Academic Skills
on the LEAPS Summer School

Brief for the Team Project assessment

1. Outline

Context	Your team is the Transition and Retention unit for your university (see below). Across UK higher education, there is a drive to improve the student experience. Your university enjoys a high level of student satisfaction, and Senior Management is committed to improving and supporting transition, retention and success. Your university: • has a student 'drop out' rate in line with the national average; • has a commitment to helping every student achieve their potential; • has a commitment to providing high quality education and a positive student experience.
Task	Your team will prepare a set of recommendations that will support the smooth transition of students into your university and will promote success and retention. Within the recommendations you should provide a clear rationale for the proposed strategy, alongside discussion of the potential challenges for the university in executing the approaches you present. Your recommendations will be informed by research literature and examples of best practice, relevant to the nature of your specific university (see below).
Timeline	**Thurs 7 June: Team Project commences** You will discuss team roles, establish ground rules and agree how you will communicate with your colleagues. **Thurs 28 June: Mid-Project Review (MPR)** This will be a short, **formal presentation** to the marking teams and fellow project teams where you will outline your progress. Your presentation will be expected to consist of 6 slides covering the following: Slide 1: introducing the team and the presentation Slides 2 & 3: your research so far and your methodology Slides 4 & 5: your emerging ideas for your recommendations Slide 6: concluding slide to include your plan of action for the project, including a division of responsibilities Every member of your Project Team will be expected to make a meaningful contribution to the presentation. Following your presentation, there will be questions and discussion with peers and the marking team. You will receive **feedback** that will inform your subsequent work on the Project. **Continuation of Team Project** Between the mid-project review and the final presentation, your team should reflect on and action the feedback from the mid-project review, continue researching and developing your ideas and recommendations, and design, refine and practice your final presentation. The marking team are looking for a professional and polished presentation that meets the assessment criteria (appendix 1).

Thurs 12 July: Presentation of recommendations
As a team you will present your final recommendations to the marking team and your fellow project teams. This will be a **10-minute formal presentation** followed by 5-minutes of questions and discussion. **By 2pm** on Thursday 12 July you will submit one hard copy of your presentation slides/visuals, including a bibliography, to the marking team.

After all the teams have presented, you will complete the **peer assessment** component for the Team Project exercise.

Thurs 19 July: Feedback on your project
As a team you will receive feedback on your final presentation.

Universities and project teams

Vetus Collegium (VC)
Vetus Collegium was founded as a university in 1491 and is based at a number of campuses and buildings across a city centre. The university has high academic requirements for admission and offers a wide range of undergraduate degrees including traditional arts and humanities, science and technology, and professional qualifications. There is a diverse student body, including a large proportion of international students, with an annual first-year undergraduate intake of around 3,500.

Curie-McAdam University (CMU)
Curie-McAdam University was founded in 1966. The original buildings are located in parkland on the edge of the city where a large proportion of students live in halls in their first year, and specialises in science and engineering. The university also now has an international campus. With a diverse student body, Curie-McAdam University has around 5,000 students across all years, drawn from inside and outside Scotland. The gender balance is 65:35 male:female.

Metropolitan University (MU)
Metropolitan University was founded in 1992 and is located across 3 campuses in a city setting. It is known for its mostly vocational courses, excellent links with employers and high levels of graduate employment. It has 11,000 students, many of whom are drawn from the local area, including a large proportion of mature students (who make up 45% of the undergraduate intake). Metropolitan University also has strong links with the college sector with many students being direct entrants from college, articulating and progressing onto degree programmes.

Town and Country University (T&C)
Town and Country University was founded in 1995 and is a multi-campus institution with small bases in different towns covering a large rural area, sometimes 90 miles apart. There is no single location and the university prides itself on serving local communities and offering a broad range of course. The majority of undergraduates are from the local area and work part-time alongside their studies. Town and Country University works closely with local schools and colleges, advising students on options and choices in higher education. Courses are taught by a combination of traditional in-class teaching and online learning, including webinars.

