

Student Success: Access, retention, attainment and progression

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Transcript

STUART: My name's Stuart Norton senior adviser in learning and teaching in Advance HE and I'm delighted to be joined by a number of the authors of our most recent literature review in the areas of access, retention, attainment and progression.

The review itself was undertaken by research team from Sheffield Hallam who is Liz Austen, Rebecca Hodgson, Associate Dean, teacher and learning, Caroline Heaton Senior Lecturer, research and evaluation of student engagement, Nathaniel Pickering Senior Lecturer evaluation and student engagement and Jill Dickinson Senior Lecturer evaluation and teaching and learning. The literary review aims to highlight a range of elements of policy that had impact on student outcomes including impacts on progression, engagement, satisfaction, skill acquisition, and or self-confidence as well as student degree classification. I'm sure many colleagues attending at this webinar are familiar with the review, for those who have not yet explored it in full the links will be placed in the chat for you to access. Really, we know that the review focuses on those four doors on access, retention, attainment, progression it is a pathway through to a wealth of literature and the authors presented a range of evidence with impact and interventions which seek to enhance each outcome. Identifying core themes in each strand and provide early considered recommendations, by focusing on what works and adding to the evidence base the review provides the reader, yourselves with an opportunity to consider and prioritise often limited resources, for that maximum impact. We know the issues impact on students' success are broad and complex, and this review helps it furthers discussion and provides a SharePoint of references to help us all discussion shape and review policy process and practice. The review forms part of the wider trench of work from Advance HE is looking at to the updates of the essential frameworks or enhancing students' success as we know all these areas are interrelated and this review itself is very much a catalyst and progress in those debates and also the specific access, retention, attainment, progression. And recognising that, it is a multidimensional approach, today's webinar is an opportunity to allow the authors to comment on a range of areas they wish to highlight draw your attention to, and following discuss, please use the Q&A, we'll have that opportunity to put forward the questions to the authors and we'll do our best to address many of those as possible. So, without further ado, Liz, delighted to hand over to you.

LIZ: Thank you Stuart, and hello everyone I hope there's some familiar faces out there in the audience I can't see but I can feel a presence. So, it is really lovely to be here this afternoon doing this for the second time of the day and introducing you to the review we carried out. We will do a little bit of overview, discuss a bit about the methodology and approach we took. We by no means can talk to everything that is in the report it is extensive we looked at literature as we will discuss so we tried to theme what we were saying about mattering, we want to touch a little bit on the holistic relationships, connections between the areas and the student life cycle and talk a bit about developing the outcomes, evidence base and as Stuart said we'll end with a Q&A, so if anything crops up as we're talking, please hold that thought post it in the Q&A and it would be great to have a wider discussion at the end. OK. So, provide a little bit of an overview then to get started. So, the research brief that we looked at and we developed from Advance HE astute

suggested, had a focus on demonstrable student outcomes. So, we really were looking at this point in pick and thinking about the associated evidence that we could draw on in order to update a previous review that was published in 2017.

So the previous review in 2017 was conducted from colleagues from Plymouth Webb et al and our task was to develop and extend, think about how we could build on and learn from some of the experiences both of the review team at Plymouth who was kind enough to talk about their experiences and to think about how we could extend it in terms of a time frame but also content. So, the size and scope of this review was considerable. We were looking across the student life cycle, access, retention, attainment, progression and could easily have spent the entirety of our time on this review on one of those areas. So, what we wanted to do was to make sure that we had time and time to reflect and time to review some of these areas and that's why we've developed a protocol and an approach to the literary review that we think was proportionate and reasonable and also give us time to think about the connections between these areas which were something we had anticipated but really is it come out when we started to analyse some of this literature and again we'll touch on this as we develop into some of the our recommendations for impact evidence as we develop through this webinar.

So just to start with some definitions, we again used definitions from the previous review so we did learning and take from the review, so to provide context before we get started access to advantage HE was: Attainment, the extent to which students were enabled to fulfil their potential sometimes discussed in degree outcomes and progression, successful transitions within the programme of study and afterwards to employment or further study.

And our approach to this literary review relied heavily on our experiences as leaders in the higher Education Sector and evaluators and our roles as Evaluators in the sector and Sheffield Hallam and we foe used our attention what we could use and refer to as demonstrable impact.

So, to focus on this notion of what works, we drew upon the office for student's standard of evidence, which were developed by the Centre for Social Mobility in 2019 primarily applied to that to access interventions and access space but being applied across the student life cycle now and other organisations beginning to do this.

So, this helped us to manage both the scale of the project and align what we were trying to do with expectations - literacy expectation from the sector. And we've used these standards of evidence to guide our inclusion and exclusion of sources. So, what we wanted to do, thinking about evidence and impact, is focus on and look for empirical and causal evidence, empirical methodologies that look at more than one period of time, for example pre-in post or changes in time, and causal evidence which had an intervention target group but also was looking and exploring comparisons and control groups. This is what we wanted to look for and again there are other organisations in the sector such as Sayer that have done things similar and we wanted to have a look and apply this to this scope. We also applied what we're calling integrative methodology, and this extends the previous review. Which and we've detailed this in a protocol so you can see the appendix of our report, details what we proposed, the search strategy our inclusion exclusion criteria and it is critique and development so other researchers can take that build on it expand and so on. But intricate methodology is thinking differently about evidence base, so, rather than just rely on published sources, peer review, publications, we looked at grey literature which were publications, reports, outputs that may not be in a journal or peer reviewed evidence base but specifically in the

higher Education Sector when we have a variety of different outputs that are of relevance, particularly for sector organisations and think tanks, policy aligned organisations and so on, we thought it was important to also include that in our scope.

We also had a student outcomes stakeholder group that we were really delighted to have on board with this review. And this, existed at different points throughout our review period, it brought together some sector stakeholders which they voluntarily gave up their time to provide a sense check, provide critique and focus for us in terms of what we were looking for and the way our literary review was developing. So that there's a, their inputs and reflections became part of our evidence base, and we've included that as part of the reports so you can see how that helped us to develop our thinking.

