

TOWARDS FLEXIBILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Title and Presenter:

Flexible study advice – a view from the chalk face

Katy Barnett

Sub Theme & Paper Type:

Flexible People – Workshop

Abstract:

The increase in widening participation, student numbers, internationalisation, distance learning, part-time study, mature returners, flexible programmes, evening and weekend teaching and awareness of the special needs of those with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, has produced a more diverse student body and range of support needs than ever before.

In a sense, human beings are the ultimate flexible support mechanism, but resources for staffing are finite. As student numbers and diversity continue to increase, it often feels that it becomes less possible to offer flexible support under the weight of demand and the need to respond to as many requests as possible. Strategies for smarter working in the delivery of support (often involving technology) can conflict with what students say they want (the human face).

Based on the experience of the University's Study Advice Service in offering academic study support to students since its creation in 2001, this workshop will briefly address the issues, tensions and strategies that are involved in moving towards more flexible study support, covering such themes as resources, staffing, increased demand and student preferences.

The workshop format emphasises the key wish to gather views/ideas on how the Study Advice Service can flexibly support the new types of students. Participants will be invited to put forward suggestions, departmental needs and "blue sky objectives" that can be fed into future service planning.