2. Suggested reading for the Team Project

The resources outlined below provide a useful place to begin your research and reflection around academic feedback and are available through the University of Edinburgh Library. If you are not using a university computer, you may need to login with your EASE credentials to access resources.

A good place to start is the 2012 report by Liz Thomas.
Thomas, L. (2012) *Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: a summary of findings and recommendations from the What Works? Student Retention & Success programme*, [Online] Available at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/what_works_summary_report_0.pdf (Accessed 30 May 2018).

You will also find links to some interesting and relevant literature on the *Improving the Student Experience* and the *Higher Education Academy* websites.

Morgan, M. (2016) *Improving the Student Experience*, [Online] Available at: http://www.improvingthestudentexperience.com (Accessed 30 May 2018).

Higher Education Academy (2015) [Online] Available at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk, [Online] (Accessed 30 May 2018).

General reading:
Whittaker, R. (2008) *Quality Enhancement Themes: The First Year Experience Transition to and during the first year,* Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education report [Online] Available at: http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/ethemes/the-first-year/transition-to-and-during-first-year.pdf?sfvrsn=b62f981_10 (Accessed 27 June 2018)

Yorke, M. and Thomas, L. (2003) 'Improving the Retention of Students from Lower Socio-economic Groups', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 63-74, [Online] Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13600800305737 (Accessed 30 May 2018).

School to university transition:
Beaumount, C., Moscrop, C., and Canning, S. (2014) 'Easing the transition from school to HE: scaffolding the development of self-regulated learning through a dialogic approach to feedback', *Journal of Further and Higher Education* [Online] Available at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0309877X.2014.953460 (Accessed 30 May 2018).

Lesse, M. (2010) 'Bridging the gap: supporting student transitions into higher education', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 239-251.

Lowe, H. and Cook, A. (2003) 'Mind the Gap: are students prepared for higher education?', *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 53-76.

College to university transition:
Christie, H., Barron, P., and D'Annunzio-Green, N. (2013) 'Direct entrants in transition: becoming independent learners', *Studies in Higher Education,* vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 623–637.

Mature students:
Tones, M., Fraser, J., Elder R., and White, K.M. (2009) 'Supporting Mature-aged Students from a Low Socioeconomic Background', *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning,* vol. 58, no. 4, pp. 505-529.

Pearce, N. (2017) 'Exploring the learning experiences of older mature undergraduate students', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 59-76.

STEM subjects:
Hulme, J.A. and De Wilde, J. (2014) *Tackling transition in STEM disciplines: Supporting the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) student journey into higher education in England and Wales.* [Online] Available at:
https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/resources/HEA%20Tackling%20transitions%20in%20STEM.pdf (Accessed 30 May 2018).

International students:
Ragavan, S.K., (2013) Peer mentoring for international students in a UK law school: lessons from a pilot case study, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, vol. 51, no. 3, pp. 292-302.

QAA. (2015) *Supporting and Enhancing the Experience of International Students in the UK,* Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education report [Online] Available at:
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/international/international-students-guide-15.pdf?sfvrsn=7375f781_4 (Accessed 27 June 2018)

Appendix 1. Assessment criteria for the Team Project Presentation

Team Project Presentation Assessment form

Team name: **Mark out of 50** (subject to moderation)**:**

Markers initials: **Date:**

Comments

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1. CRITICAL THINKING AND EVIDENCE

1.1 RELEVANCE

Has your team addressed the project brief? We are looking for content to be directly relevant to the task (within the short presentation time there is little room for wandering off topic). We are looking for regular and explicit connections to the project brief.

(5) The impression given is that the brief remained at the forefront of your minds throughout the project. The project brief is clearly addressed and content was relevant throughout.

(3) Although your presentation drifts off topic or lacks explicit connection to the question at times, the content is generally relevant.

(1) Large sections of your presentation drift away from the topic or fail to make explicit the relevance of what is being discussed. This might be due to misinterpretation of the project brief, or perhaps the impression given is that your team lost sight of the project brief.

(0) Your team have not attempted to address the project brief (or have attempted to address an alternative one). What has been offered bears little or no relevance to the project brief.