So, as I said, our methodology and search strategy, limitations were published for others to look at in our protocol, we talk a little bit how we manage this, so us automating shared references work accounts, we had two student researchers who were invaluable with the scale of the literature we were looking at and close to 14,000 sources that were convenient actually filtered to 161, across those areas.

And it is worth noting as well that as a research team we conducted this review during the COVID pandemic, we never as a team sat in a room together to do this. We did everything remotely and it is absolute credit to the team we managed to get to the end of it. But I think research in COVID is a really interesting and worthwhile bit of exploration in terms of how that works both in terms of benefit and challenges.

So, before I move on to talk a little bit about the findings and pass to my colleagues, I want to highlight some of the limitations from this review it is important that we acknowledge these at the outset. Our inclusion and exclusion criteria focused on empirical and causal evidence as I mentioned but we did not find a Plethora of evidence of long-term student outcomes and we'll specifically reference this when we start talking about our recommendations at the end and throughout this presentation. There is a possibility that some outcome definitions have been overlooked and I think that's always a limitation of a time-bound proportionate review, so intermediate or mediating factors in relation to student outcomes for example why did the definitions of learn gain, development of skills or specific behaviours, may not have been captured with a focus on student outcomes as we applied. Similarly with our definitions, there was a tendency to look and review quantitative studies although we did not exclude a wider look at qualitative and case studies but when you're looking at grade of measure of attainment there's a tendency to filter and to find more quantitatively driven studies. And what we also had was what I've called a messiness in the evidence base. So, despite our best efforts to have a really clear protocol, inclusion and exclusion criteria, a quality assurance process where we had abstract relevancy scores and testing of each other's Inclusion Strategies, even those they were in place, sometimes, this was a subjective call and that's due to the nature of the things we were looking at, the context in which they were being discussed and so on.

You will notice as we continue to talk through this webinar a skew in the evidence that is in each outcome area, and we also touch in the property a little bit about disciplinary skews in the data we've been looking at. And finally, many of the studies we reviewed, reviewed, researched student cohorts, not necessarily specific student groups. And at times, and we've talked about this as well,

that differential impact on different student groups has been missing and these are things that we've picked up for, I guess, further exploration in the future.

OK. So that's my overview of what we did and how we approached it and I want to move on a little bit now to the findings.

As I said at the beginning, absolutely impossible to talk about everything that we found. There are some gems in here we want to pull out for you. So, please do consult the wide area report for the detail of this but, we want to pull together our findings in this notion of mattering. The idea that the university cares about students, student-centred approach across the student life cycle so student centred might be a phrase we relate to most closely to retention, but it is the principles of those and this notion of mattering we're seeing across the student life cycle in different spaces this was an evident we were reviewing. So now I'm going to go to my co-authors, and we'll look a little bit about holistic and connections between them before we go on to a little bit more of a discussion about impact evidence. So, Nathaniel over to you for the access conversation.

NATHANIEL: Thank you I'm going to take us through the access literature we looked at or key findings, first of all, in the report, 45 sources made it into the final report that we wrote but actually that initial search returned, I think access was probably one of the highest returns that we got for the number of literature but once we applied that the types of evidence that we were looking for, that was reduced to 45, so 27 of those were from United States, 16 from the UK and the rest from Australia Canada and Europe. So, as you can, we've what we've done with the access results is we've split them into two types of the blue box focus on things that students need help with, or support with, in navigating the university higher education system.

So that might be helping them overcome barriers or in the process and the purple box these are things institutions themselves can do to help increase access into their institutions.

So that's about cultural or institutional change within those environments.

So first of all, on the Outreach activities: Where we found evidence with the most impact was where the Outreach activities actually provided skills development or practical solutions to problems in access in higher education. So, if that was applications or how to go about preparing for a university interview, or even thousand to do a mock interview, those kinds of things and even with the writing of the application, journals in 2016 reported about a programme they developed where they supported students, through structured activities through the new case application to show academic suitability for courses, particularly by offering detailed analysis of the topic beyond their A-level syllabus, so this intervention was really helping them to write the best personal statements they could. And they took a control group and what they found was that the students that received this additional support around that tailored personal statement were more likely to get an offer from a Russell Group university and that they were more likely to again go in a Russell Group university and study will. So, I think, there's some really interesting lessons from that report itself, but that kind of practical support and skill development is really key in those interventions that we deliver.

Especially in the US there's a focus around career or career counsellors that facilitated that information and guidance and knowledge, that students could receive. And that came through really strongly in the American literature. I think there's a real opportunity for us to learn from some of those lessons from the American example of advice, information and guidance. We know that

that's often a challenge for students to navigate between different types of universities, different courses and there can be really, so providing that information that's tailored to the students we're supporting can have real benefits as well. Financial support, we didn't, there was limited impact if it was just financial support on its own and it is not really an incentive for students to come into university, it is part of the evidence but where the financial support really does become crucial or really does have impact is when it is offered alongside over other types of support, whether that's extracurricular activities or personal development constituents, that's when that financial support becomes really important. And also, when it is targeted to particular groups of students, to help them address certain barriers and challenges they might have to access higher education as well. So that really integrated approach and that's really targeted is where the impact lies there. So, moving on to the purple box that this is like I said really understanding what institutions can do. In order to make their institutions more appealing to underrepresented groups or students that might, they might not traditionally recruit in their institutions. And this really is about institutions reflecting on their own thinking, about how they view these students or thousand they view themselves and the status attached to that potentially. Also, about their culture and the policies that they have in relation to admissions, as well. And also, their staff base is really crucial, is a discussion about who, what do our staff look like and are they like our students for example. So, first of all around admissions and there's a lot of talk about this in the UK particularly around contextualised applications but something that's in the US particularly we found evidence this could have a really positive impact on diversifying the student body and opening up access. What was really interesting though, there was a study by Jones, in 2019, where they compared two different types of access intervention so they looked at foundation year students that accessed higher education for foundation year course and looked at students who had access of a course through contextualised offers, what they found was students that came through the foundation year route was a greater sense of identity as a student, that there was a greater sense of belonging to them and that they felt more affinity towards the institution. So, if coming back to the overall idea of mattering, that sometimes the interventions we plan can enable that mattering at a very early stage, so why contextualised offers may provide almost like a quick win almost because that's about outside changing our policies and responding to that, that also the students might need some additional help to build that identity and that belonging within the institution once they get there. As well.

