
Outcomes:

Publication of research findings will contribute to:

- ◆ Raising the profile of ‘non-traditional’ students; providing positive role models for future students
- ◆ The further development of inclusive policies and practices in widening participation and access to HE
- ◆ Influencing targeted learning and teaching strategies to support the development of learning of non-traditional students
- ◆ Production of materials for publicity and recruitment, pre-course preparation, student induction.

Students in the first study said:

“It took a lot of planning and all my time management skills but I feel that my kids have also benefited from mum being at University – we did our ‘homework’ together...”

“Quite honestly, coming on this course is the best thing I ever did – I am a new person”!

“I am much more aware and confident – before coming on the course I would hold back as I felt I didn’t have an opinion on social issues – now I am not afraid to have my say – I have learned so much in the 3 years here”.



National Teaching Fellowship Learning
and Teaching Research Project



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

DIVERSITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

How non-traditional entry students succeed in HE

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The **DIVERSITY AND ACHIEVEMENT** research project involves a series of longitudinal studies that follow selected groups of students on the Social and Community Studies Programme (SCS), in the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education at Manchester Metropolitan University, through their undergraduate years.

The **aim** of the research project is to provide insight into the complex processes that are involved as non-traditional entry students pursue academic achievement. Findings will add another dimension to current debates on widening participation, access and retention and will exemplify the achievements of under represented groups in Higher Education.

The project focuses on the **SUCCESSES** of non-traditional entry students showing how participants access, and use, a range of sources to support and develop learning and how they meet, and manage, a variety of complex challenges during the undergraduate years.

This is a participatory research project and participants are involved in the production, for publication, of 'Life and Learning Stories' (Case Studies) of their experiences as undergraduates in HE.



The current project grew out of a study of the **First Year Experience** of students on the SCS Programme (2002/3). This was supported by the Social Policy and Social Work Learning and Teaching Support Network (SWAPItsn/HEASWAP.)

Evidence emerged of students' **motivation, independence, resilience and drive** that warranted further investigation and the first longitudinal study commenced in 2003.

Research participants are from a range of backgrounds and include students who are: mature, disabled and dyslexic, from black and 'minority ethnic' backgrounds, single parents, and carers, from low socio-economic groups, from overseas, those for whom English is not the first language, the first in the family in HE and 'care leavers'.

Longitudinal Studies

Interviews staged over the second and third undergraduate years provide:

- ◆ A critical reflection on diverse pathways into Higher Education
- ◆ Details of the various challenges met, and managed, by non-traditional entry students during the undergraduate years showing how they use resources and sources of support in order to manage their learning and their lives to succeed in HE
- ◆ A reflective account of the development of students as autonomous learners as they succeed and progress.

The **NATIONAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIP** award (HEA/HEFCE 2004) has enabled the Research Project to expand to now include:

- ◆ In partnership with a colleague Dr. Diane Watt, and with the Cariocca Educational Trust in Manchester, a parallel study of the experience of students of African Caribbean and African heritage
- ◆ Opportunities for international comparative research through the establishment of the Diversity *and* Achievement International Research Consortium.

International Comparative Study

In Australia, a series of parallel studies will take place using the same methods as the MMU studies. These studies will focus on students from the **six Australian HE 'Equity Target Groups'**:

- ◆ Indigenous students (an important priority for this research)
 - ◆ Students from low socio-economic backgrounds
 - ◆ Students from non-English speaking backgrounds
 - ◆ Women in traditionally underrepresented areas of study
 - ◆ Disabled students
 - ◆ Rural and isolated students
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