1.2 CRITICAL REFLECTION

We want to see that your team has attempted to critically reflect on the project brief. We should get the impression that you spent time giving careful thought to the subject.

(5) There is clear evidence that your team has attempted to critically consider the project brief. Your team has clearly made an effort to get to grips with the topic and have achieved depth in the response. This is convincing and impressive work.

(3) The impression given is that your team has spent some time reflecting on the subject although could have gone into more depth. Perhaps there was a tendency towards description rather than analysis. More analysis or interpretation would have provided a more convincing presentation.

(1) It is unclear whether your team spent very much time reflecting on the brief. The response lacks depth and analysis (it skims the surface). There might be some description, however the response lacks interpretation and thought.

(0) There is no evidence that your team has attempted to critically reflect on the topic.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING AND INTEPRETATION

We want to see that your team has grasped the key themes from the literature and the topic.

(5) It is clear that your team has read widely which has contributed to an impressive understanding of the topic.

(3) Your team has demonstrated an understanding of some themes. Perhaps there was some misinterpretation or an overly narrow focus.

(1) It is not clear that your team have grasped the main themes of the topic or read sufficiently widely and critically.

(0) Your team appears to have little or no understanding of the topic.

1.4 SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

We want to see that you used appropriate evidence effectively, orally and visually, which made for a convincing discussion of the topic.

(5) Content was supported by evidence wherever appropriate and regular reference to the literature was made; your team has clearly grasped how to draw on evidence to support ideas. This is impressive work.

(3) There was regular use of supporting evidence, however it was lacking on a number of occasions where it could have been used to support an argument. Nevertheless, this was a decent first effort.

(1) Your presentation included some limited supporting evidence although it was generally lacking. It felt like a token effort.

(0) Your presentation included no evidence of appropriate quality or relevance to the topic.

1.5 QUALITY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Your team used evidence that was relevant and appropriate for academic study.

(5) Your team demonstrated a broad range of evidence that was consistently relevant and of sufficient quality for academic work.

(3) The range of evidence in your presentation was mostly relevant and of sufficient academic quality.

(1) With a few exceptions, your presentation lacked reference to appropriate supporting evidence.

(0) Your presentation included no evidence of appropriate quality or relevance to the topic.

2. STRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Your presentation included a clear introduction that set the scene and demonstrated the team's interpretation of the brief by providing: an introduction to all of your team members; key background information and discussion of terms where appropriate; a clear demonstration of intent for the presentation; an overall upbeat beginning.

(3) Your introduction provided all of the stipulated characteristics and 'set the scene' effectively.

(2) Your introduction matched most, but not all of the stipulated characteristics.

(1) An introduction was offered but lacked many of the stipulated characteristics.

(0) No introduction has been offered – your team simply 'launched into' discussion without appropriately setting the scene.

2.2 MAIN BODY

Your presentation included a clear main body that included: the key ideas your team has chosen to explore; consistency with what is outlined in the introduction; logical progression of content including thoughtfully considered handovers that guide the audience through the presentation.

(3) The main body matched all of the expected characteristics.

(2) The main body included most, but not all of the characteristics above.

(1) There was little cohesion or structure, making the presentation difficult to follow.

(0) A series of individual presentations was offered.

2.3 CONCLUSION

Your presentation included a clearly identified conclusion that: was short and punchy; summarised the key arguments covered within the presentation; did <u>not</u> introduce new material; made a concluding statement that linked back to the original question; was consistent with the introduction and drew the presentation to a natural close.

(3) Your conclusion fulfilled all the criteria listed above.

(2) Your conclusion included most, but not all of the characteristics above.

(1) A conclusion was offered but lacked many of the characteristics stipulated above.

(0) No conclusion was offered, or it was difficult to determine when the main body ended and the conclusion began.

2.4 ORAL COMMUNICATION

We are looking for the presenters to be clearly audible; to speak at a well-paced rate; and to speak with enthusiasm.

(3) There was effective oral communication across your team and throughout the presentation.