So, and obviously there's things that institutions we found that around entry requirements and making sure that things like school background can be taken into account, there was a stud from America, particularly where they looked at providing that contextualised information around schools and having a positive impact on the students that were in there. Also around addressing biases within the application process and making sure that we acknowledge those and that we address those as well, going forward.

So, one of the things that really stood out to us as well was around the embracing diversity of diverse stud body almost and or welcoming them this, like I said about the school and college experiences, that depending where people go to school or geographical location can have an impact on outcomes and there's evidence to show that, but actually we should embrace that and that should become part of our institutional structures and that will make us stronger for that. But also, students might not for some of the students might not have the opportunities to develop that self-effacer confidence in their ability. And so, any opportunities that opportunities are helping to provide this confidence building is really crucial and can have a positive impact into access. That

builds us and moves us-to-on to the access to extracurricular activities, so, where can and this might be about the kind of cultural or social activities, but giving students an opportunity to broaden their horizons outside of that academic but that is all part of that self-self-efficacy and confidence building and all those have an impact on how students access and where they access higher education. So, I think I'll pass over to Rebecca now.

REBECCA: Thanks Nathaniel. So, I'm going to be talking about retention for a little while as you can see from the slide the retention area reviewed just 25 sources of literature, so it was one of the two lower areas in terms of the absolute numbers we ended up with. 18 from the United States, and the rest from the UK Ireland, Australia, Spain and Germany. It is important to know in relation to retentions area that the use of the term "persistence" as well as "retention" and particularly sources and data from the United States tend to focus on persistence, not exclusively by any means but there's definitely a trend towards looking at persistence rather than retention or certainly as well as retention. And persistence can be loosely defined as students' attitudes to their studies, and it is often measured as their intention to continue, whereas retention tends to be the hard measure of whether students are actually retained on their course of study and progress from year one through to year two.

It can though at times retention can include what we might term "continuation data" where students progress to further years of study, and the literature reviewed in this section, utilised the mixture of these measures and this terminology with as I said with a kind of trend for the American literature particularly to look at persistence. And where persistence was examined there, we do see the student voice does tend to appear because they're looking the at the students' ideas and opinions whether they're likely to continue in their course of study and why that might be. It is worth noting Vincent Tetto this, is a source that appears in a lot of literature, again particularly in the American literature but not exclusively, extremely influential author, a professor from America, and it could be referred to seminal in terms of his academic integration model, his 1993 dimensions of institutional action, and this is sometimes called his student retention theory as well.

What that does is look at the role of faculty integration and social integration in terms of the student experience and that the role of those things in student departure. However, it is worth noting that more recent literature tends to avoid the use of the term "integration" and considers the experience from the student lens, so, that's more of the notion of belonging and mattering and of course mattering is what we're focusing on toed.

So, if we think about mattering then, in relation to retention, this has been divided for this section into two levels, one is around the level of the course and the other is the level of the institution. And at the level of the course there are four areas really that came through quite strongly within the literature. So, the first one is around proactive academic student contact. Proactive there is deliberately highlighted, that is in an essential amount it is important to be responsive and reactive to student needs and students reaching out to us, actually what students value perhaps above and beyond everything else is the proactive engagement from the academic community actually not restricted to the academic community either but in the research we looked at, what it was saying was what students placed a value on, perhaps there were other interventions was that proactive engagement from the academic community and they're essentially their tutors, reaching out to them, checking in and noticing them and demonstrating that they care at the course level. This is sometimes referred to in some of the literature as "faculty validation" faculty being the members of

staff so validating their experience by the interaction, and that could happen for example through Academic Advisers, personal tutors perhaps through module leaders, and this approach, this faculty validation the importance of this proactive contact between university staff and students was mentioned across a range of sources so Webb & Cotton, Dwyer, burn net 2017 and Gabi & Sharpe in 2021 all talked about this notion of faculty validation and pro-academic contact. Next, we have in class mattering. And this, is, a lot of these - my potentially sound straight forward I have a meowing cat in the background and I'm going to throw it out of the room, I thought I'd closed the door.

I'm terribly sorry colleagues. I'm sure it is something many of us have experienced on Zoom over the past year-and-a-half. So, back to in class mattering, so, this is about considering really on the relationship what I've just been talking about, none of these examples none of these themes are mutually exclusive they're all related to each other. This could be exemplified by knowing students names, demonstrating that you care about them, enabling and validating students contributions in the class environment and it is something thank as simple as being friendly and approachable and these were things seen to impact positively on the students' sense of belonging and mattering and ultimately on students retention, and this came through from Arshad-Syder's work and Gabi & Sharpe mentioned again in relation to this team, it comes from their work as well.

Moving on, into the next area, this one too is very much linked to the pedagogical environment but can also stretch in the wider university as well. And this is about the creation of learning communities, and particular interest there was a larger, longitudinal stud from Loes et al 2017 and across multiple institutions and it was minority of studies, so, it came through strongly that the pedagogical design can have a really profound influence on the creation of these learning communities. So, pedagogical design that valued and put in place active and intensive learning and collaborative learning and assessment activities, tutors and learners collaborating together all these things helping to contribute to the sense of the creation of a community of staff and students and anybody who is SNNS buff is recognise that as SNN question, the other thing in this area is the development of buddy and mentor systems across levels. So that might be level five students mentoring level four, level six mentoring level five or four students for example. That can also help the student feel like they're someone they can relate to, sometimes these mentoring systems we refer to in the literature were also focused students from minoritized ethnic backgrounds and finding them in men to have to help that student feel a sense of place and longing and mattering within the university environment.

One thing to note actually in the area around the creation of learning communities and active and participative learning, sometimes it is not what students expect when they come to university and if there's a mismatch what universities teaching and learning should look like and what they actually experience it can have a negative effect in terms of them being dissatisfied, they may retained but think I shouldn't have all this, I should have polled in lectures with a my course is about, it is important in these spaces and I'm sure many of you experienced this, to include students in curriculum design to include them in the conversation what it is we are we're trying to achieve with them. When we want them to learn in the way we do in order to develop a range of skills and so on. Finally, then at the level of the course, this one is around the opportunities for students to have early success, and this was also noted as being a primary flag, an important flag in learner analytics information.

