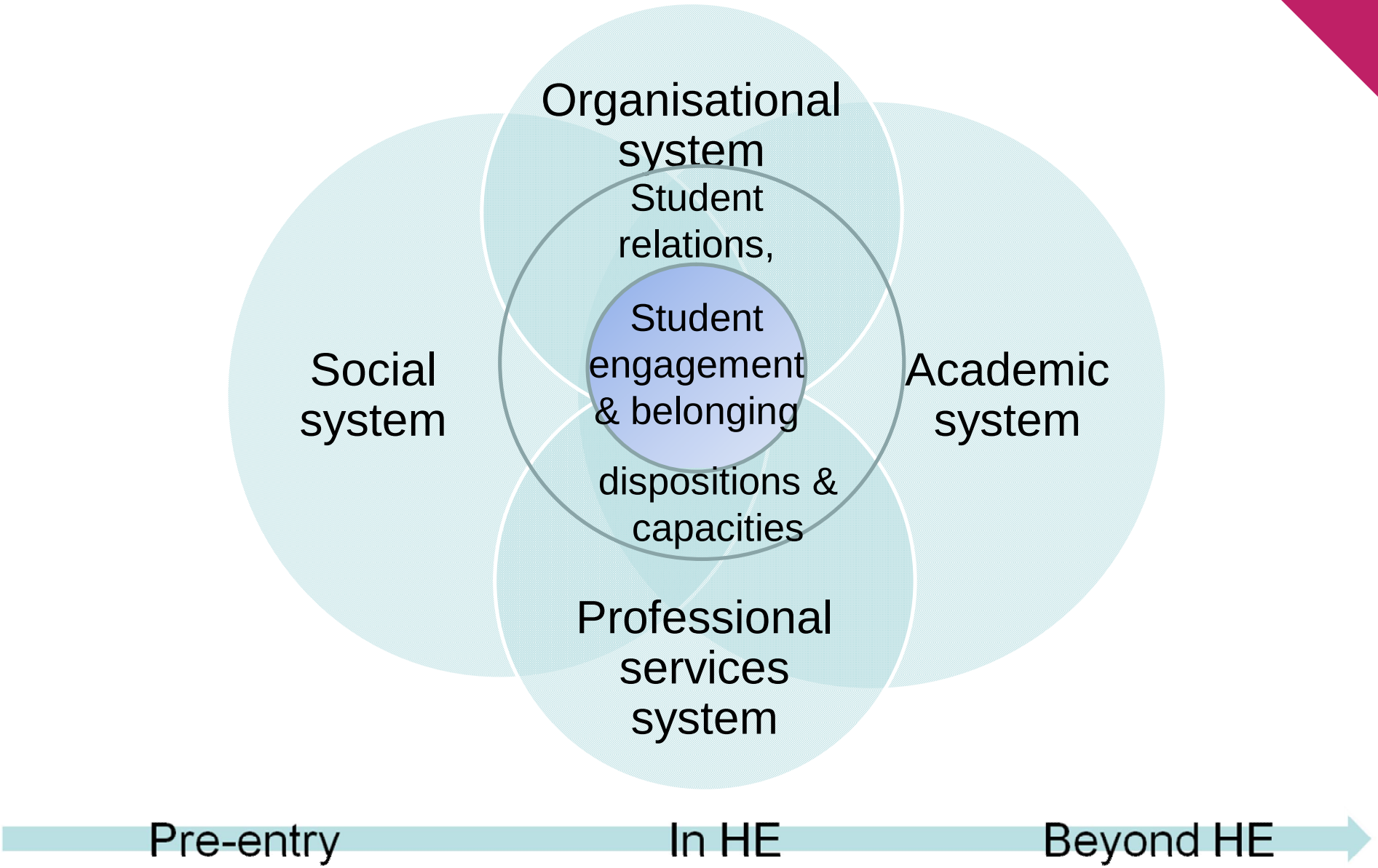
- The provision of adequate pre-entry information and preparation
- Relevant courses
- Induction and transition support
- Active learning and inclusive teaching and learning strategies
- Formative assessment
- Personal tutoring and study support
- Social engagement
- Student support, both centrally available and integrated within the curriculum
- Effective collection and use of retention & achievement data, and monitoring