(2) Overall, a good effort if a little inconsistent.

(1) The quality varied, perhaps due to lack of preparation or rehearsal.

(0) Your team ignored the criteria.

2.5 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

We are looking for your team to: speak directly to the audience; use positive body language; be attentive and supportive of other members.

(3) There was effective non-verbal communication across your team and throughout the presentation.

(2) Overall, a good effort if a little inconsistent.

(1) The quality varied, perhaps due to lack of preparation or rehearsal.

(0) The team ignored the criteria.

2.6 SUPPORTING VISUAL MATERIALS

We are looking for appropriate visual materials that match the following criteria: consistent with what is being presented; integrated within the presentation; clear and consistent throughout (e.g. colour, font type and size); finished to a high standard (including proofing):

(3) High quality and relevant visual materials were provided by your team and contributed to the audience's understanding of the presented information.

(2) Your team made a good effort overall, however the quality of supporting visual materials varied across the presentation.

(1) The visual materials added little to the audience's understanding: perhaps they were unclear or failed to support the content that was being delivered.

(0) No visual materials were used.

2.7 DISCUSSION

We are looking for responses that were: considered (i.e. not a 'snap response'); relevant; concise; demonstrated an understanding across the team. We want to see that the team reflected and acted upon feedback from the Mid-Project Review (MPR).

(3) Your team responded impressively to questions, giving the impression that they understood the topic. It was clear that your team had used the feedback provided at the MPR.

(2) There was generally a willingness to respond to questions, even if the quality of responses varied. There was some evidence that your team had engaged with the feedback from the MPR.

(1) Where responses were offered, perhaps they were vague, unconvincing or long-winded. This gave the impression of a lack of understanding across your team. It was not clear where you used the feedback from the MPR.

(0) No responses were offered. Feedback from the MPR was ignored.

2.8 LANGUAGE

The language used in your presentation was neutral, non-emotive, passive and contributed to a positive 'audience experience'.

(3) Your presentation matched all of the criteria.

(2) Although not consistently the case, your presentation generally matched the criteria.

(1) Your presentation was let down by regular examples of language that did not meet the above criteria and as such was not in an academic style.

(0) Your team ignored the guidance offered.

2.9 BIBLIOGRAPHY/SLIDES

The bibliography and slides were handed in by the deadline and matched the stipulated requirements.

(1) The slides (including bibliography) **were** provided in advance of the presentation.

(0) The slides and/or bibliography **were not** provided in advance of the presentation.

Appendix 2. Peer Assessment criteria for the Team Project Presentation exercise

Peer Assessment form for the Team Project exercise

This form is to be completed anonymously and as honestly as possible.
Please complete a new form for **every other member** of your project team.

Please enter the full name of the student you are peer assessing on this form:

First Name: …………………..……………   **Surname: …………………………………**

Your Student Tutor: …………………………   **Your Project Team: (e.g. VC) …………**

Reflecting on the quality of contribution of your fellow team member
We would like you to consider the quality of contribution of the above named student in relation to five components within the Team Project. In each case, please select the score that best reflects the quality of their input.

> 4 = Outstanding
> 3 = Good
> 2 = Satisfactory
> 1 = Weak
> 0 = Did not contribute to this area of activity

> **Please do not give half marks.**

	Component	Description	SCORE (0-4)
1.	Contributes to the Team Project	Actively participates, taking on a fair share of the work and completes tasks on time. Gives timely and constructive feedback to team members in an appropriate format.	
2.	Facilitates contributions of others	Encourages all points of view to be considered and acknowledges the contribution of others. Constructively builds on others' contributions and integrates own work with that of others.	
3.	Planning and management	Takes on an appropriate role in the team. Up-to-date on team's goals and reports on progress.	
4.	Fosters an effective team environment	Expresses positivity about the team members and the project. Is supportive and respectful of team members.	
	Appropriate and supportive team behaviour	Contributes appropriately to a healthy debate. Displays appropriate, positive behaviours and is neither dominant, submissive or passive aggressive.	

Once completed, please pass this to your student tutor.