So, what this means then essentially, is in curriculum design, in course design, formative or early assessment tasks with feedback that are actually formally submitted in some way and therefore they are logged on a system in some way, these completion of these, is actually a key indicator of retention risk and if should be, therefore a primary flag in learner analytics information. This came through really strongly from the work of Ortiz-Lozana et al and Keylow and Scherzberg as well, it is important to not Kehoe this should happen in the first semester of a student's study because that is a peak risk time for students to withdraw or to consider withdrawing if they're struggling with the course, it gives us an indication if we set students' tasks early on when they complete that task they get a sense of achievement, even it is a small task, that's a sense they, it is OK for them to be at university, and they the feedback we can give them on the task, again even if it is only relatively light touch can help them feel like they matter, they have achieved something, they matter, they belong and therefore have a positive impact on their retention and indeed on persistence in how they feel about their course of study.

So, with the learner analytics then, of any system of that is dependent on what is feeding it. And what this information could do is to flag any students that don't submit at these assessment opportunities to their support workers, Academic Advisers, pastoral support and so on so potentially additional support could be offered, students could be followed up and checked on as well of course recognising for students who are submitting that you know, it looks as though for those students things are on track and things are going well.

The level of the institution then, this one is around financial aid, this could be funds such as childcare, travel support and so on, and this was, this came through from a number of studies, Qayyum in 2019, Troester-Trate in 2020, Snyder from 2017 again and it was found that universities, institutions, that provide financial aid to students are sending a message to students that they care about them particularly if the access to those hardship funds for example is easy for the student to engage with in terms of how they find the information how they apply for that hardship fund and so on. So that can be really positive intervention, and you'll see this across one of the other themes as well, it just necessarily impacts on retention. And then, personalising interventions, so these across the board we see as something which really helps, students to feel like they matter. So, this is essentially being noticed by the university and the university recognising who that student is, what their needs are and how the university might help them. So, an example would be supportive text messaging that is tailor today a student's needs, this is something that came through from the Wilson & Dauncey literature review in 2020. And you have to be careful around text messaging of students of course because any kind of mass text messaging could be potentially have the opposite effect and we could see students just starting to think, is this a random text it doesn't apply to me so we have to be careful with those types of communications that they are personalised and they do feel beneficial and targeted and targeted to that student for them to be effective. OK, so, just briefly on the limitations in the retention space there, and as I alluded to earlier the majority of studies in this space were single institution studies, there were a few multi-institution but the majority was single institution so that's something we have to bear in mind, institutional context varies widely and as we said from the first slide the majority of the studies were based in the US, so, we have to just bear that in mind in contextual differences between institutions. Also, it's worth noting an important point to note that in several cases many cases, the studies were looking at existing factors and then essentially analysing those factors and correlating to datasets around retention and persistence, rather than actually designing a new intervention and then evaluating the success or otherwise of that

intervention. There were instead looking at a range of factors that were already the case in that institution or on that course or context. And then analysing that. So, still worthwhile, still important information, and research, but not necessarily all of them were looking at new interventions. Somewhere however, but also, in this space we saw ones multivariable interventions so it might be that there was a range of support provided for students so it might be there could be a bridging course, preuniversity, there may have been a mentoring programme and then potentially a pedagogical approach which was designed to help cement a learning community and so, it was very difficult for the researchers and also for us of course through the literary review to actually look at interventions and ascribe causality in terms of the data. That's said, nevertheless, I think across this body of literature, there was enough for us to be able to see the themes that better' sharing with you and have made it into the review. There is a body of evidence there, telling us that the things that work the things that can be effective in this space. So, that's all I'm going to say on retention, I'm going to pass over to my colleague Jill and she's going to talk to you about attainment. Thank you.

JILL: Thank you Rebecca. Yes, so, in terms of attainment, 67 pieces of literature made their way in the very view as you can see from the slide there, most from the US context, five from the UK, and then the rest were from Spain, Australia, Poland nor yea, Germany North America and Iran. So, in terms of attainment interventions around this theme of matching then there's a few key points emerging. So, we identified as you might expect how interventions that were grounded with supporting data through the use of analytics were particularly effective. There was some differentiation around how much of impact financial support could have, but, where it was provided as part of a wider programme of interventions, it was much more successful. Some of the studies we looked at demonstrated the positive impact of students' transfusion are significances and induction in the higher education setting which are generally available to at risk groups of students and some the interventions were introduced before the students arrived at the university or early into their higher education journey to help improve outcomes as Rebecca was saying there in the first particularly crucial year.

We also saw how the adoption of pedagogical student centred approach active learning experiential learning and support of learning have an important impact on attainment. The review highlighted studies no negative impact of using open educational resources so 2008, noted how students were opened a hope textbook perform the same or better than those asked to read a commercial text. Another study by medley Rath indicated the potential for making cost savings in this area without affecting attainment so with the potential for use the valuable resources elsewhere.

Another theme that came up related to interventions that were based on psychosocial or behavioural theories around the student experience where the focus tends to be on those students who fall within at risk categories. For example, research by Dean et al was text messaging as Rebecca was saying there as well and that how that affected progression, average grades, attendance and attainment snooks and we found that it may be helpful to combine such approaches with analytics to identify at risk students early on.

Another aspect we sided from the literary review is how peering mentoring or tutoring could help with impact outcomes around attainment as part of a wider programme of activities. So, for example, the provision of a summer bridge programme and undergraduate research experience. There are limitations with using grades as the measure of attainment, but we also need today maintain a focused and proportionate review. It is interesting to note topic areas we might have expected or mentioned by our stakeholder group that didn't appear possibly due to the focus on grade outcomes. So, exploration of assessment to supplement the discussion on teaching and learning was not efficient and student engagement was somewhat lost by the outcome focus. Finally, it became clear the majority of reviewed sources of pedagogic interventions report a positive impact in contrast to other areas where there was a balance between what worked and what didn't work. So guided by the paper of Dawson and Dawson 2018 on reporting a publication in higher education we included this reflection in our review. So, if I can hand over to Liz, to talk about progression please.