# Common issues across SHU

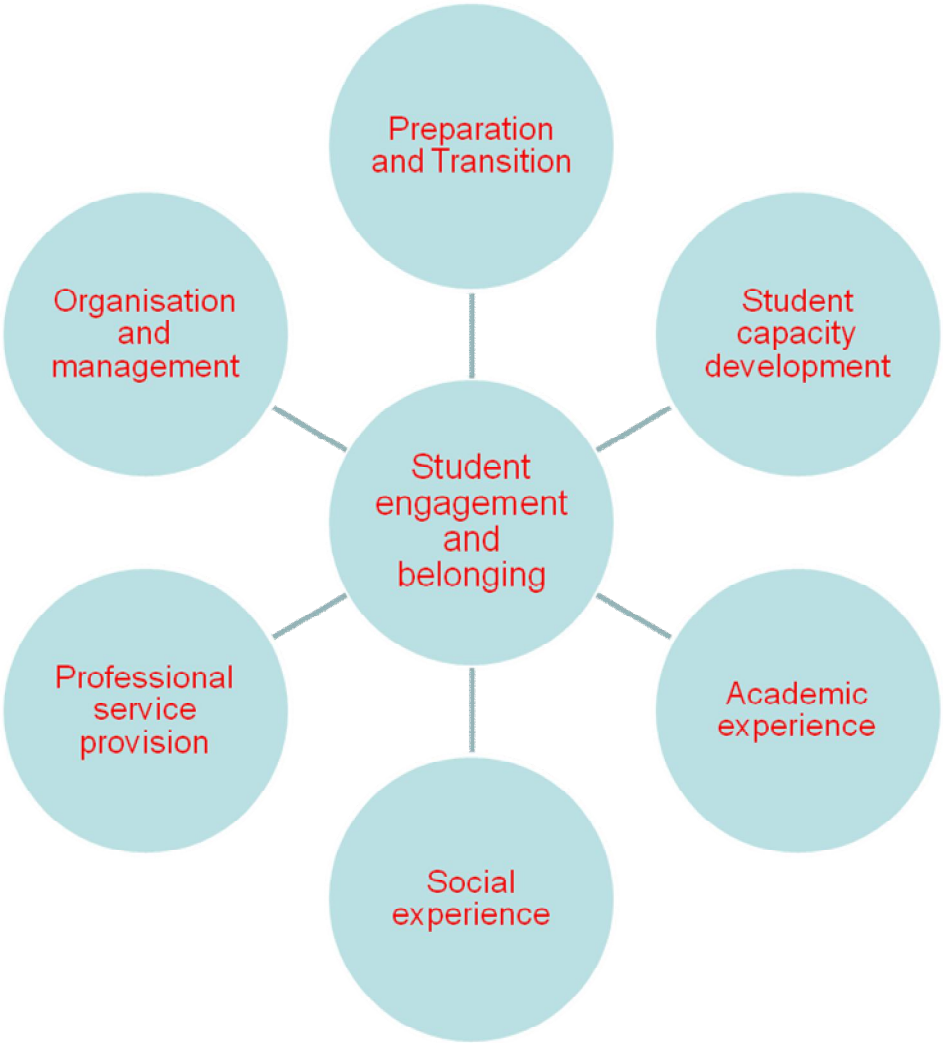
- Level 4 retention and achievement
- Distance learning students
- Prep year (level 3) pass rates
- Withdrawals due to poor course matching
- Student personal/ financial issues leading to withdrawal
- Numerical modules - leading to high referral rates e.g. Maths, programming, statistics financial accounting modules.
- Lack of course identity
- Lack of academic support for summer referrals

# SHU Common interventions

- Extended induction
- Mentoring/ peer assisted learning
- Attendance monitoring
- Increased study skills support
- Revised assessment strategies – improved formative assessment and feedback
- Use of personal academic tutors
- Development of a course identity/ community
- Improved marketing/ open day briefings
- Raised UCAS points
- Texting to students
- Numerical skills support


Organisational system
Student relations,
Student engagement & belonging
dispositions & capacities
Social system
Academic system
Professional services system
Pre-entry
In HE
Beyond HE