LIZ: Thank you Jill, so just to go through the last outcome area of our review before we move on to the connections between them as, we're talking those things are emerging for you. The progression area, there were 24 sources of literature we use here from a range of countries and locations, and I have to say we found this progression space a bit trickier to explore, and I think using the search criteria we adopted from web et cetera tell brought up a lot of sources from the outset but filtered down to not very many to with a we were looking for in testimonies of the requirements to talk about student outcomes and the requirements around inclusion for empirical and causal evidence there was something of a gap here and that's worth noting as we move on. So, it was a particularly challenging area to look at. It is also worth noting there was a skew in what we were looking at. So, the progression area is I think more comprehensive than possibly the evidence that was in this area of the report.

So, the evidence primarily looks at employment outcomes even though we know this progression definition is broader than that to include progression within, or progression on to further study. And one of our reflections possibly is that some of those areas such as progression into further study may well have been picked up within the access spaces and some of those suggestions around progression within a course of study possibly within the attainment and retention literature. So, there was a lot of kind of complicating factors for this progression area and I will just talk a little bit about some of these now. So, I talked a bit about the difficulties we had, and I want to go into detail before I talk about some of the evidence had base. A bit more difficulty in finding and using our predefined criteria and that deserves more investigation as to what is being published in the progression space, and how we can possibly enhance or develop our evidencing of longer term employment of the study outcomes. At times the evidence that we refer to in this report does start to discuss the relationship between intermediate outcomes like the development of employability skills and how that links to longer term outcomes to supplement this the review such as movement into employment. And I really would recommend at this point the associated centre review of this one which was conducted around the same time by colleagues at Oxford Brookes on employability because their review does talk about employability in the round so it dailies with issues of measurement and definitions and so on, and how that links to sector practice, so in addition to the progression section from our report, I really would recommend you having a look at that as well. That's not to say that there wasn't important and interesting evidence here and actually some sources which used what we would describe as empirical or moving towards causal evidence so

for example experimental designs were seen in this area, but what where he weren't able to see in those spaces were EEOC valuations designs and employment outcomes so for example, they may have had experimental design with a control group but the measure they were exploring was for example the development of self-efficacy. So those kind of complicating factors in this space made this a bit trickier but what I want to point out to you is two areas, one is that around investment so thinking about the notion of students and mattering. And one around opportunity, so these are the two examples I just want to draw your attention to this afternoon.

So, there's a couple of studies that discuss the impact of interventions that had multiple activities within them, so, I've themed these around the notion of investment so that provision of a package of progression-related interventions that possibly had more than one opportunity to develop student progression and employment. So as an example, there was a case study by Lake Land in 2019, which included multiple interventions spanning work experience, career interventions and mentoring, and Martin et al that created a large programme that had elements of career interventions work based learning and skills development, so we could see evidence that combining activities, combines interventions into a programme or package of support is one aspect of what might be working in this space, although going back again to the reflections that Rebecca mentioned in her area, distilling impact at the level of activity is difficult when, there is this kind of package of support.

The evidence of impact in relation to progression opportunities, I think slightly more robust. But still had issues with evidencing long-term impact on employment. So, for example, Ergun 2018 concluded that participation in a sandwich placement year is strongly associated with enhanced graduate prospects, and I think importantly for the context we're working in in the UK, this is replicated this impact of sandwich placement is replicated for widely participating students when compared to those completed a year in work. So in this regard and in fact they talk about this sandwich placement, if it is desirable and available for WP students given the financial and time commitments that maybe associate with it, there's a possibility that they can have a levelling or equalising effect on graduate outcomes so that's a really important point when we're considering not just the opportunities, the context that, that is provided and impact it could have if we were to explore that in trying different student groups

So, my reflections then of this evidence base, is that there really is a picture of impact emerging in this space. So, there are lots of assumptions being made and connections being made between the employment of A and the outcome of B. So, for example, the theorised approach that employable behaviours and skills lead to eventual employment successes, so, we see the theorising and we see the disparate bits of evidence but what we're not able to see or weren't able to find and obviously we talked about the limitations of the review, is studies which really connected these disparate parts so studies which looked at and invested in, the exploration of outcomes across an extended period of time and across that student journey. Similarly, the association between attainment and progression outcomes is important and again this is used as a basis I think for some assumptions and connections between them.

And I don't think that we can ignore that here but again, the comprehensive reporting of the connections between them is perhaps what we need to look into further. Let me not say the projects we looked at didn't have aspirations for better longer and more robust data, so if we looked at, as our report had two, limitations or future research area at the bottom of a report, the

things we would like to do if we had more time, money and space in our brain, there was aspirations to track over a longer period of time and there was a sense that longitudinal approach would have been beneficial. So, one of the things we've balked in the report is a need really to invest as a sector in how we develop that more long-term progression, long-term exploration of progression. So, something that we've gone Don at Hallam and I know other divisions is looking at is coherent theory of change which would start to join together short, medium and long-term stages of impact and this is something we possibly need to start applying a little bit more routinely to some of the areas where impact evident has been seen to be slightly less robust. So, that was the four areas of our report in terms of outcomes. What I'm going to do now is pass back over to Rebecca to talk a little bit about the connections between them.

REBECCA: So yeah, I am going to talk briefly about trying to start this idea of joined up thinking around what works, as has been alluded to by colleagues and Liz, what she's talking about the findings suggest clear relation between access, retention, attainment, progression and in terms of both intervention, design and also the holistic impact on more than one outcome measure. If we have a look at interventions that work across different areas of the student life cycle across the literature review, pertinent examples of holistic interventions included several things one was certainly delivered pre-entry and during transition and induction, another was interventions which provide financial aid or assistance to students pre, and post entry with a package of support. And the other is interventions which were designed purpose free to align with the students' curriculum. Interventions which provided personal support and guidance for students, so the notion of personalised interventions as referred to earlier and the user analytic to support identification of student need and finally intervention design and evaluation of subsequent impact. So, three examples of those, I'll expand on those in a little bit more detail. So, if we think about financial support, in terms of access outcomes, financial support packages that are accompanied with other interventions that address intersectional and multi-barriers experienced by students do appear to have more impact. Financial aid when provided as part of a multi-interventional programme so for example when kind with pastoral support, has also been shown to be more successful and enhancing retention and attainment outcomes.

The impact of financials alone is complex, because of all of the things my colleagues have talked about, but there is evidence of impact across the broader student life cycle. If we think about learner analytics, the effective use of educational data analytics and data mining as it is sometimes called is noted within the retention area as I discussed and the attainment area, and the impact is associated with early indicators or opportunities for validation for example through assessment opportunities, also the identification of potential risk or students who are at risk, and non-deficit targeting based on personalised need. Whilst it is not specifically mentioned in the access and progression areas, the importance of good quality, institutional data, tracking student journeys and providing evidence of impact is crucial and this is in fact the focus of many of our report recommendations.

Thinking about later Wilson & Dauncey's work provided evidence of all levels of study they referenced the longitudinal evidence that Nottingham Trent University which found that participation in extracurricular activities enclosed attainment in all years of study. The known association between attainment and progression outcomes is used in this case study to predict the association between extracurricular activity and progression outcomes although as we've

previously mentioned the evidence of impact is lacking. We also included in the review a discussion of enrichment and extracurricular activities and impact on access intentions, preparedness and HE application rates.

So, there's a lot more to say about the holistic nature of impact than we have time for in the webinar, there's a little more detail within the review itself. But we now need to move to focusing our attention on the recommendations from our research, and the implications for impact evident, so for this I'll pass to my colleague Nathaniel again thank you.

NATHANIEL: So, so hopefully you've got appreciation for the from what you've heard from my colleagues today about the scale and scope of the literature we looked at. And what we really found was there was a lot of interesting and impactful work undertaken across different types of institutions and I'm with a wide range of students as well. And while there was knows consistent themes that ran throughout such as mattering as we highlighted today, there was also areas that we felt that needed further development to ensure that what works is better understood across the sector. Therefore, we made 24 recommendations, which will help develop practice and support a focus on impact going forward. The recommendations are in four different stakeholders' groups, practitioners, researchers and funders, institutions and higher Education Sector as a whole, and to conclude I wanted to address a key theme within the recommendations because obviously we don't have time to go through all 24, but a theme that ran through all of those was the need to fix the leaky pipeline of impact evidence. And this means that institutions, and other funders should ensure projects are accountable for the measurement of long-term impact, beyond the alignment to strategy at the pointed of funding. Also, the sector and institutions have a responsibility to deprioritise quick wins and invest in longevity of projects designed implemented and evaluated over a reasonable period of time. We think it is essential to move away from quick win culture, and as this quick wins often do not provide the sustainable solutions or long-term impact we might desire. And this, there's many reasons for this, but often they're not based on evident and reactive in their nature and really, if we can become more proactive and pre-emptive and base our interventions and programmes of change on evidence, that hopefully then we should see the long-term impact going forward.

So, for practitioners, this means commitment to sticky practices, sustaining interventions so that long-term impact on student outcomes can be eventually measured so in relation to access for example, and access interventions, impacts would not be measured in relation to higher education participation, but also, how interventions supports success the whole student cycle, we talked about confidence if we're doing self-efface, that development will stay with them for the rest of their time with us as well.

So, the report recommends a shift in focus and the shift in focus is from the short-term to the long-term evidence gorge and I think Liz touched on this in her section particularly and this, approach to long-term evidence gathering should be built into project plans and business cases right from the beginning and that should always be an intention that we have. For researchers and fund irrelevance we suggest more attention should be paid to the whole student life cycle this particular row dregs as evidence if this area was particularly limited as Liz highlighted as well. The there needs to be a development of a variety practices longitudinal approaches and collaboration

and replication of findings, replication of programmes so that we test the findings in different financial situations and context.

And also, an inclusion of those intermediate outcomes to measure the development in the theory of change. For higher education institutions there's a real need to enhance the leadership, and value prescribed, and value prescribed to institutional projects. Also there needs to be less reliance on quantitative metrics-driven data a qualitative evidence requires more visible and use within the sector. Projects and initiatives should be supported beyond the quick wins to enable sustained sticky practices and evidence of impact over time. Finally for the higher Education Sector we also recommend a focusing on, focus on exploring robust impact across the whole student life cycle with progression outcomes requires further investment and attention particularly. There needs to be more encouragement to share failures and lessons learnt from those researching and evaluating learning and teaching interventions. So, we feel that while what works is really important and understanding what doesn't work and why something didn't work can be just as insightful and something that can be really powerful while recommending, they offer a new look that takes a holistic and joined up approach to the student journey into and out of higher education. And I think, we'll respond to one of the questions more fully but one of the key elements of this review is because it took a holistic approach of the whole student life cycle we could see how each of the stages were interconnected and that gives the evidence we presented real strength as well and also the recommendations become really powerful then and they're taken on board would lead to change.

There remains a need for high quality data that measures impact across multiple settings and amongst different student groups however this would require much more collaboration between institutions and their various departments and across a sector as a whole. But this needs to be facilitated by higher case leaders and funders so that's a real priority for them. So that concludes our presentation of the findings, we hope you found that interesting, I'll pass you over to Stuart now who will facilitate the questions and answers section of the webinar.

STUART: Thank you so much. Absolutely fascinating and really do appreciate the insights to that real sense of richness and colour to large volume of work and research and effort over the last several months so my heartfelt thanks. We have a couple of questions and comments, you may like to comment from yourself I will take them from the top first one what a great project it is but specifically like to know what the difference in the methodology with the Kehoe review was a joined approach.

>>: I can take that, so, not a lot is the quick answer. There was an extension in terms of time of literature so the report we probably had another 18 months of literature within it. In terms of the focus on types of evidence, very similar I think, I think assonate than yell the intersections between the areas is something that we were able to bring a perspective this and we have indicative methodology while we didn't elude to the impact of having a stakeholder group, if you look at the protocol what and some of the discussion about the work we did there, some of the input from our stakeholders, to either widen our scope or narrow our scope or sense check what we were doing, and how that became part of the evidence base is slightly different to what I would call evidence review, so, it was I think a bit more rounded in that sense, a bit more looking at the connections

between areas, a bit less focused on the presentation of the evidence but essentially there are some similarities, yeah.