# Institutional systems relevant to improving student engagement and belonging




**Retention Grants Programme Briefing No.3, Feb.2010**

# Guiding Principles for SHU Framework

- A **supportive environment** to help students succeed from **all staff**
- **Student engagement** and utilising their **feedback**
- Students should have a **sense of belonging**
- Students should know **what is expected of them**
- Retention and student success issues should be regularly reviewed and **embedded within university enhancement processes**, such as Module quality review

# Guiding Principles cont.....

- We need to be **consistent across the university in utilising data** and measures that highlight student success, and data that gives **early warning signs** of potential student failure, such as identifying those **students at risk** and **acting on modules** with persistently poor pass rates
- Ongoing **evaluation, sharing, dissemination** and identification of practices
- Retention and student success should be incorporated into the **course planning process**

# The SHU Retention and Student Success Framework

## (a) Preparation and transition

### Core requirement:

1. Extended induction and orientation for first years, including academic skills development.
2. Transition induction from level to level, including placement and final destinations.
3. Attendance monitoring of first year students during first semester.

### Recommended:

- Extended induction for PG taught students
- Careful recruitment to ensure student retention and success.
- Socialisation at course level
- Peer mentoring

# (b) Student skills and knowledge development

**Core requirement:**

4. Early diagnostics during induction to identify students at risk.

**Recommended:**

- Individual student support through use of peer mentoring.
- Moving from centralised to discipline led skills development and support
- Early student engagement in active learning, e.g. through group work projects.

# (c) Academic experience

**Core requirement:**

5. Early formative assessment and feedback by week 6 in all first year UG and PG modules.
6. Use of in-module retrieval in all first year modules.
7. This Framework should be incorporated into course planning and validation, for improved course design.

**Recommended:**

- Inclusive LTA practices.
- Revision support classes for summer referrals.
- Active learning, e.g. EBL
- Peer tutoring.

# (d) Social experience

**Recommended:**

- Peer networks and social activities e.g. within the Students Union.
- Use of social spaces, both physical and virtual via technology.
- Peer mentoring/ tutoring.

# (e) Professional services provision

## Recommended:

- Guidance on support services within extended induction.
- Staff development support through central staff working with faculty staff to embed student support/ study skills within programmes of study.
- Student Union providing support through the Advice Centre.
- Individual student support e.g. through peer mentoring, or other individualised personal support processes.

# (f) Monitoring and evaluation

**Core requirement:**

8. Common set of institutional data to underpin the framework.
9. KPIs to be clearly articulated and monitored at university and local levels, and faculty action plans produced.
10. Feeds into University Business Planning processes/ Portfolio Review.

**Recommended:**

- Effective engagement in the use of data through existing quality enhancement processes such as module and course review
- Each faculty should have a forum for the discussion and implementation of retention and progression interventions

# Useful References


1. Action on Access, http://www.actiononaccess.org/index.php?p=11_3 Last accessed 18th April 2010.
2. Corporate Plan 2008-2013, Sheffield Hallam University (2008), http://www.shu.ac.uk/about/foi/priorities.html_ (last accessed 16th January 2011).
3. House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2008), 'Staying the course: the retention of students on higher education courses - tenth report of session 2007-08', http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmpubacc/322/322.pdf Last accessed 16th January 2011.
4. Jones, R (2008), Student retention and success, Research Synthesis for the Higher Education Academy: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/teachingandlearning/inclusion/alldisplay?type=resources&newid=ourwork/inclusion/wprs/WPRS_retention_synthesis&site=york Last accessed 16th January 2011.
5. National Audit Office (2007), 'Staying the course: the retention of students in higher education', http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0607/retention_of_students_in_he.aspx?alreadysearchfor=yes Last accessed 16th January 2011.
6. Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
7. Tinto, V. (2003). Learning better together: The impact of learning communities on student success. *Higher Education Monograph Series, 1.* Higher Education Program, School of Education, Syracuse University.
8. Yorke, M. (1999) Leaving Early: undergraduate non-completion in higher education. London: Falmer.
9. Yorke, M. and Longden, B. (2008) The first year experience of higher education in the UK. Final report. York: Higher Education Academy http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/resources/publications/FYEFinalReport.pdf Last accessed 16th January 2011.
10. University of Salford, Admissions and Retention Policy, http://www.governance.salford.ac.uk/cms/resources/uploads/File/policies/Admissions_and_Retention_Policy.pdf (last accessed 16th January 2011).