STUART: Thank you Liz. Secondly, more of a comment and I know we had an earlier discussion around learner analytics. But this is highlighting the interest in the study. And the learner analytics perspective and how the data is used to evidence impact and service and monitoring student outcomes et cetera the comment really in relation to highlighting the connection between wellbeing, context of HE students' progression and outcomes he had, and it is saying it is missing connection between progression outcomes and wellbeing resilience satisfaction, as a total experience. I wondered if you'd like to comment further on that, from your own experience of the papers reviewed and potentially future direction of travel?

REBECCA: My comment, relatively I would agree and say we're missing the connection and that's an area where we need more work. We need to do more work and we need more evidence, and we need more students focusing in those areas. The potential for the learner analytics to help us to understand the student experience in a supportive way to make connections through to student's wellbeing and have a much more holistic approach, I've lost the question there, it is disappeared.

There it is. And yeah, it is basically I read this comment early on and thought yes, I agree.

Liz anything to add.

Or another colleagues.

STUART: I think when we do the close, we will all point towards the summit, and I think it would be helpful for colleagues attending to perhaps register for those and have an opportunity to explore some of the areas in depth as well. Because as we know it isn't complete, we're not solved everything but there's an interesting juncture where we are at, and your review certainly comes at a well-timed position.

REBECCA: It might be the case work is going on out there, which is doing some of this, but that isn't being published or shared, you know it could be that there are things happening in universities attempting to make the connections, triad connection that's made references to in the comment, so it is about us being able to access that work and work shared if indeed it is going on and if not we need to find ways to embed that approach across HE I think.

STUART: Yeah, absolutely and I think it is fair to say that flowed the brief given to you by Advance HE very well and all reviews are limited they're restrict in certain ways and we're aware there could be a lot of Mayon and Grey literature we didn't explore so we encourage colleagues to carry on the conversation. I'm conscious of time and two questions so I'd like to come to the next one. This is from someone working within the Students Union and partnership is key and your review made several nods to different areas of thematic areas of success. The question here is in relation to the impact of extracurricular activities on student's initial success and progression outcomes and

highlights that through your presentation, you do mention the positive secure in the literature, and the lack of studies robust empirical evidence of change or causality. And the question is, what type of studies do you think researchers could undertake to evidence that change or causality? So, any kind of advice or guidance around that, I think?

LIZ: Do you want me to take that one. I'll start. I think, just two things to note first before we get in the intricacies of a methodology, one is we looked for empirical and causal that doesn't mean we think they're better. There is I guess an assumption about the hierarchy of evidence that we don't necessarily want to reinforce. But what we were looking for is whether we could find any of these studies and that's why we find recommendations really important, it is important how to develop them, alongside other things, such as it is possible to explore impact through case studies, through practitioner reflections and so on, there's a multi-tide of ways to do that. I don't want people coming away thinking everybody needs to develop pre and post tests and experiments because that's not the case, that was just the focus and the skew we applied to this literary review and very much as Evaluators we encourage a diversity types of evidence and I do think that I don't want you to sit there thinking I don't know how to do that either as a sector we immediate to provide a bit of investment into methodological practice, evaluation practices because there's a creeping expectation we must evaluate and provide information around impact, but very, very often we don't provide any supporting capacity-building in order to be able to did that so something we're committed to, so the first thing I would say is don't think you have to do the empirical causal and the other thing is to think about what evidence you already have, and seek some support in terms of methodological approaches, the kinds of thing you might want to think about in terms of the types of impact of extracurricular activities, is so, one example that is off the top of my head is see whether you have naturally occurring comparison group, for example if you have a group of students that aren't participating in extracurricular activities, perhaps they wanted to and were on a waiting list for example, and then there's a way, you got relatively controlled situation where you have students who is and students who didn't and you might be able to explore what the impact of that has been.

What you will need is a good system of communication with your university, so that you have access to that data in order to be able to summer not just the intermediate outcomes which is have students participated and what are the immediate benefits of that, it might be around the self-efface and self-confidence but then how you track that, using some of your institutional data, it is good you're looking at that and has aspirations to do that, I would say don't do it alone and look at variety of ways you approach it, but there are some, I don't done want to use the word quick wins but there are ways you can do it, that aren't resource intensive or scary thinking I need to run some kind of controlled experiment.

NATHANIEL: It is the appreciation of the complex nature of student lives nowadays and why students don't necessarily engage with extracurricular activities. So, I think it is coming back to that theory of change process and part of that is be looking at your assumptions around the student groups that you're engaging with, and really making those explicit and also, really being clear about the students that you're looking at. So, the students that engage and students that don't necessarily engage and what difference is there, and what does that tell you, and I think that

will inform them your evaluation of that and also inform the outcomes that commute a of that as well.

REBECCA: I'd like to come in on that to support what you're saying about the nature of students and complexities of student groups and student leavings, and although we did refer to data around extracurricular activity and the study from Trent and so on, that made the connections, the evidence wasn't as we know the evidence wasn't particularly strong in terms of ultimate outcomes. And I think that's why, it always brings me back to the idea why it is so important to develop learning communities within the core experiences that the student has. Because, those are the experiences we know the students are going to be, well hopefully, we know the students are going to be engaging in, because fundamentally the core of their course, perhaps the pastoral supports around their course from colleagues working in those services as well, because, if you take university like ours, at Sheffield Hallam University 54% of our students are what we commuters students so they have the same address as home address, now we also have a high proportion in mature students, around 20% are mature students. And also, we have the highest proportion of any university in terms of our population as well so we have a diverse range of students in terms of socio economic background and perhaps we would struggle to engage with things because of extracurricular because of a range of commitments and work commitments, caring commitments and so on, so I think it is really important to think about it is not to say it is not important to have that as a university offer, clearly students gain from it and benefit from T but we have to look at what the core offer is in terms what students get as part of their course as well and try a integrate that, curriculum integration of interventions around the student experience is really important.

STUART: Yeah, thank you Rebecca, highlighting student population there, points to the fact that just because something he is available to everyone doesn't mean it is accessible and I think it is a challenge there are no easy answers here.

I am going to move on to the next comment which is in relation to what doesn't work. And some colleagues maybe aware this is the second live on this webinar to meet our global membership need to we had an interesting discussion around this earlier with, several minutes left A couple more questions coming in, so ask colleagues to perhaps provide an overview of that discussion this morning in term how we fag sill Tate that conversation.

LIZ: Yeah, the specific flag for us in the report where we started to think about things that didn't work was particularly around the reporting of impact on pedagogical interventions where, I was reading one after another and another, thinking they're all great, working it is all looks fine and thinking, well, how much is this reality?

How much am I reading that and that's great but what about the other stuff, the things that don't work?

And I'd read the Dawson and Dawson paper a couple of years ago and I'm influenced by this and I open it a lot and reread it, there are themes this there which are pertinent it is an Australia article and they talk about professional identity and I think this is eluded to in the question some of the risks of reporting things that don't work for an individual and what impact that can have on personal progression. They definitely talk about a reporting and publication bias and 2010 this is alluded to

the question, so, journals that may not want to know about the things that don't work. To be fair, in some of the other areas in some of the other outcome areas, we did report things that were explored and didn't have the impact they would have assumed. But specifically, in relation to pedagogic research there's something we need to look at further. This morning, we talked about wouldn't it be lovely to have a Conference where we talk about the things that didn't work and it has to be a reflective collaborative supportive space in order to do that. And if anybody can remember the name of the journal and I'm sure there is one, that, reports failures and I think if it was coming back to me after this morning, it has a swear word in it so I won't report it, but it has somewhere reports things that don't work and it gives people the space to talk about them. In anybody is interested I will dig it out, but it is an interesting point about whether we provide the space for people to do that. Because we also know that we can't just pick up interventions from one context to another, we need to understand a little bit how context change. The COVID context in particular is going to be something we need to consider, in terms of things that might work one year but might not work the next or vice versa, so, it is a really interesting conversation and I wish we were a bit transparent possibly about the things we've tried. But I totally understand why there's some sensitivity around that.

STUART: Thank you lads. Liz, we have a summit coming up, and we will come to that shortly and we have a learning teaching community of practice through connect accessible open network and that link will be in the chat. Pleads join it and have that conversation, the authors are active within the forums so a really good space and perhaps we can have that conversation what doesn't work there as well. A comment saying where the learner's analytics shift to an intervention to sticky practice, so I think, it is a very, yes, I completely agree it is interesting to see whether that happens.

REBECCA: I'm going to the inside Government and presenting at the inside Government data higher education Conference them week in London and, I'm really interested, because a lot of that will be around the use of learner analytics and it will be interesting tagline from that what thank that comment was about, are we seeing a shift to it being seen, I went to a Conference a couple of years ago and it wasn't seen as novel intervention but definitely not widespread, I'm curious now particularly the whole digital world has expanded massively anyway due to the pandemic, whether or not it will have started mainstream and what institutions are doing with it.

STUART: Yeah, thank you Rebecca.

Very conscious of time and try and get both of these final questions to you.

The first one is just regarding methodology; would it be better for international students.

NATHANIEL: Methodology should be driven by what your evaluation questions are and what you're trying to measure ultimately it is choosing the most appropriate one to answer that. So, I don't think necessarily you'd have a different methodology for international students it is about the most appropriate methodology for that evaluation.

STUART: Thank you. And the last question, before we close - talk about the conceptualising of mattering and intervention of impact and how best to use the find and focus on developing interventions in different context, I know we had lots of conversations around context and so again that's a nod towards the summit but as a brief answer if I put that to you.

REBECCA: I mean, I think that for me, the answer to that question is does the intervention enable the student to feel that the university, the course the their tutor, their support workers pastoral support, other aspects, do, does that whatever that intervention is, is it likely to have positive impact to the student feeling they matter to the university they're noticed by the university and the university cares about them. And at different levels within different contexts and I think that's kind of your guiding principle really around that the coffin September for me. I don't know Liz if you want to add anything to that.

LIZ: I was going to say exactly the same, I think, what we've provided is an evident-base and focus on impact at the end of interventions, and we've looked at what's worked, between 2016 and 2021, what can you use this report for is to help you now design interventions and then follow that process on and you'll know this Greg asking the question, following this process on from not just using evidence at the end to show impact but putting that evident back into the cycle of intervention design. And.

REBECCA: There are examples within the review of potential areas where this could be taken forward so suggestions for the types of interventions that would be really useful to implement and evaluate in this space.

LIZ: As a principle, if you think about how, you would device and intervention based on certain assumptions, and thinking about how your context and principles interact, I think potentially the concept of mattering is a good starting point.

STUART: Colleagues thank you so much, just to reiterate not only is the literary review available but the data sheets so the abstracts, near misses, they're all there. They're openly shared by the research team through Advance HE as part of our benefits for other researchers to going on and take forward this fundamental area. I've mentioned that the connect group please get involved the conversation doesn't end here, it leaves me to thank the authors whose work is quite simply a major addition to this very critical thematic area across acknowledge access, retention, attainment, progression. And they've provided a very comprehensive narrative to the literature and offer many more avenues to explore, and todays shone a spotlight on a range of areas, so colleagues thank you so much. We are of course the review was focused very much on peer reviewed evidence and there's many areas of research, as we've already indicated and colleagues across the globe are exploring different aspects of access, retention, attainment, progression. So, as well as other related areas we know they don't sit alone, not to employability and learning and engagement through partnership and internationalising HE towards the end will as well. To that end I remind colleagues there's a range of summits coming up and lead on and provide an opportunity for all

colleagues to discuss more areas and what is working in their context, which point about context coming back there. The links to the book is in the chat there are for dates, to meet our members' needs, and I would encourage to join, in the first session on 15th of November is co-facilitated by Liz and Rebecca from the Sheffield hell lamb team, come along and participate in those activities. And it leaves me to say, I know some of our attendees are very late in the evening, and others May well be more mid-morning for colleagues, a little closer to the UK. It is probably drawing slightly towards your end of workday at least. Thank you so much. Safe journeys hope whether they be virtual or otherwise, and we greatly welcome you to the next event thank you so much, thank you colleagues.

Bye-bye.



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